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

Date: 10th February 2011

SUBJECT: ENQUIRY INTO SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF RURAL WIND FARMS

The Senate enquiry requested views on:

- (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.

Most of these questions appear to be similar to those which would be raised by those who are against wind farming in rural Australia. This enquiry therefore provides an opportunity for those in favour of wind farming to present the positive aspects of harnessing this renewable energy resource.

Wind farming is by its nature a rural activity, and is unsuited to urban areas, therefore we refer to simply wind-farms rather than rural wind farms.

In relation to points a) to c), while any development in the countryside has impacts, we consider that overall, the benefits of wind farming far outweigh the costs. Existing regulations and planning provisions already ensure that wind farms are located appropriately and that social impacts from wind farm are minimised. Meanwhile, the economic results of wind farming include an increase in income levels for rural land owners hosting wind turbines, increased employment during construction and operation of the wind farms as well as a long term electricity resource for the nation which incurs zero fuel costs.

We note the response to this enquiry presented by the Hepburn Wind co-operative recently on their website. We broadly agree with the content of that submission:

“Renewable energy is an essential part of our response to climate change, and, by a wide margin, wind power is the most commercially and technically viable form.

Current research by respected institutions supports claims that wind farms pose no health risks for people living in close proximity to wind farms. Research conducted on modern wind turbines has shown that the levels of low frequency sound are well within accepted thresholds and are comparable to naturally occurring phenomena.

Land owners benefit from a new source of income, without any measurable impact on farming operations.

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Communities benefit from job creation, local investment and the community funds that are commonly implemented by project proponents.

We are aware of studies which have found no statistical evidence that wind farms negatively affect property values.

Wind farms are widely supported in many communities.

For example, the Future Energy webpage advises that Hepburn Shire received 343 letters in relation to the Hepburn Wind Project, with 95% in support. Recent NSW polling shows more than 85% support wind power.

In addition, the Future Energy webpage states:

“Australian states already have a well developed wind farm planning controls which are among the most onerous in the world. Any changes to these controls should be equitably and consistently applied across other industries and be informed by science.

The Senate Committee should not propose provisions that would unnecessarily make the development of the Australia wind industry more difficult or onerous.”

The process of developing, constructing and operating wind farms throughout Australia is a vital part of securing a sustainable, reliable and indigenous power supply.

Enhar provides consultancy services to the [renewable energy industry in Australia](#). We provide several services tailored to the community wind farm market. Our services include wind farm feasibility studies, wind resource assessments including wind monitoring, environmental impact assessment assistance, clients engineer roles etc.

Enhar also work within the solar sector, consulting to solar photovoltaic installation firms and providing feasibility and solar resource monitoring for solar farm developers.

We also advise on [energy conservation and energy auditing](#).

Maintaining a viable renewable energy industry, with the support of the community, stands to benefit many parts of the economy.

The social benefits arising from mitigation of man made climate change are enormous. Therefore reduction in carbon emissions from the stationary energy sector in Australia, including responsible wind farming, are vital activities to support. Reduction in domestic emissions will yield significant political benefits for Australia within the international drive to tackle climate change.

While local impacts of wind farms can indeed be noted, the benefits of wind farms are both local, national and global and this balance must be borne in mind by the wider community.

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