

Department of the Senate
Community Affairs Committee

“Inquiry into the social and economic impact of rural wind farms”

Submission from

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Situation

My family lives in Codrington on a property adjoining the existing wind farm run by Pacific Hydro. We have lived here for approximately ten years and the wind farm was in existence prior to our purchase. There is no financial benefit to us from the wind farm.

Health Impacts

To the best of my knowledge there has been absolutely no impact on our family’s health or sleeping patterns. Nor has there been on any of the landowners who have houses closer to the turbines - .whether or not they have a financial benefit.

Noise

The turbines on the adjoining farm are inaudible on our property. Even at the closest approach of about 500 metres they cannot be heard above the ambient noise of a strong wind. I have taken concerned visitors to stand under them in 25 knot southerly and they are surprised at the lack of noise. It is far from overwhelming. Technology advances since these were installed has further reduced noise from the turbines and the blades.

Property Values

Over the last ten years property values in this area have more than doubled. The adjoining property with wind turbines was bought and sold in that period and more than doubled. In areas like this it is often difficult to sell small properties with houses independent of their wind farm proximity because they are insignificant and overpriced to a farmer wishing to expand and too remote from town facilities for new residents.

Some Planning Issues

Visual Amenity

It needs to be recognised that the landscape being defended against wind farm intrusion in most cases is a man made landscape. Landscape preferences are quite subjective and hardly the basis for acrimonious disagreement. I find the visual impact of the adjoining wind farm quite spectacular and endlessly changing in response to the weather. It provides a much more agreeable aspect than the sprawl of new developments around nearby coastal towns for example.

Endangered Birds

The Codrington Yambuk wind farm runs close to the Princes Highway for about 15KM. The arguments re protection of endangered species of bird from whirling rotor blades by denying planning permission should also lead to a suspension of traffic on the Highway if we are to be consistent. All infrastructure results in habitat change. The effects of the turbines are minimal compared to highway kill. At least the wind farm provides funds to monitor the effect on bird life and in so doing provides for an increase in knowledge of the various species and their habit.

Some Conclusions

In view of the much higher penetrations of wind power in Europe as a percentage of total generating capacity, one has to wonder why Australia with a much less dense rural population cannot go down the same track. European countries have recognised wind power as an opportunity to improve rural incomes for farmers and have developed policies to suit. What is so different about Australia that prevents a similar approach? Germany in particular has placed great emphasis on solar and wind power as technologies which today can provide substantial portions of the total generated power base.