

The Chair,
Senate Committee investigating Wind Farms in rural areas

Dear Sir/Madam,
Please accept the following as my submission to your enquiry.

I would like to make the following points in favour of wind farms in rural settings (in any setting really):

1. Visual Amenity

Whilst I personally find wind turbines quite elegant I am aware that others find them quite ugly and a blight on the landscape. I would point out that there are several important factors to consider:

- They are considerably more elegant than either of high tension power transmission lines or indeed, an operating open cut coal mine feeding a thermal power generation plant;
- I believe wind is at best an interim renewable power supply source which will be replaced in 25 or 50 years by newer solar and wave generation technologies that are more reliable and cheaper. But in the meantime all indications are that large scale wind is the most efficient and cost effective renewable energy source available.

The joy is that wind turbine towers have an intrinsic 20-25 year design life span and once there are more efficient power sources the towers will not be replaced and any perceived loss of visual amenity will disappear.

Once the towers are not to be replaced the turbines will have to come down and the landscape will be FULLY restored.

Landscape guardians need not despair, the economics of the situation will act to restore the landscape in the medium term.

2. Health Effects

I believe the Victorian Government report into adverse health effects to people living in the vicinity of wind towers pointed out that there are no reported cases (anywhere in the world) of adverse health issues by anyone living on a property and being paid to have turbines on their land. This suggests quite clearly that adverse health effects reported by people living near wind towers are most probably psychosomatic in origin. That is not to say these need be disregarded; it is just that the resolution of them should not require removal of towers or rejection of approvals.

I would suggest that a review of the Victorian Government report to confirm its research is required.

I also question the validity of a health argument stopping wind farms when governments of all persuasions push high voltage transmission lines through communities with no regard for the adverse health effects they might have on nearby residents.

3. Financial/Property Value Considerations

I put it to the committee that one of the great factors in support of rural wind farms is the payment land owners receive to have towers on their properties. I am confident that their land values will increase as a result of an existing stable long term income stream.

As for the values of surrounding properties; I am in no position to offer any opinion.

4. Regional Economic Development

There is no doubt that the skill set required to erect a wind farm is such that construction projects offer local people employment opportunities that are perhaps not available on other power projects in rural settings. In addition to this, a significant part of the civil and steel fabrication parts of a wind project should be provided by local content. Most other countries in the world impose local content requirements on wind projects (including, I believe, the USA); **I believe the Australian Government should do the same thing.**

There is also no argument that wind farms provide ongoing employment for mechanical and electrical trades in maintenance crews. A 120 turbine farm should provide about 25 ongoing jobs.

5. Power pricing/cost

Whilst wind apparently costs around 80% more than brown coal per kWhr to generate, wind farms can be located close to where power is consumed, with significant reductions in transmission line cost and power loss which mitigate the overall power cost increase significantly.

In summary, I'd suggest that wind farm projects offer Australia significant benefits that far outweigh any perceived badness!

- They are by far the most cost effective renewable energy source available to man at the moment; and I firmly believe that we need to be replacing fossil fuel power generation in Australia as fast as possible;
- Any loss of visual amenity resulting from wind turbines on the landscape WILL be short to medium term at worst;
- Unlike other power sources, wind actually directly returns income to the community in which it is located on top of any construction and operating reemployment;
- Local content elements of a wind farm project CAN be provided by existing industry and infrastructure without the need for major investment or high value equipment imports; and
- Available scientific research appears to indicate that claims of adverse health effects due to electro-magnetic radiation, noise and shadow are not supported by actual case history anywhere else in the world.