

25 November 2001

733 2171

Planning Panels Victoria  
Department of Infrastructure  
GPO Box 2797Y  
MELBOURNE VIC 3001

Dear Sir/Madam

Our family property is 'Doonbar' at Codrington and it accommodates eight of the fourteen turbines that make up Pacific Hydro's Codrington Wind Farm.

It might seem hypocritical for farmers hosting a wind farm to object to wind farms, but we feel that we are amongst the few people who have the benefit of hindsight. Living with a wind farm is a daily reality for us and while we do receive financial income from it, we are now aware of many of the costs and repercussions that occur after installation. It is for these reasons that we object to the wind farm proposed for Yambuk.

When we agreed to lease land to Pacific Hydro, we were driven by self-interest. With failing health and no children interested in taking over the farm, we had already put our property on the market. We saw the turbines as something that would make the property a more attractive proposition to buyers, and hopefully result in a quick sale. While we had some reservations, we felt pressured to sign the contract by the specified time.

The outcome has been quite different to what we hoped for. While we have had many prospective buyers, none have been willing to purchase the property and some have stated that they were put off by the lease arrangement with Pacific Hydro (specifically, the clause relating to a caveat).

What we hoped would be our ticket out has turned out to be an obstacle to a sale.

It would also be true to say that our relationship with Pacific Hydro has soured. After installation, there was very little contact and whatever goodwill existed at the outset has disappeared now. My advice to farmers considering wind farms would be to have the contracts checked very carefully and to make sure that they understand what impact it might have on their primary production.

Having a wind farm has altered our farming practices and other farmers who are considering wind farms should be aware of this. Our lease includes right of access and that means that gates can be (and have been) left open or not secured properly. We now feel compelled to check the gates regularly - an extra job taking up time that we can't really spare.

We have also found that some people want to see the turbines up close but don't want to pay for the tour. They jump the fence and walk on the farm (without asking), scare the stock and run the risk of injury.

Wind farming has not worked for us and we now very much regret the decision to proceed with the lease. The wind farms have spoiled the coastline and spoiled the view from public beaches and other public areas. These peaceful, natural views belong to everyone and they have been damaged by this development. Additional turbines at Yambuk would only serve to make this small blot on the landscape a far bigger one.

We have also learned from our experience that wind turbines are not 'bird friendly'. 'Doonbar' is located between the Eumeralla River and the Southern Ocean. These water bodies attract sea birds, water birds, falcons etc. and we have always enjoyed the presence of birds. It was therefore very upsetting to find dead birds under the wind turbines, particularly during the first few months of their operation. These were mostly falcons (about one a week for the first two months).

The Yambuk site includes the Lake, rivers, wetlands and beaches and has a far greater variety of bird species including migratory birds. They congregate there in much larger numbers than at Codrington. Given the experience here, Yambuk would seem to be a very bad location for a wind farm in terms of its impact on birds.

For those people who face the prospect of living very near a wind farm, we can confirm that they can be noisy. On bad days, it is something like the sound of heavy traffic. If you are the landholder receiving lease payments, you can put up with it but we can understand why neighbours who get no direct benefit from the wind farm would find the noise objectionable.

Finally, we should briefly mention that the conflict that wind farm proposals cause between neighbours and in the community does not disappear after they start operating.

For ourselves, we remain hopeful of finding a buyer for our property and retiring from farming. We have enjoyed the many pleasures and privileges that living on the coast brings, and we believe that the wind farm here was a mistake. More turbines in a more sensitive area would only worsen the situation. There must be better sites than those that are being proposed.

Yours faithfully