



NOISE MEASUREMENT SERVICES

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15 April 2011

Attention: Terry.Brown@aph.gov.au
Copy: timothy.kendall@aph.gov.au

Dear Dr Kendall

Response to assertions about my professional independence from Cam Walker, p98 of Hansard Transcript from hearings in Melbourne

Thank-you for your reply of Thursday and the copy of the Melbourne transcript. Mr Cam Walker questioned my independence with respect to my submissions on wind farms before the current Senate Inquiry. His specific comment is:

‘In my understanding, he is one of the people who have very clearly aligned themselves with the anti-wind campaign’.

The Hansard reference is page 98 of the Melbourne Hansard 29_3_11 S13806.

This letter is to confirm that I have never heard of Mr Walker, do not know what his submission is about (apart from the text in the transcript), and he is factually incorrect. I am not and never been part of any ‘anti-wind’ campaign and have no knowledge if such a campaign exists. Mr Walker or any wind farm developer may at any time consult with me on the acoustical, psychoacoustical and health environmental risks of a wind farm. Equally regulatory authorities and persons affected by wind farms may also seek my professional advice.

The above notwithstanding my submission made to the Inquiry is a professional submission and to allege a non-independent stance - or bias - is an extremely serious matter. My formal response follows.

As a consultant by definition I am totally independent as I do not depend on any one specific person or organisation for income. Secondly, consultants have civil and duty of care liabilities that must always be considered in the preparation of reports. All my reports are written around the scope of work. A client also has to accept that my report may not be what they want to hear! One report for a NZ resident actually supported the wind farm. Rare for this to happen, but that is what independent means. No client can not tell me what he wants or how I should write it.

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With respect to my expertise and impartiality in the matters before the Inquiry I am one of the very few truly independent wind farm acoustical and psychoacoustical experts with relevant published scientific peer-reviewed research. This is my PhD thesis on low amplitude intrusive noise. The thesis deals with acoustical measures, instrumentation, human perception and assessment of low amplitude intrusive sound. Wind farm noise is a unique application for my continuing research. Some researchers (van den Berg, Shepherd, Persson Waye, Pedersen for example) have, of course, delved more deeply into certain aspects of wind farm noise. Most of my work (wind farm assessments are a very small component of my work) is commercially sensitive; that is, it is for a specific client and will never be published. A brief bio follows:

Bob is the Principal Consultant of Noise Measurement Services Pty Ltd. He is a member of the Australian Acoustical Society and the Institute of Acoustics (UK) and is an Environmental Health Research Associate in the Institute of Food, Nutrition and Human Health at Massey University, New Zealand.

As a Director of Planning and Regulatory Services for a New Zealand local government body and a Principal Environmental Officer for the Department of Environment and Heritage (now the EPA) in Queensland, Australia, he has extensive knowledge and expertise in environmental policy development, developing environmental management systems and land use planning. He also has considerable experience in the fields of environmental ethics and community consultation and is an expert witness in court in the field of psychoacoustics.

Bob holds a PhD from Massey University New Zealand in health science. His research work involved using advanced specialized technology for intrusive noise assessment and noise monitoring systems with simplified data analysis and information retrieval protocols. A specific area of research was into the human perception of wind farm complexes in the Manawatu and Wellington, New Zealand. A specific application is personalized sound reinforcement for hearing assistive devices.

If the emotive context around the statement by Mr Walker (he notes 'ideology' in the first sentence of page 98) is true then there are no independent acoustical experts in Australia or elsewhere as we all work for a client. I exclude university people as they are academics and would normally be seen as being independent in the true sense of no financial claim. However, even they have a 'client' unless they are doing self-funded research. Conversely, and taking his stance, consultants working for developers and ignoring the effects of noise on people may be considered as being part of a campaign for wind farms and may therefore be considered as being "anti-people". This, of course, is simply untrue but is the reverse side of the coin that Mr Walker has tendered to the Inquiry.

I trust that this rebuttal can be put forward to the Inquiry.

Yours etc

Bob Thorne PhD, FRSPH, MIOA, MAAS