

Submission to inquiry on the impacts of windfarm development

Approximately 2 years ago we were contacted by a windfarm developer to investigate the possibility of locating turbines on our property. Given the vagaries of the weather and commodity prices the thought of another income stream not quite so dependant on precipitation was attractive. As a result of this approach I have endeavoured to educate myself regarding the energy industry and the role which wind may play.

At the outset I will say that I find wind turbines quite majestic however I can understand some people may not share my view. From the perspective of impacts to our local environment and the management of our property I think a windfarm is far preferable to a coalmine, coal seam gas extraction or even solar as they would potentially take up more land area or damage aquifers. Apart from some major inconvenience during construction the on going operations of the enterprise will be minimally affected and very little land resource will be lost. Once established it would provide low cost green power.

As part of our research we did go to windfarms at Cullerin Range and Bungendore. This did make me aware what a major construction the farm development would be. We were also able to assess the noise generated whilst the turbines were rotating. At approx. 400m downwind of two turbines it was difficult to hear any turbine noise if anyone was speaking or there was traffic on the motorway some 800m to 1000m away. This satisfied me that such impacts on dwellings a minimum 1km from projected turbine sites would be negligible.

From a local community perspective it would inject considerable amounts into local economy during construction phase. This would be a real shot in the arm for a town like Coolah. The ongoing royalty payments to property owners hosting infrastructure will inevitably support the local economy. Another spin off would be the upgrading of some roads to allow the construction to go ahead.

From our personal perspective it would essentially drought proof our operation by providing an alternative income stream. I feel it would secure a good future for our operation and family.

In closing it would seem to me that Australians have an insatiable thirst for energy. Burning of fossil fuels is still the cheapest method of producing this however it appears to come with associated environmental costs. As a result alternative methods must be sought. No matter what production system one uses there will be some impacts both environmental and social. Harnessing wind energy is currently the most cost efficient green alternative. It doesn't come without some of these issues however from my perspective it stacks up as a preferable alternative. Those who oppose windfarms probably have objections to all energy generation methods if they are located in their backyard, but will be the first to scream when the lights go out.

Thank you for considering my views R.P.K.