

Grampians – Glenthompson Landscape Guardians Inc.

We wish to make a submission to the Social & Economic Impact of Rural Wind Farms on behalf of our members.

When the Oaklands Hill Wind Energy Facility was first proposed the Grampians – Glenthompson Landscape Guardians raised concerns about the visual impact to the landscape.

Since then our members have become increasingly concerned about the following issues and impacts that the erection of 32 wind turbines south of Glenthompson and 15 kms from the foot of the Grampians National Park, will present.

1. Changing of the visual landscape in this picturesque location with panoramic views of the southern Grampians National Park. We felt this location was totally inappropriate for the siting of these turbines. The local community prides itself on this beautiful landscape, which will be changed dramatically.
2. Effect of soil erosion and salinity impacts on an area already very unstable with tunnel and gully erosion both on the site itself and immediately down stream of the site. As the turbines are built on the top of the hills and watersheds and an agreement with hosting landowners that no trees be planted within 1 km of a turbine, the site will continue to lend itself to more erosion and salinity thereby negating a lot of the excellent Landcare and CMA work done to date.
3. Increased Fire risk from 32 electrical machines, 80 metres in the air in an already high risk fire area. Without proper facilities to fight fires 80 metres in the air and no legislation to turn these turbines off on total fire ban or code red days, all neighbouring landscapes and properties, plus the Grampians National Park (15kms away), will be at much greater risk. This has been a very big concern for our members and the local community.
4. Social impact to our local community has changed how neighbours view neighbours forever. Mistrust has developed because the developers signed up hosting farmers, who were sworn to secrecy and couldn't openly discuss what they intended to do with their neighbours. If wind turbines are so wonderful, why the secrecy? Many people in our community will now no longer work with their neighbours on community issues like Landcare, Fox off baits and just 'helping each other out' as a result of the arrival of the developer and his wind turbines. Rural communities have a very different social fabric to city communities. With few people to carry out community roles in small rural communities it is far more important to have

harmony in these communities. In the cities it is easy to be anonymous, but not so in the country.

5. Concern about health affects resulting from noise and infrasound has been a major issue for our members. Many members reside and employ staff within 2kms of these turbines and understand that the noise levels, based on NZ standards, are borderline. The onus is on the community to provide evidence that there is a problem. This is very difficult for lay people to do. Independent monitoring should be provided to ensure all noise and infrasound measurements are adhered to.
6. Decreased land and house values for properties close to wind turbines is resulting in many unsold houses in Glenthompson. Neighbours properties are losing value and the value of those properties is declining. Most farming properties become the superannuation for the retiring owners. If their value is depleted, then people will not invest in farming land in the future. This will mean more people wanting to live in large cities and not the country.
7. Economic losses as a result of cumulative effect of wind turbines in western Victoria is a great concern to our members. Tourism relies on attractive landscapes and picturesque scenery. If the landscapes are to be dotted with industrial turbines, travellers seeking a change from the bustle of city life will choose other destinations to holiday in where the landscapes are protected.
8. Another economic loss from our members has been the endless redirected hours from our businesses, trying to understand Government Legislation, prepare submissions and attend Planning Panel hearings. This has meant losses to our members businesses, not to mention the emotional trauma and uncertainty surrounding the Planning process.
9. Loss of fauna & flora is another concern. At the Oaklands Hill Wind Energy Planning Hearing a great deal of time was spent on submissions by DSE and local landowners concerned about the impacts of turbines on broilgas, wedge tail eagles and other bird life. There was also a lot of discussion on removal of native vegetation. Our members were not convinced that these turbines won't affect the bird life in the vicinity of the turbines. We have also watched as native vegetation has been removed and impacted.
10. Panel Hearings and Permits are issues without approval for power lines. This is of great concern to us and was also of concern to Panel members. Connecting power to the grid from Oaklands Hill wind turbines is meaning the destruction of beautiful old trees and more native vegetation removal. This should have all been addressed as part of the overall impact at the time of the hearing, not piecemeal as has happened.
11. Increased traffic and construction noise 6 days a week is impacting on the neighbouring community. Invasive noise of reverse beepers has been particularly disturbing to the community as these beepers can be heard up to 3 kms away particularly on still days.

12. Road construction on the wind farm site is amazing. Local rural communities would like to see the same attention given to improving our rural roads. It is hard to stand by and watch so much money poured into farm roads when our rural roads are all breaking up due to lack of funding.
13. Unfair redistribution of wealth . This issue causes mistrust and resentment in small communities, where one neighbour is seen to benefit greatly from money from wind turbines and the next door neighbour is impacted severely and receives nothing. This is not helped by the fact that rumours abound that developers get subsidies of up to \$900,000 to build each turbine. In Oaklands Hill case, once the initial developer obtained their Planning Permit, they on sold it for \$14 million. Can you imagine how the locals felt with this amount of money changing hands and all they are left with is the mistrust of their neighbours and emotional trauma of trying to understand Government Legislation and the future impacts to them? Not to mention the fact that it meant a devaluation of their own real estate by anywhere from 30 – 50%. **Those who gain from wind turbines should be made to pay compensation to those they impact on.**

Judy Vanrenen

President

Grampians – Glenthompson Landscape Guardians Inc.