

Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

Dear Sir/ Madam,

A Response to the Social and Economic Impact of Rural Wind Farms

Please accept my submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Social and Economic Impact of Rural Wind Farms.

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, we must greatly reduce our greenhouse emissions this decade, to avoid dangerous climate change. An important way of doing this is to move away from our reliance on coal and other fossil fuels to meet our energy needs as soon as possible.

Fortunately we have the technology to do this. The facilitation of a speedy massive roll-out of renewable energy across Australia will be essential if we are to have a hope of reducing our emissions sufficiently to have a chance of avoiding dangerous climate change.

Renewables (and wind in particular) are an essential part of our response to climate change, and the Senate Committee should not propose provisions that would make the development of this industry more difficult. **Wind is currently the most advanced and cheapest option for us to begin the transition away from coal. Well planned wind energy projects must be a cornerstone of this new renewables industry.**

- Current research and scientific investigations have found that there are no adverse health effects for people living in close proximity to wind farms
- Research conducted on modern wind turbines has shown that the levels of low frequency noise and infrasound are within accepted thresholds
- Studies have found no statistical evidence that wind farms reduce property values
- The employment benefits are substantial and widely spread across regions, and provide considerable opportunities for individuals and communities where they are located, including the land owners who host turbines.

In 2009-10 wind energy in Australia generated almost \$1.6 billion in investment (Bloomberg, New Energy Finance, 2010). The wind industry is of huge economic importance to the nation, not only through the creation of jobs during the development, construction and ongoing operation of the wind farm but also throughout the supply chain, including the manufacturers and suppliers of products and services to the industry. The supply of steel for wind turbine towers is just one example of the importance of the wind industry to Australian manufactures and suppliers.

Apart from direct jobs in the industry, there is considerable 'down stream' employment opportunities, as well as an obvious economic boost for towns and communities which helps to diversify and strengthen opportunities in these communities. This in turn reduces the need

for individuals to leave these areas to seek employment. A key advantage of wind farm development is that the jobs created are dispersed across several regions, rather than concentrated in a few areas, as tends to occur with larger scale fossil fuel plants such as coal.

· Wind farms are widely supported in the community. **For instance, a Newspoll survey commissioned by the Clean Energy Council in December 2009 found that in regional areas 90% of people said that Australia should produce more renewable energy.**

Conclusion

I urge you not to give in to unsubstantiated rumour and fear campaigns about wind energy.

With appropriate controls and robust planning processes, wind has proven itself to be an excellent form of energy as part of a broader mix, while driving investment and employment in rural areas and acting to reduce our greenhouse emissions.

Regards.

Marguerite Marshall