



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

By email to:

February 8, 2011

RE: Senate Enquiry: The Social and Economic Impact of Rural Wind Farms

Dear Senators

I write in support of electricity generation by rural wind farms.

We in Australia are blessed with an abundant natural resources, which put our country in the top 10 richest per capita in the world. Our lifestyles are dependent on cheap reliable electricity, and we use lots of it.

Unfortunately our electricity generation is some of the most CO₂ intensive in the world producing 895ⁱ tonnes of CO₂e per mWh (megawatt hour) compared with an OECD average of 440 tonnes per mWh. According to the IEA (International Energy Agency) the only other states that produce dirtier electricity are India (927 t/mWh), and Cambodia 1.151 (t/mWh). I come from Victoria – where we produce a staggering 1.35 t/mWh.

So in essence we are rich and use lots of dirty electricity.

Australian electricity is the major contributor to our CO₂ footprint – if we are true in our desire to reduce the CO₂ from electricity we need to either use less electricity, or use cleaner electricity or both. This letter deals with making sure that we can remove barriers to producing cleaner electricity.

Australia's dirty electricity produces strong negative social impacts, directly through health impacts and indirectly through the effects of an increased contribution to CO₂e induced climate change on our national and the globe. Around many of our coal regions there are large clusters of coal related cancers and other diseases.

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Producing Clean Renewable energy is an essential part of our response to climate change, and, by a wide margin, wind power is the most commercially and technically viable form.

Increased generation of Clean Renewable Energy will displace our dirty coal fired electricity and reduce the negative social impacts of our current coal fired generation system.

Current research by respected institutions supports claims that wind farms pose no health risks for people living in close proximity. Research conducted on modern wind turbines has shown that the levels of low frequency sound are well within accepted thresholds and are comparable to naturally occurring phenomena.

Studies have found no statistical evidence that wind farms negatively affect property values.

The wind industry employs more people per unit of energy than either coal or gas generation and the resulting jobs are widely spread across many regions.

Land owners benefit from a new source of income, without any measurable impact on farming operations.

With more than 100,000 turbines installed globally, wind farms are not new. The vocal minority views are consistent with the implementation of any unfamiliar technology.

Community wind farms are common in Europe — Denmark has more than 2,100. These projects empower local communities to constructively engage in the transition to a future without pollution. By being a laggard in Renewable Energy Australia is missing the opportunity to create new renewable jobs and renewable intellectual capital.

Australian states already have a well-developed wind farm planning controls which are among the most stringent in the world. Any changes to these controls should be equitably and consistently applied across other industries and be informed by science.

The Senate Committee should not propose provisions that would unnecessarily make the development of the Australia wind industry more difficult or onerous. In fact this Senate enquiry should be considering how it can harmonise the regulations across the states to encourage more wind generation.



Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions on this submission.

Thanks

Richard Johnston
Director

The Wind Turbine Company installs small wind turbines (2.4 kW to 50 kW) on rural and industrial properties. We don't install megawatt scale wind farms, but we are very supportive of the industry.

ⁱ All data from CO₂ EMISSIONS FROM FUEL COMBUSTION - 2010 EDITION
<http://www.iea.org/co2highlights/co2highlights.pdf>