

Submission To the Federal Senate Enquiry 2011:
"The Social and Economic Impact Of Rural Wind Farms"

Summary of Submission:

My submission is very lengthy (385 pages) because I believe it is important to this Senate Enquiry to include a number of the many relevant documents I have found from my extensive Internet research. It contains facts, opinion, argument and recommendations.

My submission covers all of the below but it does not separate the "topics" into (a) (b) and so forth.

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.

I would first like to express to the Senate my heartfelt and - I believe - educated recommendation that all industrial wind "farm" plants located (and proposed to be located) in close proximity to rural communities are brought to a halt as a matter of immediate urgent high priority and without further ado because of the devastatingly adverse impacts of being forced to live near industrial scale wind turbines and associated infrastructure being reported on a stupendous scale by communities close to industrial wind turbine plants both in Australia and all over the world.

There is a clear need for a moratorium= calling a halt on industrial wind "farms" - as a duty of care to the people of Australia - until such time as full and proper research has been conducted by reputable and independent (no conflict of interest) specialists - to determine once and for all what the true effects of industrial wind "farms" are on the environment in its entirety when they are sited close to rural communities - this proper, federal government sponsored research to cover all the reported hazards including but not limited to adverse health effects on people who are forced to live in close proximity to industrial wind turbines as well farm animals, family pets and impact on birds, insects, other wildlife and on the land.

Current world-wide outcry also rightly includes property devaluation. According to senior personnel of real estate agencies both in Australia and overseas property devaluation from close proximity to industrial wind turbines is a fact and can mean a loss of up to 50%. It is - they say - considered the same as

living next to a piggery and other undesirable developments to live next door to such as rubbish dumps.

In other words, industrial wind plants can and do cause nuisance and disturbance to nearby residences and therefore permitting them without consent from affected residents is surely contrary to lawful provisions contained in world-wide Environment legislation.

Our lives and our environment are truly being ruined. Please take heed. It does not make any sense whatsoever to put people and the environment last to (according to wind "farm" developers) purportedly "save" the environment from carbon pollution. There is strong evidence that industrial rural wind plants are polluting the environment.

I urge the Senate to call upon the Precautionary Principle to call a halt to industrial wind farms located near residential communities.

Very simply put (for readers who do not know what the above means) any development that could possibly be a hazard to the environment should not be permitted. The onus is on the proponent= whoever wants to proceed with a development to **prove beforehand** that there will be no adverse effects.

What I glean has been happening however is that wind developers are "convincing" approving authorities in their development applications that (a) the community targeted for their wind factory site has been properly consulted (there appears to be no law stating that the approving authority must check the integrity of the developer's consultation report) and that community is (they claim) happy to live next to their wind plant and therefore (it follows) does not mind living next to a potential source of noise and other emissions and other disturbance (which wind "farm" developers do acknowledge to exist as can be seen from the application criteria and their responses) i.e (b) they "promise" approving authorities they will try to mitigate any problems such as noise etcetera when the "farm" is under construction and when it is operational.

By then it is too late. There is suffering without respite. As is evident from all the media reported problems experienced by the wind factory community of Waubra in Victoria, to name but one. There are worldwide testimonials from wind factory communities reporting adverse health effects. A wide range of nuisances and disturbances have become too apparent to continue to ignore.

I am not against renewable energy initiatives. I simply assert that the "proof is in the pudding" and that it is high time to put a stop to what has been happening to innocent communities who are being sacrificed all over the world because of state government attempts to meet renewable energy targets through rural wind "farm" developments. I do not want to believe it is federal government that is for example driving South Australia's push to have wind "farms" in particular established over any other form of renewable energy

development but perhaps that is the case? This important Senate Enquiry will hopefully provide answers and resolutions..

I am of the opinion (and I am by no means alone) that industrial wind farm developers are 100% motivated by the stimulus packages/financial incentives made available to them and certainly not by altruism and that it is all about profit with little to contribute to the provision of clean renewable energy.

I personally dislike the term wind "farm" because wind cannot be harvested and because it suggests to people that a wind power plant is not an industrial development and that it is "green" which many energy experts (world-wide) argue it most definitely is not and I totally agree with them.

Who am I? I am one of many alarmed and distressed residents of a rural community in the South East of SA who have only recently found out - in my case as late as late in December 2010 - that an industrial wind factory of 46 x 141 meter high industrial turbines and associated infrastructure has not only been planned but was *approved* in March 2010 by the local approving authority. The local authority who issued the permit for the "Allendale East" Wind "Farm" was a panel of 7 appointed by the District Council of Grant.

From some recent investigations made by community regarding the "community consultation process" claims made in the wind developers application there is evidence it was indeed seriously flawed. We are disillusioned with our Council for not checking the veracity of the developer's so-called community consultation as a duty of care to us before they went ahead and issued a permit to the developer. We assume they did not check it because under the Development Act (as far as we understand it) they were not obliged to check it.

Likewise, we are aghast that our local Council through its appointed panel did not check other assertions and reports made in the wind developer's application. For example, in regard to likely impact on birds etcetera, the developer does not take into account the rare orange-bellied parrot and that the proposed site is the habitat of bent wing bats and birds of prey. We are astounded that no consideration appears to have been given to the fact that a previous wind "farm" development at nearby Green Point did not go ahead on the basis (we understand) of having protect the orange-bellied parrot alone. Green Point is next to Eight Mile Creek. The "Allendale East" wind "farm" includes Eight Mile Creek.

Birds collide with turbine blades suffering injury and death and it has been proved that the lungs of bats explode when they are in the vicinity of the blades.

Our investigations to date have uncovered the fact that an astounding number of households in Allendale East, Eight Mile Creek and surrounds either received no information whatsoever or only scant information from the wind "farm" developer over the 5 years this development was being planned.

We have been ridiculed in the local newspaper by one of the potential wind turbine “hosts” who called us “ostriches with their heads in the sand” but our community investigations tell a different story.

The only people I know of who appear to be “happy” to have this wind “farm” here in our community are the ones who have been offered money to have the turbines etcetera on their land. There has been only one “for” and 3 “neutrals” expressed so far on the community questionnaire we have requested community members to complete. This community strongly objects to it.

We are not unique. Recently in February 2011 a US citizen group filed a lawsuit against the Town of Forest. The board approved the development last year, but residents say they were kept in the dark about the plans. They are asking for a permanent injunction to stop the building of the turbines.

Here is an example from the “Allendale East” wind “farm” application criteria (council-wide development principles and objectives):

PDC 9: Development should not occur if any aspect is likely to cause a nuisance to neighbouring land owners by the emission of unacceptable noise, light, odour, or other disturbance.

In my opinion the developer does not provide a satisfactory response. They simply claim that our community wants the wind “farm” and that they (as developer) promise to mitigate (take care of) any nuisance or disturbance.

That is absurd.

Given there has been ongoing nuisance complaints about unmitigated and unbearable noise, shadow flickering and flashing aviation lights etcetera and other disturbance (very serious disturbance) from a great number of individuals and families from communities forced to live with industrial turbines all over the world it therefore stands to reason that **it is highly likely any industrial wind farm development close to residences will cause nuisance and disturbance to neighboring landowners.**

This comes back to the Precautionary Principle. “If in doubt, throw it out” is what it boils down to. If there is any aspect of a development that is likely to be harmful it should not be allowed to proceed.

Wind farm developers argue that there is no concrete evidence that industrial wind turbines have adverse health effects on people living close to them but under the Precautionary Principle wind farm developers have an obligation to prove they *do not* cause adverse health effects.

Therefore **if they want to continue to run commercial wind farm ventures in rural communities using Australian government funding shouldn't the wind “farm” companies be the ones paying for research**

into health effects by independent specialists with no vested interests in the wind power industry during a moratorium rather than Australian tax payers footing the bill?

In the case of the application for a wind "farm" they want to land on us in tranquil Allendale East, what makes this wind plant any different to any before them? It is the exact same company who set up the Waubra wind "farm" where many residents have been forced to abandon their homes. This company (Acciona Energy) is currently the subject of enquiries in Victoria in relation to noise monitoring and from the CFS (country fire service).

There have been media reported turbine fires at 3 wind power plants in SA alone with debris reportedly flying up to 2 kilometers away when firefighters were not able to get close to the fire.

Does this wind "farm" developer (or any wind "farm" company for that matter) have proof of *even just one* industrial wind plant that is located in a rural community setting where *no nuisance or disturbance to neighbours* has been caused?

It is widely reported that wind turbine "hosts" enter into agreements with developers which "gag" them from complaining or revealing anything that could reflect badly on the wind "farm" developer and many do not live on the host land.

The community in which I live and had planned to live for the rest of my life is currently preparing for battle. The one family who found out about this wind factory development by accident in time to formally object has taken the District Council of Grant (with the developer) to the Environment Resources Development Court. This means the permit is on hold and in the hands of the ERD Court. Meanwhile Council continues to support the wind developer by continuing as First Respondent in the court case. Council says the matter is out of their hands but we have received legal advice that they can withdraw from the case and stop supporting the wind farm developer if they want to.

The general consensus of opinion among community is that Council is disregarding its role and responsibilities towards its rate payers and has been biased towards this wind farm developer from the onset.

From my extensive research it is evident to me that wind power is not cheap and it is not as "clean" as it is portrayed. I am including research documents to support this assertion.

Furthermore I question the overall legality and morality of imposing wind factory sites on rural communities as in my opinion it is certainly *not* in this nation's or in any nation's best interest.

In my opinion decision-makers have erred/are out of order and federal government now needs to irrefutably justify to us the citizens of Australia (and

the same applies to federal government of other countries throughout the world) exactly how it is lawful i.e. in the name of "greater public interest" to permit wind "farm" developers to ride rough-shod over rural communities to establish wind energy "farms" that clearly do not live up to the wind industry's spurious claims.

The maximizing profit angle on the part of the wind developer is clear:

1. Close to an electrical grid so connection can be made at minimum cost.
2. Deals to the wind company's advantage can be struck with impoverished or greedy and naive local landowners to "host" the turbines e.g. assignable leases renegotiable to the host landowner's detriment to a new wind factory company after the initial developer has sold on for profit.
3. Power supply for construction of the wind plant is already available on site, reducing costs.
4. Road access to the site is already available as there are formed roads, reducing costs.
5. Financially "vulnerable" and "gullible" community unlikely to have available resources to fight against approval are targeted to avoid legal costs.
6. Close to needed material supplies, hence reduced transport costs of sand, steel, water, concrete etc
7. There is already accommodation and recreation facilities nearby for construction workers.

This is all to the detriment of rural communities. **No-one** should be made to accept compromised health and safety which means being forced to move to avoid harm (selling at an automatic loss) or (if people do not sell in time) being driven away from home and off the land (traumatized as well as suffering from harmful effects and financial loss) because they cannot stand living there any longer and need to escape from what many describe as a nightmare existence.

If this rural community wind "farm" madness is to allowed to continue after this Senate Enquiry I believe the very least federal government ought to do in respect of (what amounts to) "reclaiming private land for industrial wind power sites" is to **ensure all those living nearby/affected are 1. definitely individually told/warned/consulted about it 2. properly compensated for the inconvenience of having to move e.g. adequate relocation costs and adequate compensation for devaluation of property value.**

Below is an extract from a research paper I am including further on in my submission. (source: NOISE RADIATION FROM WIND TURBINES INSTALLED NEAR HOMES: EFFECTS ON HEALTH

With an annotated review of the research and related issues
By Barbara J Frey, BA, MA and Peter J Hadden, BSc, FRICS)

"The continual economic survival of rural communities depends both on 'old' and 'new' wealth creation. Many rural communities have enjoyed economic growth and social benefits from the influx of 'life style' families, young and old,

who have brought with them wealth and economic opportunity to their chosen new communities. 'Life style' families are often seeking the pleasures of rural life and unspoilt countryside, away from the commercial and industrial development that is characteristic of our towns and cities. The devaluation of assets such as property by rural industrialisation is likely to deter further migrations to the countryside, and over time, this will inevitably reduce new economic injection into these areas. State development-control decision-makers, who allow the industrialisation of rural settlements, with the consequent environmental pollution, are likely to trigger a slide back into rural economic deprivation as the lifetime savings of people living in these communities are eroded by the devaluation of their properties"

The following was published on the February 3rd 2011 in the Herald Sun.

There is "no doubt" wind farms have a negative effect on the value of adjoining properties, according to a senior rural real estate agent.

Elders Rural Services national sales manager said the towers were seen by most of the market as "repulsive" and could lead to a 30 to 50 per cent drop in the value of the land.

In an email to a member of the anti-windfarm group, the Landscape Guardians, seen by The Weekly Times, (...) said a proliferation of wind towers adjacent to a property had the same effect as high-voltage power lines, rubbish tips, piggeries, hatcheries and sewage treatment plants.

This meant, he said, that "if buyers are given a choice, they choose not to be near any of these impediments to value.

Close proximity to an industrial wind power plant in the case of communities in SA can mean an industrial turbine(s) located just 500 metres from a dwelling. This is unarguably behind the times compared to other "safe setback" distances both in Australia and across the world. From the latest international research and findings the recommended distance is now in fact being cited as a minimum of 10 kilometres from dwellings. This is because of the escalating health and safety problems being reported worldwide in testimonials from those living closer than that to large industrial wind turbines.

According to Dr Sarah Laurie, Medical Director of the Waubra Foundation, Mr Peter Jorgensen, a Danish wind industry expert, was recently in SA as guest of Premier Mike Rann for for a public forum and he gave an interview the day before on ABC radio. In response to a question from ABC's Carol Whitelock about people's concerns about noise and adverse health effects Mr Jorgensen said that **in Denmark, turbines are being built out at sea, because of the noise and adverse health effects** (interview with Carol Whitelock, AM 891, on the afternoon of 12th August, 2010).