



THE SENATE

SELECT COMMITTEE ON WIND TURBINES

28 July 2015

Senate Select Committee on Wind Turbines

Public hearing, 29 June 2015
Sydney, NSW

Questions on notice

Professor Simon Chapman

Questions on notice from Senator Anne Urquhart

1. In his testimony, Dr McMurtry said this about your research:

“I think I have heard Simon Chapman make that complaint, if that is who you are quoting.

What I noticed about his research is that he was going to the wind farm people themselves and asking them if there were adverse health reports. That does not withstand critical appraisal. You must have an independent determination to determine if in fact there was a problem. That to me undermines this facility, substantially. So I think that claim is dubious.” Would you have any comment on this?

Response: Dr McMurtry is referring to a paper I published in the journal PLoS One in October 2013. It can be accessed here <http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0076584>

His statement is critical of my methods, implying that I used only information from wind energy companies in seeking to establish the total number of people who had ever complained about noise or health issues associated with wind farms.

The Methods section of my paper clearly sets out that I used four sources of information to produce this number, not just wind industry sourced information.

1. Information supplied by wind energy companies
2. Examination of 1,594 submissions made to three parliamentary enquiries for those mentioning personal complaints about being adversely affected
3. Media monitoring of news media reports
4. Feedback obtained after publishing a draft of the paper on an open-access website

By failing to acknowledge that we used four different sources, Dr McMurtry's comments under oath on our methodology are clearly misleading.

2. Dr McMurtry also said that the Bulletin of Science, Technology and Society is indexed in Index Medicus which conflicts with your testimony that the journal is de-indexed. Would you have any comment to make on this?

Response: The long retired Dr McMurtry would appear to be rather out of date with his information here. Index Medicus has not been published since 2004 (see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Index_Medicus). I found a list of all journals indexed in Index Medicus in 2002 (see <http://library.bjmu.edu.cn/ejym/dzfu/ljiweb.pdf>) and the Bulletin of Science, Technology and Society was not among them.

I wrote about the Bulletin of Science, Technology and Society in Crikey in 2011:

“Recently though, the anti-windfarm crowd published 8 papers in special edition of an allegedly peer-reviewed journal you could be excused from never having heard of. The Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society is a journal which has appeared erratically over the past few years. It was indexed between 1981-1995 by the Web of Science, the international scientific indexing platform which “covers over 10,000 of the highest impact journals worldwide, including Open Access journals and over 110,000 conference proceedings.” But after 1995 it was dropped from the list of journals being indexed, generally a sign that indexing services regard a journal as having fallen below an acceptable scientific standard. In the 14 years it was indexed, a citation search conducted on 10 October 2011 showed that it published 961 papers that had been cited for a grand total of just 345 times - an average of 0.36 per paper --almost a homeopathic strength citation rate. Today, Web of Science shows it has published only seven papers which have been cited 7 or more times, with the most cited paper in its history having been cited just 15 times. PubMed, the indexing service of the US National Library of Medicine also does not index the journal.”

I searched PubMed on 24 July 2015, and found only 3 papers from the journal indexed, none of which were on wind farms (see screenshot below). I also checked Journal Citation Reports, the most used listing of scientifically indexed journals. The journal is not indexed by them.

The screenshot shows the PubMed search interface. At the top, the search bar contains the query: "Bulletin of science, technology & society"[Journal]. The search results are displayed in a list format, showing 3 results. The first result is titled "Facebook Influence among Incoming College Freshmen: Sticky Cues and Alcohol" by D'Angelo J, Zhang C, Eickhoff J, and Moreno M, published in Bull Sci Technol Soc. 2014 Feb 1;34(1-2):13-20. The second result is titled "How Do Interaction Experiences Influence Doctoral Students' Academic Pursuits in Biomedical Research?" by Kong X, Chakraverty D, Jeffe DB, Andriole DA, Wathington HD, and Tai RH, published in Bull Sci Technol Soc. 2013 Jun-Aug;33(3-4):76-84. The third result is titled "Scientific opportunities -- ethical choices: an undergraduate biomedical ethics course" by Boyd A and Savarino ME, published in Bull Sci Technol Soc. 1992;12(3):160-2. The interface includes various filters on the left side, such as Article types, Text availability, Publication dates, and Species. On the right side, there are sections for "New feature", "1 free full-text article in PubMed Central", "Find related data", and "Search details".

3. Do you have any comment to make on the methodology of the work completed by Steven Cooper in Cape Bridgewater in terms of its study design and methodology?

Response: I am working on an extensive critique of Cooper's report and the way in which The Australian newspaper and anti-wind farm websites sought to megaphone its findings and alleged importance. This will be submitted to an international peer reviewed journal as a case study illustration of how "research" with manifest problems can be used by opponents of renewable energy to advance their goals. There are many problems with Cooper's work. Many of these are well summarised in submission #194 from the Association of Australian Acoustical Consultants.

4. Some have pointed out that it's actually impossible to prove a negative and that no matter how much research is done, those with issues about wind farms will never accept this research. How much scientific evidence is enough and do you think we'll ever get to that point?

Response: I agree that it is impossible to prove a negative. However there are many research questions where such lack of proof does not continue to stimulate serious research into the as yet unproven phenomenon. We do not see serious research funding agencies allocating funds to continuing efforts to locate the Loch Ness monster, UFOs, or into clairvoyance or astrology, despite the convictions of many that these phenomena are "true". We have repeatedly seen anti-wind farm interests reject any findings that do not accord with their beliefs. The rejection by such interests of the recent large scale Health Canada study is a prime example of this. The manifest opposition to wind farms of a majority of this Committee is a sad chapter in the erosion of evidence-based attempts at policy making in Australia.

5. Do you believe there is a risk that people are misattributing legitimate health concerns to wind farms and failing to seek medical treatment on this basis?

Response: I know of no evidence that this has happened, but it is of course a worrying possibility. It is significant that, to my knowledge, there has never been doctor in Australia who has declared that they believe a patient's health problems have been directly caused or exacerbated by wind turbine exposure. All we have are claims by a few prominent anti wind farm people that their doctors told them that their problems were thus caused. Given the well-known poor reliability of patient recall of what their doctors have told them, such claims need to be treated with great circumspection. It would be very easy for a doctor to make public statements about such a patient, provided they had the full consent of that patient. Given that there are some claiming to be affected by wind turbines and doing their utmost to draw attention to this, it is significant that none of these people have apparently obtained their doctor's support for their claims.

6. Do you have any comment to make on the majority recommendations from the Interim Report of the Committee, specifically the creation of
 - a. an Independent Scientific Committee on Industrial Sound to advise the Minister on the health impacts of noise (including low frequency and infrasound) from wind turbines
 - b. a *National Environment Protection (Wind Turbine Infrasound and Low Frequency Noise) Measure* (NEPM) which would be required to become law in states and territories in order for ongoing accreditation of wind farms under the Renewable Energy (Electricity) Act to continue

- c. National Wind Farm Guidelines linked to eligibility to receive Renewable Energy Certificates
- d. a National Wind Farm Ombudsman and
- e. a levy on wind farm operators to deliver these functions.

Response: Yes, I believe all of these recommendations are grossly disproportionate to the phenomenon the authors of the majority recommendations believe warrant such attention. The situation at the Cape Bridgewater wind farm is a perfect example of this gross disproportionality. The Glenelg Shire Council has provided evidence to the Committee that just six people (from just three houses) out of an estimated 11-12 thousand residents living within 5km of the turbines have ever complained about the turbines. This is a vanishingly small proportion of residents whose alleged best interests have driven absurd levels of attention from the anonymous authors of anti wind websites, the Murdoch press, the wind farm developer and the majority of members of this Committee.