



Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Submission to the Inquiry into the Social and Economic Impact of Rural Wind Farms

Dear Sir

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission into the social and economic impact of rural wind farms. I was raised on a sheep farm and my initial working life was in a rural setting and as such I take a keen interest in the environment and the sustainability of our current way of life. Consequently, the effect a wind farm can have on both these subjects is important to me.

Please note that I do not seek to have my submission treated as confidential however I request that you do not publish my personal contact details shown in the header of this document.

I do not consider myself qualified to comment on any perceived medical issues associated with wind farms. However, I have noted from a variety of news articles and special interest group publications that adverse medical issues seem to be presented when other objections to the establishment of a wind farm have failed to stop the development of such a site going ahead. I consider that medical and psychological concerns are used as an excuse of last resort to stop a wind farm from being established.

As far as I am concerned, as long as an exclusion zone around a wind farm is established and adhered to, there should be no problems. I understand one thousand meters is a reasonable exclusion zone for residential properties. If there is strong medical and/or scientific evidence that this distance is insufficient then the distance may need to be increased.

Likewise with noise and vibration issues, standards should be set then adhered to. I understand that 35db is a reasonable level of noise below which there would be minimal interference to a person going about their business. I currently live under a flight path where noise levels can be extremely high but it is something you get used to. At such low levels as 35db I consider that other environmental factors, such as the wind itself, vehicular traffic, and livestock would be of a greater concern than a turbine.

Variation to property values will depend on the purpose of the property. If the land is a "going concern" for primary production then the inclusion of another income source can only be seen as a positive thing and should add value to the land. The new income stream could allow for a consistent level of planning and budgeting as opposed to that necessitated by a volatile and variable income stream. What is immeasurable is the improvement to the mental wellbeing of landowners and other rural workers that would occur if a guaranteed income stream were to be established, and some certainty provided to their lives.

However, hobby farms with an "off farm" income may find the initial establishment of a wind farm intrusive to their country lifestyle. I feel that once the wind farm is established property

prices for “hobby farms” would continue to increase as they would have prior to the wind farm being established as potential buyers would consider the land as it currently is, not as it was. It is my opinion that the careful location of a wind farm development in dedicated rural areas should reduce the initial level of impact hobby farmers may be concerned about.

Local employment would be enhanced during the establishment and ongoing maintenance of a wind farm. In volatile and uncertain times in primary production the injection of revenue from a major project such as a wind farm can only benefit a local community. During the construction phase there would be a significant number of jobs created and a portion of these would remain to facilitate the ongoing maintenance of the wind farm when fully established. This would inject a significant amount of money into local communities as people associated with the wind farm seek accommodation, schooling for their children and the like. This would see a rise in rental and property values in local communities.

Another major benefit I see from the establishment of a wind farm is the improvement of local infrastructure. A project the scale of a large wind farm would require local roads to be upgraded, and facilities such as quarries and concrete batching plants to be established. Once the wind farm was completed these facilities could remain for use by local businesses and/or local government authorities.

The upgrading of local access roads would also increase the effectiveness of local bushfire brigades. They could use the all weather roads to quickly access fire fronts and also use the roads as a control line for back burning. The roads would also provide dependable escape routes for local residents and those who may be caught in the area. Maintenance crews for telecommunications and power suppliers would also benefit from road upgrades.

In relation to the interaction between the levels of government I feel that the less red tape the better. While anyone proposing to establish a wind farm should have the appropriate checks and balances in place it would be disappointing to see one level of government block something that has been approved by another level.

While I understand that renewable energy cannot currently replace base load requirements I feel that any reduction that can be achieved at a reasonable price should be pursued with vigor. Hopefully at some stage in the future fossil fuels will be an outmoded means of generating electricity and renewable resources such as wind, solar, tidal and so on will be the main source.

In closing, I would have no problem living one kilometer away from a wind turbine but I am concerned that special interest groups may oppose the establishment of wind farms for their own personal reasons. I’m sure any opposition to a wind farm would fade away very quickly if those opposing the farm were offered an income stream or some other form of financial compensation.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my submission.

Yours sincerely

Mal Corcoran

9 February 2011