

Submission to the Federal Senate's Committee on Community Affairs (the 'Community Affairs Reference Committee') Inquiry into the 'Social and Economic Impact of Rural Wind Farms'.

G V Community Energy Pty Ltd (GVCE) is a purpose formed not for profit community organization based in Victoria's Goulburn Valley.

GVCE has facilitated the installation of more solar PV systems than any other community group in Australia. Our governance arrangements have ensured transparency for all interested parties and the professional project management methodology and accountability to an honorary working group has been an integral reason why our local municipal authorities have endorsed our current work and why the Goulburn Broken Greenhouse Alliance has supported the Solar Photovoltaic Community Hubs proposal. Initially, we operated under the auspices of the Dhurringile & District Landcare group Inc, then expanded with the Shepparton Chamber of Commerce & Industry Inc. and now operates as a not for profit company called GV Community Energy (GVCE).

GVCE takes an interest in all forms of renewable energy and welcomes the opportunity to submit the following comments in line with the key inquiry issues.

Australia is currently falling behind most developed countries in the uptake of this energy source and it is hoped that this inquiry will result in the improved understanding of impediments to the industries growth and recommend solutions.

Wind Farms are accepted world-wide as an alternative to the use of fossil fuels in power production. Wind farms use a renewable energy source efficiently and cut greenhouse gas emissions, making a contribution to meeting greenhouse gas targets.

Current research and scientific investigations have found there are no adverse impacts on health.

- The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) recently found that “there is currently no published scientific evidence to positively link wind turbines with adverse health effects”
- The NHMRC review concludes “It has been suggested that if people are worried about their health they may become anxious, causing stress related illnesses. These are genuine health effects arising from their worry, which arises from the wind turbine, even though the turbine may not objectively be a risk to health”
- The Victorian Department of Health after examining both peer reviewed and validated scientific research also concluded that “The Department of Health has examined the available scientific literature on wind farms and has concluded that there are no direct health effects that can be attributed to modern wind turbines.”

Concerns over the excessive noise and vibrations emitted by wind farms, which are in close proximity to people's homes.

- Research conducted on modern turbines has shown that the levels of low frequency noise and infrasound are within accepted thresholds.
- Like any machine, wind turbines emit sounds across a broad range of frequencies, including those below the frequency threshold of human hearing. The sound

characteristic is not particularly unusual, and the intensity is similar to sounds emitted by natural sources like ocean waves, and wind passing through trees, and industrial sources like vehicles and air-conditioners.

The impact of rural wind farms on property values, employment opportunities and farm income

- Traditional agriculture is a significant source of greenhouse gas emissions and wind farms offset this usage.
- Many positive benefits come with wind energy projects including job opportunities, investment, green house gas abatement, secure returns for farmers with turbines on their land, fire access roads in steep hill country, native vegetation protection and support for local community initiatives.

Wind energy and property values.

- In an assessment by the NSW Valuer General of 45 property sales located within a 10 km radius of 8 wind farm sites, it was found that property values were not negatively affected. No reductions in sale price were evident for rural properties located in nearby townships with views of the wind farm.

The interface between Commonwealth, state and local planning laws as they pertain to wind farms.

- We accept the need for effective environmental standards for wind projects. It's recognised that Australia's existing standards and guidelines for wind farm development are some of the most rigorous in the world.
- Wind farms should not be required to meet unnecessarily higher standards than those faced by other infrastructure developments.
- Existing planning systems already provide the framework to assess impacts.

We look forward to a positive outcome from this inquiry that removes current uncertainty and supports the growth of wind farms in Australia.

Regards,
(...)

 **Ian Bertram**
Chair GV Community Energy