

## The social and economic impacts of rural wind farms, and in particular:

- (a) Any adverse health effects for people living in close proximity to wind farms;
- (b) Concerns over the excessive noise and vibrations emitted by wind farms, which are in close proximity to people's homes;
- (c) The impact of rural wind farms on property values, employment opportunities and farm income;
- (d) The interface between Commonwealth, state and local planning laws as they pertain to wind farms; and
- (e) Any other relevant matters.

### Senate Committee

My Name is Paul Manning. My Partner and I own a 10 acre lifestyle property at 8 Mile Creek in South Australia's South East Region. Our property is in extreme close proximity to the proposed Allendale Wind Farm. I make this submission due to our concerns and wish to convey those concerns so that any learning's taken from our experience will assist the improvement of the development application and approval process to ensure fair and just considerations of families and communities in a similar situation to ours. We fervently oppose the development for various reasons but in simple terms it is not appropriately sited, this statement is supported by the following arguments.

**1**

Firstly Australia requires a nationally recognised Set back from existing homes. There is much debate nationally and internationally regarding this requirement for many reasons. Health Impacts and loss of lifestyle and amenity are just some of those arguments. However there is no doubt that there is growing evidence to support these. Despite the grey areas associated with the impacts of Wind Generated Power this is a relatively new technology and its impacts should not be underestimated while awaiting the results of long term studies. South Australia's current set back based on EPA noise emissions is not allowing enough protection to residents and businesses. It does not allow for errors in computer modelling for predicted noise emissions and this is already proven in Waubra. The community must be protected with a buffer from these errors. 40db Limit allowed in SA is proving to be border line around the country and regulation should protect Families from errors. The Allendale Wind Farm development proposes to have **turbines as close as 750 meters from the children's bedrooms of our house**, the Application approval allows for this to be as close as 650 meters if necessary. **THIS IS NOT APPROPRIATE.**

**2**

Our council has stated and (this was minuted and attached to the Allendale Wind farm Application) in response to Acciona's question about regulations that (this is taken straight from the councils minutes)

**"DC Grant advised that all situations would be considered and the regulations were guidelines not hard and fast rules".**

This is a very poor and blatant misrepresentation of the governing frameworks that are set down before us. The Objectives and regulations of the Council Planning Document are required by law and supplement the Act. If this is the current interpretation of our council then Planning law is not specific enough and requires urgent review. *I have noted more than 20 objectives and principles of development control that have been disregarded in relation to the development application.* If just some of these were enforced our family would not be in the situation it is in. The legal minds that I have consulted find this type of interpretation of our countries Laws bordering on dangerous.

**3**

Further to Laws, Regulations and Policies *the 'Consultation' Process requires urgent review.* Additional guidelines are required for Category 3 developments and the methods of consultation must be stringently regulated. This is a global environment that we all live in. Relying on a local newspaper advertisement to properly inform members of the community is not sufficient. *There must be regulated methods to ensure that persons of interest requiring notification receive that notification. There must be an independent panel who decides who will be on the list of the category 3 for notification purposes who ensures that these people do in fact receive the information.*

In our case we only ever received one info document from the developer. This did not explain the proximity of the turbines being 750 metres from our house. The local map on the info flyer was small and unreadable. We made several attempts to contact the developer to make further enquiries, they could not put us through to the appropriate person and we never received any calls back. This initial Info Flyer mislead us to believe that we would be further informed, as no more information came through and no one returned our calls, we assumed that the development was

stalled for whatever reason. Two and a half years later we were informed by a neighbour how close the development was to be to our house. It should be known that we had a current and up to date mail redirection throughout this period whilst we lived and worked away. We never received anything from council throughout this whole process. We requested copies of Document transmittals and or registered mail receipts or signed courier receipts. There is nothing. Through out this time we maintained our Council Rates and received other insignificant council mail outs but nothing on the wind farms. There are much better ways to ensure that information distribution is undertaken in an efficient and professional manner and this must be regulated. Development companies have concise Document Tracking systems and yet the developer in this case stated in court that they could not prove that we were ever mailed anything.

4

There are many others from our region who feel they were directly left out of the Consultation process. The council stated to some of these that they were not entitled to be included in the consultation process as they were on the other side of the road to the development. This again is the incorrect interpretation of Category 3 for Notification Purposes. Other *improvements to the regulations should include directions that any information forwarded should be clear and concise. It should explain the proximity of the Turbines in simple terms and provide proximity maps. It should also provide clear, to Scale Photo Montages of the Turbines in relation to each property. Most people do not understand the sheer scale of these turbines. The documentation of the consultation process requires regulation. This will ensure that Councils and Developers act in appropriate fashion. A sausage sizzle attended by the local kindy is not effective communication. Australians cannot rely on 'letter' drops by councils and developers who have obvious conflicts of interest.*

We have read the Local Government Act 1999 Section 50 Public Consultation Policy, as follows

#### **11.6 Public Consultation Policy**

##### **1 Purpose**

To outline the principles and procedures that the district council of Grant will follow to involve the community in council's decision making process through effective communication and consultation strategies

This wording is repeated again in 4 - 4.3

Effective communication are the key words.

It is obvious that the local Government act 1999 requires clarification to ensure that lazy interpretations are not undertaken by Councils.

5

Fire Safety is a specific concern to our family. Starfish hill in South Australia experienced a turbine fire recently. This was reported through various media outlets. It was stated that the CFS could only stand and watch the fire from a distance of 500metres as the fire was too dangerous to engage. Work Safe SA attended and instructed the CFS to stand a further 500 metres back as pieces of debris were flung from the burning turbine. This was a safe distance of 1 kilometre for the trained fire brigade. The turbines are approved to be as close as 650 meters from our house and only 550 meters from our property line. David R. Packham OAM Has recently completed his own study on the risks associated with turbine fires, excerpt is as follows.

"Applying the global data to the 2000 or so turbines installed in Australia we would expect a 60% probability of one turbine fire each year. We can expect (if my estimates are at all close to the mark) to have a 2% probability of an unstoppable bushfire if the turbine is in a forest area and in grass lands a 0.4% probability each year for grasslands. What can be said is that from the time of failure until the time of fire brigade attendance a fire on the ground in extreme fire danger conditions would have spread beyond any possibility of control."

I would expect that Mr Packam's statistics are very conservative considering that South Australia has experienced at least three Turbine fires in recent times alone. Over the 25 year life cycle and more of turbines, at 60% (conservative) the chance of a fire at our property is very real. The CFS will stand back and watch and the proximity does not allow appropriate warning and evacuation times. The Developer, Acciona, stated to me directly that the workers at the Wind Farm will be trained and have access to a Ute with a water tank on the back, they will fight the fire and call the CFS if necessary. At 750 meters this is not acceptable. I do not trust Workers engaged to fix pot holes in tracks and holes in fences kilometres away with the safety of our children. This is not acceptable. Removing the hazard has always been at the top of the hierarchy of controls in regards to risk management.

6

Property Devaluation is now an accepted fact by those who live near Turbines. Family investments need to be protected. In our particular case we have purchased and maintained what we consider our dream investment and strongly feel that it would be difficult to replace this property. Its future capacity and potential should be considered specific to our circumstance. A copy below of a circulated email from a respected property industry expert explains the reality of families living in close proximity to turbines.

I have been a Licensed Estate Agent for 30 years, specialising in the sale of rural property, essentially all over Australia, with an emphasis on Victoria and the Riverina. I have held senior Management positions with the largest Rural real estate Companies in Australia. In recent years the growth of activity and the actuality of wind towers throughout the Victorian rural landscape has been significant.

Challicum Hills, Codrington, and Mt Mitchell have all emerged as large scale wind farms, located on the tops of the low hill country, interrupting the landscape for many kilometres.

Of significant importance, is the negative effect on the value of adjoining lands where wind towers have been erected? Visually, the towers are seen by the majority of the market as repulsive.

Audibly, the towers effect the stillness a property enjoys, in particular the resonating tones in the night, invading serenity of the adjoining lands.

A proliferation of wind towers adjacent to a property has the same effect as high voltage power lines, rubbish tips, piggeries, hatcheries, and sewerage treatment plants, in that, if buyers are given a choice, they choose not to be near any of these impediments to value.

The ultimate effect is that the number of buyers willing to endure these structures is significantly less than if the structures were not there. This logically has a detrimental effect on the final price of the adjoining lands.

Experts assess the loss of value to be in excess of 30%, and sometimes up to half.

My personal experience is that when an enquiry (potential buyer) becomes aware of the presence of wind towers, or the possibility of wind towers in the immediate district of a property advertised for sale, the "fall out" of buyers is major. Very few go on to inspect the property, and even fewer consider a purchase. On the remote chance they wish to purchase, they seek a significant reduction in the price.

**There is absolutely no doubt, that the value of lands adjacent to wind towers falls significantly in value. The ambience of a rural property is important, and often times, the sole reason why a purchaser selects a particular area or district. The imposition of wind towers destroys this ambience forever.**

It is clear that there is going to be a growing stigma attached to houses in close proximity of Wind Turbines. Justified or not these stigmas will be very real and will affect the property values. Our current tenant has advised us that he and his family will relocate if the development goes ahead as he can not take the risk to his wife and four daughters and the property will no longer provide the appeal him and his family desire and expect. Who will compensate us for this loss? My career means we must travel it will be difficult for us to maintain a full mortgage and rental accommodation at the same time. How will our current equity be maintained? Who will guarantee that what we have mortgaged the house for one year will not be effected by loss of equity, earnings and potential caused by turbines in close proximity to our property. We were here first. The uniqueness and exclusive aspect of the property cannot be bought. Our future plans for improvement and retirement specific to this property cannot be bought. These considerations should be regulated and will ensure developers do not hastily seek approval hoping to squeeze residents out by devaluating properties through imposition in the community.

1

Critically listed animals in close proximity to Turbines require further protection. The impact assessments must be regulated. Impact assessments must be concluded prior to the approval of applications. Applications should be entirely rejected and contracts null and void if and while Impact assessments are undertaken. A local woman signed for a development that was rejected due to the orange Bellied Parrot. She has stated that her contract still stands after many years. Why? Is everyone waiting with baited breath for the birds to die out? Members of the local land care branch consulted for the impact statement are landholders who are recipients of turbines. One of the major landholders is the Chairman of Land Care (Peter Feast). Our Council stated early on in the development application process (minuted) that there will be little objection by local environment groups. I wonder why. Gwen Young (a member of our local land care) opposed a similar development only a couple of kilometres away due to the impact on the Orange Bellied Parrot; however she is now a recipient of turbines on her own land. Currently the Developer commissions and fast tracks the Environmental impact statements for development applications, all the while experts are suggesting the need for on going, effective, better resourced and independent studies. *The referral to the Environment Minister must be undertaken prior to the*

*development approval, this should be law.* Parts of the impact assessment in our community were rejected as inconclusive and yet the council have approved the development. No one knows if the Environment Minister has been referred to Under the EPBC Act (Critically Listed Animals). I have made various enquiries at many levels of Government and no one can answer this simple request. Were the Various EPBC listed species noted as being in close proximity to the turbines referred to the federal minister? What is going on? This information should be readily available. This information should be provided to the community, advertised, and information shared and the process regulated similar to the Category 3 of notification.

8

It is blatantly obvious that these developers are cashing in at the communities expense and enjoying the luxury of Councils and governments allowing them to have easy access to our electricity grids. Where are the Grids located, next to houses and farms? These grids were not built for or paid for by Developers. The message should be simple. Build your power factories in appropriate places and build your own connection to the electricity grid.

9

Permit conditions should be developed and be mandatory for all developments. Such as what the developer will do in the case of breaching EPA Guidelines in relation to noise and the Environment. There are many other permit conditions that could be a requirement of Law that will protect the community.

10

Mitigating factors in Development applications are weak. Tell the developer that they must pull down Turbines that fail to meet guidelines and they will not continue to push the boundaries. They will not put forward biased modelling and underestimate impacts. Make them accountable.

11

Any changes to Legislation as a result of this senate Enquiry should also have immediate effect on Development applications currently pending, unapproved applications and applications with objections or any applications with inconclusive aspects enabling the protection of those not currently protected by any new laws. Any new laws should be practically applied to existing operating wind farms to protect those who are already suffering.

12

There are too many expensive court cases being undertaken where individuals and communities are objecting and opposing Wind Turbine Developments. Hundreds of thousands of dollars being spent by individuals and communities demonstrates simply that there needs to be a massive overhaul of various Acts and Regulations for the betterment of the community, and in the very least for the progression of the law. It should not be up to individuals to take the responsibility of protecting the community.

**650 meters from children's bedrooms and 800 meters from critically listed species habitats are not appropriate locations for industrial power plants.**

I am able to make myself available for further comment on this very important issue.

Paul Manning.