

Submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Social and Economic Impacts of Rural Wind Farms

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I am a member and director of Hepburn Wind. I am, however, making this submission in a personal capacity and it is in support of the continued development of the wind industry.

I am particularly concerned about one of the items the Inquiry is considering. It is quoted immediately below and my comments follow.

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

I respectfully suggest that the following be taken into account in considering this item: the noise emitted by a wind farm is subject to permit conditions and, assuming that the conditions are met, cannot be termed "excessive" if the emitted noise does not meet the stipulated conditions, remedial action is taken (there are examples of this) rendering the noise not "excessive" stipulated permit conditions deal with noise that people may experience and that can be attributed to a given wind farm the term "close proximity" in relation to a wind farm only has meaning insofar as people within the given distance from the wind farm implied by the term experience noise which is indeed excessive and this means that the wind farm is not complying

Permit conditions are set on the basis that people who may experience untoward symptoms due to noise are a very small minority of the general population. In other words, the conditions are quite stringent and they are appropriate. A problem that we suggest the Inquiry consider is the difficulty of separating people who may genuinely experience untoward symptoms attributable to a wind farm from those who do not but still claim to do so. The question is how to fairly compensate those who are genuinely affected despite the wind farm in question meeting permit conditions.

In any case, there is an overwhelming case to support wind farms. Generation from wind is the most commercially viable form of generation from renewable sources. It is a technically mature technology. Such generation must be part of our response to climate change. There are economic benefits as well as environmental benefits to be gained from wind generation. Currently, investment in wind generation requires support, provided in Australia mainly through the mandatory renewable energy target (MRET) scheme. Were fossil fuel generation to bear the cost of its carbon emissions, such support would not be necessary. Generation based on fossil fuels is being subsidised by not having to pay for the safe disposal of its emissions. There is ample documentation of this and it is supported by widely respected reports such as those by Stern and Garnaut.

Community wind farms are even more worthy of support in that they are local initiatives, providing local employment opportunities and have the benefits of distributed generation, which avoids transmission losses.

I urge the Senate to find means of facilitating the continued development of the wind industry in Australia and to recommend policies that do so.