

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Matthew Parton and I am currently writing an Engineering Thesis on the effect of wind power on the electricity grid. I would like to raise two points to the attention of the Senate Committee Inquiry on the Social and Economic Impact of Rural Wind Farms, one regarding their effect on working farms and another on their ability to either rend apart or pull together a rural community.

Effect on Working Farms

There has been a large amount of conjecture regarding the effect that wind farms have on crops and grazing animals that share the land with them, as well as their effect on property values. From the reading I have done and through liaising with farmers who have wind farms on their land, I have seen little evidence to suggest that wind farms would have a major impact on the day-to-day running of a farm. The following list summarises the main impacts:

The roads that are built to facilitate the maintenance of the wind farm are very beneficial for moving around the property; they are free infrastructure for the farmer.

Due to the mixing of higher and lower altitude winds, air temperature at ground level is likely to be moderated to some degree by wind turbines making crops warmer at night and cooler during the day.

Grazing and planting land is very slightly reduced by roads and turbines.

Economic impact for Land Owners

In general land owners are well paid for having turbines on their properties. As well as this, it is industry standard practice to compensate landholders who are within 2km of and wind turbine. In the UK 72% of land valuers view a wind farm on a property as having either no effect or a positive effect on property value.

Social Impact can be Positive or Negative

There has been much negative press in recent months regarding wind farms that are being proposed near Collector in NSW – in particular about how the community has been torn apart to the point where residents are threatening to sue each other. Another wind farm development, near Rugby in NSW has gone largely un-noticed in the press, due mainly to the fact that it has huge community support. The reasons that a community reacts strongly are well known, so I will focus on the positive case of Rugby to show that Wind Farms often have positive effects on a rural community. These reasons appear below:

Rugby has a much smaller population than Collector and has been actively trying to encourage families to move there for a number of years. They see the wind farm as another opportunity to keep the township alive.

The company undertaking some of the consultations (for which I do some work for) have undertaken a massive community education program regarding wind farming in general and the Rugby site in particular. This has resulted in most of the township and farmers from the surrounding area being in favour of the development.

The NSW Government have strict and transparent rules regarding impact studies (environmental, noise etc.) which make local residents feel that they are not being treated unfairly by the developing company.

As a result of (mainly) these two reasons I believe the Rugby Wind Farm, if it goes ahead, will have a greatly beneficial impact on the community there.

Thank you for your time in reading my views on these topics. I hope they will be considered when you make your final decisions.

Kind regards,
Matthew Parton