

SUBMISSION TO THE SENATE ENQUIRY ON THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC
IMPACT
OF RURAL WIND FARMS

We moved from inner city Melbourne to a farming district south of Skipton, Victoria in 1994, after building a home for ourselves on land occupied by an old, disused church building which we had bought in 1977 when our children were young. Now we live here in retirement.

When we first made our home in the inner city, the atmosphere was village-like. We knew all our neighbours, and our lives were closely involved with theirs. We were neighbours in sickness and in health, in good times and bad. By the time our children were grown, and we were ready to retire, the inner city had changed dramatically. Though it was more crowded, it was far less friendly. Cars had taken over the narrow streets, drugs were a menace, violence had increased, the pubs kept much longer hours, even the nearby beach seemed alien.

Our arrival as permanent residents in the country was a revelation. We were stunned by the neighbourly friendliness and involvement. Also by the willingness of so many to work for the general good. This, we felt, was how life should be lived. We have since experienced fire, drought and flood, and seen the commitment of neighbour to neighbour. The advent of wind farms in this district is threatening all of this. Suddenly we became aware of a “for or against” mentality. The problem with wind farms being that money is very much a part of the story. The farmer who is being bribed with large sums to take wind vanes on his property is not necessarily the person who will be affected by them – either by the sound, or visually. Yet one is compensated and the other is not.

We have watched in sadness as neighbour has turned against neighbour. We never thought to see this. There are so few of us spread across so much land. We need the support and co-operation of our neighbours. We depend on our neighbours in times of crisis, yet we see instead former friends who now no longer speak. We can't afford to lose our neighbourliness, it is far more precious than money, once it is gone, it may never return, and country living will never be the same again.

Is it worth destroying an Australian way of life for a dubious technological fad?

Janet Walsh