

Submission to Australian Senate Inquiry regarding the social and economic impact of rural windfarms

My wife and I live on a small sheep property near the Waubra wind farm in Victoria. Important facts about our current interaction with that wind farm are as follows:

- We cannot see any turbines from our house.
- Several turbines may be seen from other parts of the property.
- We have only once heard any turbine noise whilst on our property, and that was minor.
- We are *prima facie* in favour of the production of energy from renewable sources.
- An individual turbine has a certain structural beauty about it and, in the right setting, is a grand sight.

Our concerns about the Waubra wind farm, about its extension to Evansford, and by analogy about all wind farms, are as follows:

Philosophical

We live in a natural landscape. Much of what we see around us has always been there, within the normal run of geophysical processes. If we compare our surroundings with those of Europe, for example, we can note that that continent has little left which has not been amended by human hands over the millennia. A wind farm creates substantial change to the visual environment and it may be argued that there is something undesirable about making such a significant industrial change to a natural landscape in an area in which both resident and passing populations can otherwise take pleasure in simple, natural beauty.

Whereas this argument could be taken so far as to preclude any man-made artifice, we stop short of that assertion. Clearly we need roads and rail, houses and factories – and even wind farms! We simply argue that planning rules should ensure that, within a rural setting, each is located so as to minimise visual impact. In the case of wind farms, this would mean placing them where their impact will be least intrusive.

Practical

We cannot say that the Waubra wind farm has impacted directly on us in the sense of causing disturbance or illness. Nevertheless, there are many who say this is so and that fact has become widely known and believed. The result of this has been significant reduction of property prices.

A local resident we know well has been told by her estate agent that the price she will get for the small house in Waubra she has recently decided to sell will now be \$40,000 less than she would get in the absence of a wind farm.

My concern and that of my wife is that we live in a much larger house in a rural setting with a beautiful outlook and our prospective losses are significantly greater. (...) These observations about property prices are despite the fact that, at the moment, we experience no direct impact on our residence, on our lives.

Should the Waubra wind farm be extended to Evansford as suggested, then the flashing lights that give the area the ambiance of an airport at night and the visual disturbance of the turbines themselves will be visible from the front windows of our house, creating a direct and unpleasant impact on our lives. The economic impact will also be enormous for we shall not be able to sell the property in the manner I described above. Local sale of the property as “grazing country with house” will seriously damage our financial situation.

We ask the committee to consider both the intrusive visual impact of wind turbines on a region of natural beauty and the economic impact on local residents – at Waubra, in the proposed Evansford extension area, and whenever and wherever wind farms are being planned.

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