

From: jacinta morahan [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, 23 March 2015 1:43 PM
To: Committee, Wind Turbines (SEN)
Subject: Submission to Select Committee on Wind Turbines

Dear Senators,

My name is Jacinta Morahan. I am a medical doctor and I live with my partner and 3 primary school aged children in Anglesea on Victoria's Surf Coast.

I have been motivated to make this submission for a number of reasons.

Firstly, Australia and the rest of the world must drastically reduce and then stop burning coal and other fossil fuels as a means to produce electricity if we are to avoid both the environmental and human health harms of climate change. The environmental and humanitarian crisis currently overwhelming our Pacific neighbor Vanuatu is a salient reminder to us that we must embrace and invest in clean and currently available renewable energy technology, like wind turbines, as a matter of urgency.

Secondly, my family and I live within 2kms of Alcoa's open cut coal mine and aging coal fired power station. Anglesea homes and the local primary school are less than 1km from both. Given Alcoa's emissions are greatest between 11am and 3pm (as recorded in Alcoa's own human health and risk assessment) I can not send my children to the local primary school as it is not safe for their developing cardio-respiratory systems. As a medical practitioner I am well informed regarding the irrefutable evidence that coal mining and coal burning are harmful to human health. The coal mined in Anglesea has 10 times the Sulphur content of that mined in the LaTrobe Valley. When burnt, the dangerous respiratory irritant Sulphur Dioxide (SO₂) is emitted, in Anglesea in amounts 3 times that of the notorious polluter Hazelwood while only being 1 tenth the size. In addition to the extraordinarily high and dangerous levels of SO₂, the mine and power station are also sources of particulate mater, PM₁₀ as well as PM_{2.5} and the ultrafine PM_{0.1} which are blown over the town and breathed deeply in to the lungs of every resident and visitor. As well as being carcinogenic, particulates cause damage to multiple organ systems over time. Children (at the primary school, the closest town structure to the mine and power station), the elderly and those with pre-existing lung conditions are most at risk.

The health of my family and my community is being harmed by coal mining and coal combustion. Communities in the Latrobe and Hunter Valleys, as well as multiple other sites in Australia, are also exposed to these harms. Given renewable energy sources like wind energy are available **and safe** it is incumbent upon Government to embrace

these technologies and encourage investor confidence in their rapid development so that the phasing out of dirty and dangerous coal can occur as soon as possible and communities like mine will no longer be harmed by coal mining and burning.

Wind energy is safe. There have been a number of international studies that have concluded that this is the case. There is no reputable medical or scientific evidence that wind farms cause illness in humans. The AMA has been clear in its stance regarding both wind and coal energy sources. In short, coal is clearly associated with a number of real and demonstrable adverse health effects. Wind is not.

In addition to the health benefits from the transition from coal to clean renewable energy sources like wind energy, both direct and from climate change, there are also the direct environmental effects from open cut coal mines. In Anglesea, the mine sits within the nationally registered Anglesea Heath. Alcoa's current license allows for a further 147hectars of this pristine and valuable Victorian resource to be ripped up to create energy that, with the closure of the Point Henry Aluminium Smelter, is no longer needed to feed into an already oversupplied Victorian Energy Market. That Anglesea residents and visitors are being harmed by coal dust and emissions from coal combustion for power that is not needed is a particularly bitter pill to swallow. There are also of course, the environmental effects of climate change that we are already beginning to witness and experience through extreme weather events. Wind farms do not cause the devastating environmental damage caused by coal mines.

Health and environment are however not the only factors that need to be considered in encouraging a transition away from dangerous and damaging fossil fuel mining and burning. Economic factors must also be included in any review or discussion. As technologies improve, the cost of producing electricity from renewable sources is falling. Cheap sustainable electricity can be produced with downward pressure placed on electricity prices. Investment, jobs and income are created in regional Australia. Anglesea is in Western Victoria where these jobs are much needed. Recently, a number of jobs were lost in a Portland wind turbine factory due to investor uncertainly drying up growth in this potentially valuable industry. Drought proof income is also produced for our farmers providing those who provide us with the essentials of life with a much deserved alternative source of reliable income.

Recent reviews have revealed that the coal industry employs far fewer people and is much less important to the Australian economy than the coal industry asserts. Massive subsidies are provided via our tax dollars. The overall or 'true' costs of coal are very rarely accounted for. The health dollar alone spent on damage caused by coal mining and combustion is significant. Tax payer dollars spent on environmental damage caused by coal mines, power stations and the effects of climate change must also be considered in any sort of economic review. Wind turbines and wind farms will do no such harm to our health and environment and will incur no such costs.

I appreciate the opportunity to make this submission to the committee and thank you in advance for your careful consideration of the points made.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Jacinta Morahan
Anglesea