



18th January 2013

Environment and Communications References Senate Committee-Recent trends in and preparedness for extreme weather events

To whom it may concern

The Senate committee will be aware of the recent fires which have ravaged rural areas in NSW in the last few weeks. These have been devastating for these communities and for individual farmers. Whilst farmers prepare themselves as much as they can to prevent bushfires from both igniting and spreading quickly, there are a number of factors out of their control that increase the risk of fire many fold. One of these factors is the presence of industrial wind turbines sited in highly bushfire prone areas such as Gunning and Crookwell in NSW.

A number of farmers who do not yet have operating turbines on their properties but have contracts to host industrial wind turbines near Yass were recently burnt out, lucky to save their own lives and their dwellings. 10,000s of livestock and wildlife have not been quite so lucky. The saving grace of these and many other farmers was the use of helicopters and planes to water bomb the raging fires, protecting homes and families. Without this life saving method of fire control, the fire near Yass would no doubt have reached the town, and God only knows how much loss of human life would have resulted if it had. I mention this fact to highlight the immense danger that the siting of industrial wind turbines in highly fire prone areas puts its inhabitants and the environment, as fixed wing aircraft will not operate within 1 km of wind turbines, given the innate danger of flying close to such tall structures in less than perfect visibility and often unpredictable wind conditions.

I have included in this submission as an appendix a document which highlights some of the issues faced by fire fighters and residents of areas where wind turbines are sited inappropriately in highly volatile fire prone regions. It is reassuring that government bodies and private consultants are beginning to understand and take very seriously this matter. In short, the siting of industrial wind turbines in highly fire prone areas is irresponsible and greatly impedes farmer's ability to prepare and protect themselves from bushfires.

I trust the committee will take this submission and the issues highlighted seriously. We are not able to change the weather, but we can reduce the impact of severe bushfire conditions by not siting industrial wind turbines in areas which are high bushfire prone areas.

Regards

Charlie Arnott