

Submission to the Senate Community Committee Affairs - 'Inquiry into the social and economic impacts of rural wind farms'

To: community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au

From: Danny Walsh

I work in the Australian renewable energy industry and thank you for the opportunity to express my support for Australian rural wind farms. Wind energy is a vital component of Australia's energy mix, to reduce our strong reliance on heavily subsidised and polluting fossil fuel energy sources. The science is clear, that to avert climate change we need urgent and drastic reductions in the carbon emissions that come from burning such fossil fuels, whilst the onset of climate change already occurring here in extreme weather events provides terrifying proof.

It is therefore necessary that planning laws facilitate fluid development of wind farms, indeed in a sustainable manner. This means regulating noise impacts using the best practice technical Standards and Guidelines so that the amenity of neighbouring residents of wind farms is protected. This is achieved with current documents such as New Zealand Standard 6808 and South Australian EPA Guidelines.

In regard to health effects, I have worked on operational wind farms here in Australia and also visited numerous wind farms throughout the world and I have not experienced any adverse health effects. I also have reviewed the current literature on wind farms and health affects and the scientific case is clear; *"there is currently no published scientific evidence to positively link wind turbines with adverse health effects"*, as stated by the Australian National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC). Indeed, a global expert panel of medical doctors, audiologists, and acoustical professionals reviewed all the current literature and found that *"There is no evidence that the audible or sub-audible sounds emitted by wind turbines have any direct adverse physiological effects"*¹. Further, Pacific Hydro recently commissioned an infrasound measurement study that found; *"...infrasound is not unique to wind farms. The levels of infrasound produced by wind turbines is well below established perception thresholds and, importantly, is also below levels produced by other natural and man-made sources. Interestingly one of the highest levels of infrasound that was recorded was at a beach."* Unfortunately, the non-scientific claims of such health effects from infrasound and wind farms, as perpetrated by the media, is causing unnecessary fear and distress in rural communities, so it is important for this Inquiry to alleviate these fears.

I have seen the majority support and benefits of wind farms in rural communities where developments are occurring or completed - from buying lunch and supplies in local stores, to the purchase of wind monitoring and other equipment from local manufacturers. During wind farm construction, local jobs are created and throughout the operational life, a guaranteed income for the farmers holding wind turbines on their land is provided, which is vital for the local economy during times of drought and flood.

¹ Colby, et al, Wind Turbine Sound and Health Effects - An Expert Panel Review – December 2009

Best regards

Danny Walsh