

Email:

Re: Senate Enquiry regarding the social and economic impacts of Wind Farms on Rural Communities.

To whom it may concern,

We would like to lodge a submission in regards to the social and economic impacts of Wind Farms on Rural Communities. We are in the position that we are now going to be directly impacted upon by two large scale wind farm developments, one currently being built at Macarthur, and one being proposed at Penshurst.

Social Impacts of Wind Farm Developments.

We have been approached to participate in the Penshurst Wind Farm Development. We have declined to participate due to financial and mostly management perspectives that this wind farm would have on our farming. The way in which wind farm developers approach and sign up farmers needs to be investigated as with the Penshurst Farm, we were only told of the development, six months after other neighbours had been approached. This approach creates divide and tension amongst neighbours and the community, as they are signed to confidentiality agreements preventing neighbours from discussing the proposal. From our direct experience, it seems that Wind Farm Developers pick off each individual farmer, not allowing for group discussion, bargaining or organisation.

The Wind Farm Developers also put considerable pressure on land owners to sign for the wind farm as we have experienced first hand. There is the “if you don’t sign then your neighbours can’t have towers” clause thrown around, as well as the “all your neighbours have signed so you will be surrounded anyway and we will have towers on your boundary fences”

Wind Farm Developments polarise a community. You have the devout protesters and the devout land owners who will profit greatly. You have the Wind Farm Developers sponsoring anything that moves or gathers people to win over public support and it creates such tension in the community. It not only affects surrounding land holders but also the township, community groups, service clubs etc as it creates debate and discord in these organisations as well.

Our other major concern regarding the social impact of Wind Farm Developments is the

ongoing issue of Noise and visual impact of a wind farm. Discussions with RES Australia Pty Ltd regarding the Peshurst Wind Farm have concluded that the noise impact study that they are using is based upon noise generated from one turbine, not the cumulative effect of the 225 turbines proposed. This is an ongoing concern for our property and our family due to our direct proximity not only to the Peshurst Wind farm, but also the Macarthur Wind Farm, all in the direction of the prevailing wind from our property.

Our small rural community of Peshurst will become the Wind Farm Hub of Western Victoria should all proposed and approved projects be built. In the 50 kilometer vicinity of Peshurst there is proposed: -
Peshurst Wind Farm – 225 turbines
Blackwood / Woodhouse Wind Farm

Approved:
Macarthur – 174 turbines – Under Construction.
North Gums – about to start construction.
Glenthompson – Under Construction.

Small Rural Communities are being seen as easy targets for Wind Farm Developers, in particular where there is large land holdings or large quantities of outpaddocks as with the case of Peshurst Wind Farm Proposal. Small Rural Communities will be greatly impacted by wind farms, and if this power is for supporting urban communities, why are these projects not being planned closer to Urban communities in open spaces, sporting grounds etc? Why is Rural Australia bearing once again, the cost of Urban Development and Lifestyle.

The impacts of the Waubra Wind Farm on the Waubra community are now only just being seen after the wind farm has been built and operational for several years. This impact is growing and is having a very negative effect on their land values, lifestyle, health and ability to farm as well as the community being able to function together in a productive and functional capacity.

Impact of Traffic on our local roads.

Currently we are experiencing the impact of the cartage of gravel to the Macarthur Wind Farm. We have large heavy trucks using rural roads constantly during the day, this includes trucks at 7am in the morning through to 5pm at night, particularly during school bus times as well. This also impacts on local farmers who need to use these roads to move machinery and livestock. We have only been experiencing this traffic for the past week at this stage and our roads are already starting to disintegrate and we have many more months of traffic yet to live through.

With recent wet conditions, our Rural roads are already under strain and showing considerable wear and tear, and we then place upon them, huge heavy traffic loads to support massive development projects, not just Wind Farms, but also other power

projects such as the Gas Fired Power Stations of Mortlake, Tarone and Orford.

Economic Impact of Wind Farms.

Small Rural communities will see economic return whilst the wind farm is being built, and depending upon the developer and company running the wind farm, ongoing sponsorship of sporting teams and environmental projects in the area. This goes some way to offsetting the environmental and economic costs that the wind farm puts on Rural Communities.

From our prospective, all though the wind farm was going to provide extra income, this was going to be greatly offset by:-

Cost of losing valuable grazing area to tracks and towers.

Cost of having restrictions on what infrastructure and trees we could have in the wind farm area.

Additional running costs as we would not be able to use aerial spraying or spreading of fertilizer that we rely on in the Stony Barriers that surround Peshurst.

Wind Farm Developments also prevent the use of Aerial Fire Fighting appliances in the area, this will have devastating effects in the event of a fire in the area, as the Stony Barriers are very difficult to control fire in due to the rough terrain and inaccessible areas and aerial fire fighting appliances are our own major control measure in this terrain.

We are already hearing reports of world food shortages and yet governments are supporting large scale industrialisation of farming land that restricts usage and functionality of prime farming land.

Local jobs quoted by wind farm developers are overstated as most of the construction requires specialised contractors or labour supplied by specialised large companies and there are very few ongoing maintenance positions that can be filled by local rural workers who do not have trade qualifications such as electricians or welders.

It has recently been reported in the Weekly Times that Elders expect property values to decline for properties abutting wind farms. This is a concern for rural communities for attracting new people to the area as well as the economic impact of declining farm values.

From our own perspective, we would like to be able to purchase additional land but are now very hesitant to purchase land that will be in or near the Peshurst Wind Farm development due to traffic issues, access, and value depreciation. We have looked at several properties for sale in the area, of which three out of five, will be directly impacted upon by Wind Farm proposals or approved projects. We purchased our property in 2004 and had we known then of the proposed wind farm developments at Macarthur and Peshurst combined, we would not have purchased land in this area as there is a risk that should the developments effect property prices, lifestyle and ability to farm, that we will lose considerably financially and socially.

We also are conscious of what has happened with Managed Investment Schemes in our local area and the cost to farmers not being paid lease payments when these schemes collapsed. There is a large risk to Rural Communities should these Wind Farm Developers or Companies collapse and the community is then left with a large scale development that can not be maintained or removed without considerable cost.

Regards

Adrian and Amanda Straw