Submission to parliamentry enquiry to rural wind farms

The problems associated with renewable energy production in Australia stem largly from the lack of a planning system that is
A, Enforcable
B, Fair and equitable to rural communities

And a technically inept system that is unable to distribute renewable energy that is able to have a effect on the reduction of emmisions from coal.

I will concentrate my submission on the planning guidelines for wind facilities as this is where my expertise lies.

Wind facilities are no longer a welcome development in rural victoria, this is partly due to the poor planning guidelines in place, partly due to the evasivness of the companys involved when it comes to consultation and answering simple questions honestly and partly because of its technical inadequacy as a energy source able to be relied upon.

The planning guidelines must include certainty, to both communitys and the developers in regards to landscape values. If an area is protected by the planning scheme it should be off limits, councils have placed overlays on areas for good reason, local laws should be upheld and this should be clearly indicated in the guidelines to save confusion to all concerned.
The cost of studys for overlays can be extensive, this money is spent by council and ratepayers, therfore should be respected by the guidelines as a extension of state planning law. To save both companies involved in development money and time, and communities with a interest in local landscape preservation stress, all areas covered by Significant Landscape Overlay should be disregarded for wind farm development.
Areas with historic significance, high landscape value or cultural heritage values should also be protected, Its obvious that these issues regularly come up at planning panel hearings, with local opinion often shoved under the carpet in favor of so called payed "experts" that are used time and time again by wind farm developers.

The ability of windfarms to produce noise is widely known, noise produced is both audiable and low frequency / infrasound in nature. The current guidelines contain no reference to the low frequency aspect of this. It is often claimed by the wind industry that low frequency noise is not generated by wind turbines. But in reallity this would appear a lie.
Infrasound in the range under 20hz has been measured at above 80db near the Waubra windfarm. Sustained exposure to high levels of infrasound has been proven to cause health problems in humans, such as nausea, headache, palpitations, loss of balance, and in exceptional circumstances vibro accoustic disease, including hardening of the arteries and heart disease.
Low frequency noise can be generated by many things, both natural and man made, but the number one cause has been found to be fans. Its quite obvious that giant fans will produce sound pressure levels higher than humans should be subjected to for long periods of time.
To lessen the impact of LFN a buffer must be placed in the guidelines to allow residents to lead normal lives, there must also be compansation available to residents who are unfairly impacted by this insideous problem outside the buffer.
Due to the nature of LFN and its ability to travel long distance without attenuation i suggest a buffer of 3km be used to the nearest home (unless the homeowner and company come to a arrangement) This will provide certainty for all partys involved and result in less resentment and complaints about proposed developments.

The issue of noise is one that impacts upon the local population, but it would appear as though there is no responsible local authority that is able to enforce the noise limitation implied by the planning permit. This must be made clear by the government of the day, local councils are not in a position, nor have the

expertise to measure sound pressure. This must be made clear as the local population needs to have a body that is able to accuratly and quickly deal with any breaches of the permit.
Either a governement funded body such as the EPA should be responsible for noise issues as it is with other industry, or the government should fund the coucil to employ someone to be responsible for handling complaints and co ordinating testing and response.
Penalties should be imposed that are in line with other industry.

The risk of fire MUST be addressed.
Wind turbines like other industrial equipment has a risk of fire, 3 bush/grass fires have resulted from turbine failure in SA in recent summers. The manufactures specifications for operation are often not adheared to, ie operation in temperatures considered to hot for reliable operation.
In line with other industry, water should be on site and fire surpression equipment installed in turbines.
Turbines should under no circumstance operate outside specifications.
The placement of turbines close to areas of bush, where prevailing winds would push any fire into bush is asking for trouble. Areas that are inaccesable due to topography should also be avoided as fire crews obviously cannot attend.