

I wish to express my concerns regarding the “Social and Economic Impact of Rural Wind Farms”

I am a resident of a region that has the potential of becoming over run by wind turbines. This region has already been hurt by the issues arising out of the process that the many wind companies have gone through trying to get people to sign up. Family members have been pitted against each other, friendships have been severed and distasteful events have taken place. The social fabric of the community has been affected.

The wind companies speak of what they can do for the community and how their presence will in some way increase the wealth of the community, however we can look around the world and indeed even our own state to see the “For Sale” signs that spring up after the Turbines start to turn, this is particularly evident in areas where there is significant population.

One local prospective wind farm tabled in their information that there would be 36 residences within 1.5 km of their turbines, and that 21 of these would be non participatory residences. The table also displayed that a further 61 residences would be within 1.5km to 3km of their turbines, 58 of these residences being non participatory. This means that of the 97 residences located in the immediate vicinity of the turbines in this one proposal 79 are not participants. When we consider this is residences not residents, the full impact of this can begin to be understood. If a family unit lives in each of these residences hundreds of people could potentially be about to become inundated with the effects of these turbines. These are significant numbers of people in a rural setting. This number of residents only related to the immediate impact of one wind company proposal, there are at least 3 other proposals in the immediate area and many more in the region equating to thousands of turbines (Some of these proposals have already been given conditional approval). Cumulative impact studies have not been undertaken. The potential effects on the people, the environment, and the agricultural productivity appear to have been ignored.

In a highly productive area such as ours there is always work available, this is reflected in the stability of the town and districts population and the variety of services able to be offered. If the turbines go ahead and the social and health issues begin to take a toll as they have in other regions, there may be a population shift. The flow on effect of this could result in loss of population and loss of services. Schools, hospitals, shopping facilities and small service businesses, all could suffer.

The presence of the turbines themselves, the glint and flashing, the noise both audible and inaudible and the effect on ground water both in disruption to flow due to the cement bases of the turbines and earth leakage altering water quality, could all have a potential impact on the health and wellbeing of the livestock resulting in production losses.

We are all so busy getting on with life that we believe that the authorities employed to look out for us are doing their job, and that they will have done the research necessary to determine that a proposal will not impact negatively on the environment, will not destroy flora and fauna, alter the water resources or present health risks to the community.

Unfortunately this does not appear to have been the case in some regions, where data collection has been obviously inadequate.

It is now the time to consider the health implications for the people and the effects on the health and productivity of the domestic livestock along with the future of our native plants and animals, their habitats, safe flight zones and breeding grounds.

I believe that the Senate Inquiry has the opportunity to halt the onslaught of industrialization that is threatening to engulf sensitive environmental areas as well as some of the most productive and picturesque agricultural land in the country.

It must be considered that there are many rural areas that are highly inappropriate for the construction of wind turbines.

Heather Hicks