

10 February 2011

Senate Community Affairs Committee
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a rural General Practitioner who moved to the Furracabad Valley near Glen Innes, NSW, in 2003 with my wife and two sons. I then worked for the New England Division of General Practice for seven years providing locum cover for their member GPs throughout the New England District.

The Division employs a locum GP because it is difficult for their members to secure locums to cover their holidays, sick leave and study leave. When I commenced work in 2003 the position had been vacant because of the shortage of GPs willing to work in the country.

My children attended the local primary and high schools. My wife worked our 266 acre property and was active on school committees and in the community.

Our lives were turned upside down by the Glen Innes Wind Farm and we have been forced to leave our idyllic rural life in NSW and have relocated to north Queensland.

I am now working for the indigenous community of Yarrabah some 60 km south of Cairns. My eldest son, Declan, is attending Newcastle University studying medicine and my youngest son, Fergus, is at school in Cairns. My wife, Suzanne, is only now recovering from the ordeal of the Glen Innes Wind Farm and the nervous and devastated state that it left her in.

This move and the events leading up to our relocation were heartbreaking but not apparently worrying for the proponent and the NSW Department of Planning.

Our property, "Cherry Tree" formerly known as "Eungai", is adjacent to the south eastern portion of the approved wind farm which is near a number of residences.

The southern end of the wind farm extends onto foothills in the Furracabad Valley where there has been widespread opposition to this extension.

The wind farm proponent did not inform us of the particulars including the proximity of turbines until they were well advanced in the planning of their 27 turbine wind farm situated on the Waterloo Range some 12km west of Glen Innes.

Not much better could be said of the Department of Planning who routinely did not respond to correspondence no matter how polite.

We, along with other so called "non- affected residents" did not seek to have the whole wind farm stopped but rather to have it modified to include a 2km setback.

Our overtures to the proponent at the time to offer our assistance in reconfiguring the wind farm were ignored. This lack of response was consistent with the appalling quality of the proponent's consultants' community consultation. The proponent failed to consult the affected community until their plans were well advanced and this consultation was generally atrocious.

Not long after we gave evidence to the NSW Rural Wind Farm Inquiry in September 2009 the Minister approved the Glen Innes Wind Farm with the deletion of only one turbine because "it considers the turbine will have an unacceptable cumulative visual and noise impact on the most immediate non- involved residence."

The proponent had not produced any evidence that the deletion of one turbine would solve the demonstrated noise exceedances.

The Department appeared to have already made up its mind and had signed off on turbines close to residents' homes despite adverse noise, visual, property value and health effects.

We feel disenfranchised and bullied by the wind farm proponents and the NSW Government.

Rural communities have to endure poorer services and health outcomes, isolation and education inequality. And now they have to put up with the nations wind turbines on their doorsteps without any setback guidelines to protect them from the noise, visual, health and adverse property values.

We are making a home for ourselves in Queensland but have retained our property in Glen Innes (because no one wants to buy it now) and await the construction of the Glen Innes Wind Farm. In the meantime the community of Glen Innes has been split in two with many people not wanting to take sides but at the same time totally ignorant about the impact that the wind farm will have on the region.

We know that many a survey is done demonstrating that people approve of wind farms but do those surveys ask the question "Should a turbine be within 2km of a residence?" There is clear evidence that they shouldn't be.

When we hear on the news about another proposed wind farm my wife and I look at one another in despair, aware that some other poor bastard is travelling the ugly journey that consumed our lives for many years and still haunts us.

We need guidelines for minimum setbacks for wind turbines from residences.

Yours sincerely,

ASHLEY W PEAKE