

The Social and economic impact of Rural Wind Farms

My name is Donald Thomas I have lived and worked on my farm in the Waubra /Evansford area for over 51 years. In this time I have experienced pretty much everything nature can deal out: floods, storms, fire and many years of drought. Although this can be very hard to take, it is nothing to the man-made hell that was to come.

When the wind farm carpetbaggers came to town I took, in good faith, what they had to say about wind turbines and, it all sounded pretty good. Believing this has to be good for the environment and the community, I did not lodge an objection.

It was obvious during construction that contractors would move pegs set out by the surveyors to suit their selves; deliberately breaching turbine manufacturers conditions which stipulate topography and spacing.

This may be why I have been suffering adverse health effects since the wind farm started to operate, working between clusters of turbines approximately a kilometer away and hundreds of feet above the valley where my farm is situated. Some days I experiences headaches so severe I have to abandon my farm work. Other symptoms are pressure in the ears, high blood pressure and my heart starts beating really fast like I have been running. These symptoms may occur even with little or almost no noise from the turbines, they just have to be going.

It has become very clear that noise prediction from a wind farm with hills and valleys would be virtually impossible to predict. On any one day noise around the wind farm can vary from place to place, noise from turbines can sometimes be louder up wind than down wind, when there is a frost in the valley or just still cold air as at night and the turbines are still going on the hill the noise is

unbelievably loud.

The New Zealand noise standard NZS 6808: 1998, which is our Standard, is a totally inadequate noise standard that deliberately disregards low frequency noise. This Standard is no longer used in New Zealand because it did not address the problems with larger scale wind farm developments and community issues with noise.

Although my home is approximately 3.5 kilometres north of the wind farm I am often woken at night, sometimes for nights on end. The noise from the wind farm can sound, like anything from a train going past, to an annoying wooshing noise or the sound of a jet going overhead. However, even when the sound is very low you find yourself awake, often around 2am, very alert, with your heart beating fast and impossible to go back to sleep. Despite having made over 30 complaints to Acciona about noise at this address, not one of my complaints has been followed up, because we are apparently too far away for them to do anything about the noise.

Tests have shown my blood pressure rises dangerously high at night when the turbines are going. I am now on medication to keep my blood pressure low. As I have no blood pressure problems when the turbines are not going I find myself with low blood pressure when the turbines are turned off. Working with heavy machinery, riding motor bike, mustering sheep etc I often have to stop and sit on the ground to avoid falling over. When the turbines start to operate again my blood pressure goes back up.

Some of my neighbours leave, what should be a quiet night in the country for a guaranteed, good night's sleep in Ballarat.

My elderly parents, in the home they have lived in for 54 years, live within 1 to 1.5 kilometer of 7 turbines: a home, which would not have been allowed to be built because of the windfarm. Indeed on much of our property we would be prohibited from building a

new home.

After working very hard all their lives, raising four children and putting everything they had into their home and farm, in what should be a peaceful time of their life, they are forced to endure sleep deprivation, headaches and other health problems due to the wind farm.

Recently 7 turbines were shut down in our area for more than a week. I have not felt so good since the wind farm started operating. (It reminded me of the 5 days in mid May 2010, where we had exceptionally still weather, where not a turbine was operating.) Everyone around those 7 turbines all commented how good they felt that week. Dad who is 80 was doing things like mustering sheep on the motor bike and other things he hasn't been able to do for a long time. As the turbines started to operate again all this came to an end, with people suffering ill health again.

My family has lived in the area for 4 generations but I could not see my son or daughter living and raising a family in this man-made hell. I have been to many panel hearings, and have found respect for the health and well being of humans living in a proposed wind farm area to be less than the respect for flora and fauna.

It may be very inconvenient to the wind industry but ill health is what myself and others are experiencing around the Waubra wind farm. We never expected it but it is very real. By speaking out about these health effects, I and others have been labeled anti-wind farm, anti-renewable energy, climate deniers and have been publicly attacked by the wind farm operators but all we did is put up our hand and said "We have a problem."

This Wind farm could have been a best practice model, world-wide. Instead it is a study in how not to do a windfarm. The whole

idea of placing a windfarm at Waubra was highly questionable. A previous wind developer had surveyed the site and decided that the topography was too difficult and it was too close to a community. The current planning is an ad hoc affair. I don't know how they can accurately predict the noise emitted from the windfarm.

It is very clear Acciona who operate the Waubra wind farm know of the multitude of problems people under their turbines are experiencing. By not shutting these turbines down, they are deliberately and aggressively harming people. The whole thing should shut down until things are put right.

The current guidelines for building, operating and monitoring a wind farm are grossly inadequate. They are nothing less than a license to torture.

Due to my experience of living under turbines I believe nobody should have to live within a five kilometer, minimum, radius of a wind farm.

Donald Thomas.