

Senate Wind farm Inquiry

Submission to the Senate Community Affairs References Committee report on the social and economic impacts of rural wind farms.

Submitted by

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Submission summary statement

I would like to comment on the following:

(a) Any adverse health effects for people living in close proximity to wind farms

We are extremely concerned about the reports we are reading from all around Australia as well as internationally, of the negative impacts on people living within a few kilometres of wind turbines. There have been a considerable number of complaints from residents in close proximity to windfarms suffering a range of health ailments that seem to be linked to the times when the turbines have been operating. These reports are from local, national and international sources and symptoms include nausea, headaches, tinnitus, dizziness, rapid heart beat and sleep disturbance. These symptoms have been reported in case studies by such people as Dr Nina Pierpont, Dr Robert McMurtry, and Dr Michael Nissenbaum.

One consistent issue that we have heard from people with wind farms planned for their area is that they have no say in the process. They feel helpless. We were told by a representative from the windfarm company to "Just accept it, it (the windfarm) is going to happen."

This feeling of hopelessness among residents who know that there are so many issues surrounding windfarm has a very negative and debilitating effect. The change in the landscape and the loss of the natural landscape will also have a negative psychological effect on many people.

(b) Concerns over the excessive noise and vibrations emitted by wind farms, which are in close proximity to people's homes

There is a problem in that there seems to be no standard distance that turbines need to be set back from residences. Having visited windfarms we know that the noise can be heard from a significant distance and are very concerned that turbines can be placed close to our house. We are unsure what health effect this noise will have when we are forced to endure it constantly but we know that it will have a negative effect on our quality of life.

We live in a relatively quiet rural area. The noises that we hear currently are associated with transport and farming but these are transitory in nature. Traffic can be heard from roadways at times on Highway One. These roads are in between 5 and 15 km away. Noise travels well under the influence of southerly winds which is the predominant wind direction. This wind would push the noise of the turbines in our direction.

Positioning wind generators within one km of the houses in our community would be a considerable change to the current acoustics of the area. Residents know that the current noises are temporary and will fade after a short time. Introducing constant noise to this area would be an unacceptable change to the noise patterns of the area. This would cause anxiety and upset to residents, which is well documented in other areas where windfarms have been erected. We know how disturbing constant noise is. The constant noise of the wind farms will interrupt the sleep and cause general annoyance.

(c) The impact of rural wind farms on property values, employment opportunities and farm income

There are many reports of the devaluing of rural properties that are in close proximity to windfarms. There is much discussion in the community about the possible health effects of this industry and the uncertainty that this produces makes people very cautious about buying. They will either abandon seeking a property in that area or reduce the offer for the property. This is supported by the Shane McIntyre, National Sales Manager, Elders Rural Services Australia Limited and

After the development the landscape values of the area are negatively affected and this has a flow on effect on property values. We do not know what health effects will occur if a windfarm goes ahead in our community but if we are forced to sell our property all indications are that it will be at a reduced price.

(d) The interface between Commonwealth, state and local planning laws as they pertain to wind farms

There seem to be no consistent rules or no rules. As rural landowners we have no say over where the turbines are sited. If our neighbour puts a turbine on his property but close to our house (this is the current proposal) my neighbour increases his property value, while the value of our property goes down. No minimum setback distance from houses means we may not be able to live in our house anymore but we may not be able to sell it either.

There is no consideration for the whole of the landscape, just for the particular area that the windfarm is going onto so the cumulative effects of multiple windfarms across the landscape is not taken into account.

(e) Any other relevant matters.

There seems to be no cost/benefit analysis, no-one wants to answer these questions

- How much do these things actually cost in environmental terms?
- How long does it take to start getting a net benefit?
- What are the transmission costs?
- Why don't they get put near the cities where all the energy gets used?
- Why don't we try to reduce the amount of power we are using rather than spending huge amounts of energy building giant machines to generate more?

Submissions due 10 February 2011.

Submissions can be sent in the following ways -

1. in electronic form submitted online at <https://senate.aph.gov.au/submissions/pages/index.aspx> or sent by
2. email to community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au as an attached Adobe PDF or MS Word format document.
3. posted to
Department of the Senate, PO Box 6100, Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600.

Notes to help you prepare your submission are available from the website at http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/wit_sub/index.htm.

Alternatively, the Committee Secretariat will be able to help you with your inquiries and can be contacted on telephone +61 2 6277 3515 or facsimile +61 2 6277 5829 or by email to community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au.

Important information

Once the Committee accepts your submission, it becomes a confidential Committee document and is protected by Parliamentary Privilege. **You must not release your submission without the Committee's permission. If you do, it will not be protected by Parliamentary Privilege.** At some stage during the inquiry, the Committee normally makes submissions public and places them on its website. **Please indicate if you want your submission to be kept confidential.**