

Dear Senators

## WHO AM I AND WHY DO I SUPPORT THE HEPBURN WIND FARM?

I live in Daylesford, am 75 years old, a grandmother of 10, a former secondary English teacher and also a former farmer. Whilst producing fat lambs and vealers for 5 years, and aware of the benefits of shelter belts in increasing animal well-being and therefore meat production, we planted 5 km of tree lanes on a denuded hill property near Yea.

I have also worked as an environmentalist in a voluntary capacity for many years. As a volunteer and later an employee of The Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF), I devised and ran an award-winning national education program on Ozone Depletion and Global Warming for 2 years, taking a national youth delegation to the UN Montreal Protocol in London in 1990 to argue for a reduction in CFCs. For this work I was also awarded a United Nations Environment Program citation and medallion. I thus have a reasonably good grasp of the problems facing our planet and all life on earth in the event of future global temperature increases. This has made me determined to do all I can to educate people and help them to reduce their carbon footprint to minimize global warming.

With local Council funding, I started a local branch of CRAG (Carbon Rationing Action Group) two years ago, to assist residents to reduce their household energy use. I am a member of the local environment group, SHARE (Sustainable Hepburn Association for Renewing the Earth), and a supporter of the Hepburn Relocalisation Network which is working to have Daylesford become a Transition Town, planning for local resilience in a future of energy descent.

As a local, I fully support the Hepburn Wind Farm and, though on a modest income, have invested a large proportion of my retirement savings in it since the launch of its prospectus. This has meant no income from these savings for two and a half years now. We can only spend our money once. I am happy to use what money I have in retirement to leave a healthier planet for later generations and have less money for my grandkids to inherit when I die.

## THE IMPACT OF WIND FARMS

1. It makes sense to generate as much of our electricity locally as we can. There is little loss in transmission and we reduce our dependence on electricity produced by Hazelwood - the country's most polluting power station, producing some 12% of Victoria's greenhouse gas emissions. Local generation of power from wind as a renewable source of electricity not only helps lower our carbon emissions and thus global warming, the cost of generating electricity using wind power is much cheaper than other forms of renewable energy. Hepburn Wind is expected to cost \$13m and generate more electricity each year than is used by the houses in Daylesford and much of the surrounding area. At the equivalent of less than \$6000 per house, no other renewable energy solution comes close. Local power generation also reduces the risk of widening the impact of any central grid-supplied power breakdowns and of any future terrorist attacks.

2. I do not believe that there will be any adverse health effects for people living in close proximity to wind farms in rural areas and specifically close to the Hepburn Wind Farm. The [National Health and](#)

[Medical Research Council](#) (NHMRC) recently concluded that "there is currently no published scientific evidence to positively link wind turbines with adverse health effects."

3. Regarding concerns over the excessive noise and vibrations emitted by wind farms, which are in close proximity to people's homes, the nearest house is some 500 metres away from any turbines. [Research](#) by Adelaide consultancy Sonus has recently shown that low frequency noise levels at the beach and in the CBD are typically higher than near wind farms. Where are the complaints of noise levels from CBD dwellers and "sea changers"? Perhaps it is more a case of fear rather than of any actual proof of excessive noise which is driving the small vocal minority to oppose wind farms in rural areas.

4. Regarding any impact on property values, Highly productive land in a high rainfall area so close to Melbourne, such as that surrounding the Hepburn Wind Farm and in this whole district, is tightly held. With houses more than 500 metres away, I do not believe that any nearby residential amenity or property values will be detrimentally affected. I believe that, in other rural areas, wind farms can be sited and designed to protect the amenity and well-being of neighbours and the environment and thus protect property values.

5. Regarding the impact on local employment opportunities and farm income, it appears that wind farms in rural areas can be positive on both counts. Hepburn Wind has already created 3 new local jobs in its short life, and has already spent more than \$2m in regional Victoria with more to come. It has already had a positive impact on farm income for the local farmer who is leasing his land, without reducing the income of surrounding farms.

6. Regarding the interface between Commonwealth, state and local planning laws as they pertain to wind farms. I only know that the Hepburn Wind Farm was subject to strict planning conditions through the approvals process and will be closely monitored for compliance with some of the strictest environmental controls in the world. As the first community-owned wind farm in Australia, I hope this example of good planning will be a template for Commonwealth, state and local planning laws to be drawn up to ensure that all future wind farms in Australia will be subject to the same strict environmental controls as the Hepburn Wind Farm, in order to protect the well-being of the surrounding neighbours and habitat.

7. Finally, and perhaps one of the most significant impacts the setting up of wind farms handled well in rural areas can have is to bring about community pride and support. The Hepburn Wind Farm has generated huge support in our local community with only a few in opposition. There were 325 letters of support for the Wind Farm when it went to Council seeking a planning permit and only 18 objections. [Recent polling](#) in regional NSW has shown that 85% support wind power with the majority supporting it in their communities.

Most locals are proud and pleased to be part of such a visionary, innovative venture which will also bring so much benefit to our local community. Hepburn Wind, being a cooperative with no director's fees will contribute \$1m to community energy-saving initiatives over the next 25 years. With the lessor farmer being so supportive, Hepburn Wind we'll be donating more to the community than it pays in lease fees to the landowner at Leonards Hill.

## SUMMARY

Regarding the Inquiry's terms of reference, I believe that the community-owned Hepburn Wind Farm has already had, and will continue to have, a very positive impact on this local community. I would like it to be seen as a shining example on how to plan and bring to fruition small local wind farms in rural areas which, whilst generating a local power supply, also manage to generate maximum community pride and support.

Ms Dallas Kinnear