

THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACT OF RURAL WIND FARMS

I am writing to express my utter dismay at the manner in which my life, my family's life and our business will be SEVERELY AFFECTED by the construction and operation of a wind farm, namely the Macarthur wind farm (140 massive turbines) on the property adjoining ours. In addition to this, our farming property lies only several kilometres south and south-west of the proposed Peshurst wind farm (RES Australia). Not only will we be affected by 140 enormous V112 turbines to our south and east (Macarthur wind farm), we will suffer the CUMULATIVE EFFECT of an additional 223 turbines of 175 metres in height, to our north and east also (Peshurst wind farm). (There is also a proposal for another 190 turbines, literally one kilometre south of the Macarthur wind farm, which would mean 553 turbines in close proximity to our property). In fact if Great Southern blue gum plantation country to our west, having been recently sold, is reclaimed from trees, the new owners could be encouraged by the massive taxpayer subsidy, to develop a wind farm. That would mean we would be 360 degrees surrounded by wind farms !!!

There are many ways whereby our property and business will be severely affected by the Macarthur wind farm on our boundary. Sadly the majority of these adverse effects are vehemently DENIED by the wind farm developers as was the case experienced at the Planning Panel for the Macarthur wind farm in February 2006.

1. Apart from the effect of the LOW FREQUENCY NOISE on my own health and that of my family whilst working in the paddocks, I am extremely concerned that I WILL NOT BE ABLE TO PROVIDE A SAFE WORKPLACE FOR EMPLOYEES ON MY PROPERTY.

There is strong evidence that anyone living within five kilometres from a wind farm is severely affected by the noise which means that at any position on my property, albeit the furthest point away from the wind farm boundary, EMPLOYEES WILL BE AFFECTED BY LOW FREQUENCY NOISE. Our property is nowhere near five kilometres wide, so it's not as if stock work can be carried out further away from the wind farm boundary, to eliminate disturbance by the constant whooshing of the turbines. The incidence of workplace accidents on farms in Victoria is currently far too high, let alone with the added factor of such close proximity to wind farms, or should I say PLACEMENT OF WIND TURBINES FAR TOO CLOSE TO NEIGHBOURING FARM BOUNDARIES. It is proposed that as many as NINE V112 wind turbines will be closer than 1 kilometre from our farm boundary. In fact there are possibly many within 150 metres of our boundary fences. THIS IS TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE.

2. In a similar manner to the severe health effects of low frequency noise from wind turbines on people, FARM ANIMALS will also be affected. There is strong evidence overseas and already in Australia where there have been many cases of loss of production, reduced reproduction rates, abortion and many other symptoms due to the stress on animals grazing on properties within close proximity to wind turbines. Of

course the effect on animals is denied emphatically by wind farm developers. I am extremely concerned about the detrimental effect the low frequency noise and strobing, will have on my paddock flock of 2000 plus ultra-fine merino sheep and also my 400 shedded sheep. Ultra-fine merinos have a highly sensitive nervous system and any disturbance causes a break in their wool and hence the fleece price is greatly reduced. We produce a particularly elite fibre, ultra-fine wool of 11 to low 13 micron for exclusive Italian mens' suits, and also for the bespoke tailors in London's Saville Row. We are one of only a handful of shedded sheep producers in Australia and in 2006 we held the Australian record for the highest price paid for that season. To date, on the several occasions Macarthur Windfarm Pty. Ltd. have been operating heavy machinery in the paddocks adjacent to ours, prior to construction even, our ultra-fine merino paddock sheep have been disturbed and those in the shed, quite some distance away, have been spooked as the noise resonated inside their shed. **THIS IS GOING TO BE A DISASTER FOR OUR ELITE ULTRAFINE WOOL PRODUCTION BUSINESS.** In fact I am of the opinion that at the Panel hearing for the Macarthur wind farm during February, 2006, the developers misled the Panel by understating the significance, or the very nature of our paddock enterprise. They claimed "The Proponent understands that the nature of the Gardners' operations is such that the sheep are already held in a shed-based environment to produce the ultra fine wool, with the surrounding paddocks **USED OCCASIONALLY FOR GRAZING AND POTENTIAL BREEDING.**" This is quoted from the document **REPLY ON BEHALF OF THE PROPONENT** presented to the Panel on the last day of the Macarthur wind farm Panel. **THIS IS WRONG** and Macarthur wind farm Pty. Ltd. knew **VERY WELL** that our paddocks are grazed **FULL TIME** by sheep and in fact they walked through our farm, the paddocks being full of sheep, during an on-site inspection of our property.

3. **GROUND WATER CONTAMINATION** is another great fear for our farming enterprise. Once again, overseas evidence confirms ground water and the soil is contaminated due to proximity to wind farms. Of course, when I presented my submission to the panel for the Macarthur wind farm in 2006, once again, my concerns were denied. Last week we received in the mail the January 2011 official publication of the Australian Farmers' Fighting Fund. In an article "Your Property Rights; Setting a Precedent" a recent NSW court case took place where the AFFF funded a farmer's legal case against a coal mining company. Specific conditions sought related to -

- a. consequences of puncturing and depressurisation of aquifers.
- b. contamination of aquifers by water seepage from other aquifers by drilling process chemicals.
- c. contamination of soil by fluid escaping from the exploration hole.

These three factors are applicable also to **WIND FARM CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATION** and I have grave fears this will affect my grazing land and hence farming operation.

The country through which the Macarthur wind farm is to be constructed consists of multiples of very small aquifers and underground caves. These three factors are of great

significance to our rocky barrier country, but once again our concerns were counteracted by Macarthur Windfarm Pty. Ltd. at the panel in 2006 by their supposed expert consultant, and the panel members convinced by the proponents that this was not an issue at all.

Apart from the huge volumes of chemicals which will be used in construction, wind turbines have hundreds of litres of oil in their generators. This oil leaks and **THE FEAR OF CONTAMINATION OF UNDERGROUND WATER IS HUGE.** This is a very pertinent issue to this once rich agricultural land, but **NO-ONE IS LISTENING.**

4. FIRE is probably one of the greatest additional risks posed by wind farms. Windfarm developers use the common spin “**WIND FARMS POSE NO GREATER FIRE RISK THAN ANY OTHER WORKING FARM**”.

THIS IS ABSOLUTE RUBBISH and government should be listening to our **WARNINGS OF CATASTROPHIC FIRE DANGER.** Wind farms are an industrial site and the oil in the turbines leaks as the generator overheats and catches fire. There have been three very large wind farm fires in South Australia over the past four years. There doesn't appear to be any policy on shut down temperatures for wind turbines and it's time the fire authorities showed some responsibility and formulated a very strict policy. On each of these occasions in South Australia, the fire authorities haven't been able to extinguish the fire as there is not machinery tall enough to reach the top of the turbine. In the most recent fire at Starfish Hill, the turbine wasn't able to be turned off due to the electrics being on fire, and the blades were still turning, on fire and throwing out burning debris and bits of blades for kilometres, just like a giant sparkler. Worksafe South Australia insisted on a **ONE KILOMETRE SETBACK FOR FIREFIGHTERS**, because of the danger to fire fighters. If this fire had been on a day of extreme fire danger the fire would have spotted for kilometres, starting multiple smaller fires, and would have burnt to the coast (a good 70 kilometres away). Apparently the policy of Acciona at the Waubra wind farm in Victoria is “**LET IT BURN**” which is outrageous and totally unacceptable. We live in very rocky country, as is the majority of the country where wind farms are to be built in south-west Victoria and this rugged barrier country is **INACCESSIBLE BY WHEELED VEHICLES..** Due to the hundreds of turbines reaching 175 metres, **AERIAL BOMBING WILL NOT BE AN OPTION** due to lack of visibility, and due to the fact that wind farms are “no-go zones” for aircraft. So how can turbine fires be fought ? **THEY CAN'T.** These fires will spot for kilometres around and on days of high temperatures, high winds and zero humidity, the **PROLIFERATION OF WIND TURBINES WILL PROVIDE HORRENDOUS CONDITIONS AND THE FIRES WILL PALE BLACK SATURDAY IN VICTORIA INTO INSIGNIFICANCE.**

Windfarm developers claim their **ACCESS TRACKS** will assist fire fighting. **THIS IS NOT TRUE.** These multiple tracks are dead end, leading to a particular turbine and there is insufficient space for a fire truck to turn around. It appears that during wind farm construction these access tracks will be quite wide, but once the wind farm is operational, the tracks will be significantly reduced in width. In fact, the wind farm access tracks

have been classified on occasions, as DEATH TRAPS. During the deathly fire at Linton in Western Victoria several years ago, five firefighters were trapped at a dead end track, unable to escape and were incinerated. As a result of this horrific accident there are many instances where CFA will simply not send crews into life threatening situations. Any situation whereby a wind turbine catches fire in Western Victoria, will provide potential fatal conditions for volunteer firefighters.

It is my strong opinion that authorities have not considered one additional and extremely concerning issue which will arise due to the proliferation of wind farms in the Western District should a fire be ignited on one of the many wind farms proposed. This issue is the fact that wind farms have severely DIVIDED COMMUNITIES and people who dare to oppose wind farm proposals are ostracised by the community. I have heard within our local district, farmers claim “don’t call me to jump on a fire truck in the event of the outbreak of fire - I’ll be in my solicitors office formulating my litigation claim against my wind farm neighbour”. Recently at an Open Day in Peshurst I also heard one of our farmer neighbours walk past another local farmer who it had just been discovered had signed to host wind turbines on his property and say “I hope you rot in hell”!!! These wind farm proposals (which haven’t even been constructed yet, or approved) have pitted neighbour against neighbour and friend against friend. There are even examples of splitting of families and our family have experienced this already.

I have actually alerted Victorian fire authorities that in years to come as the Western District is littered with thousands of wind turbines, THERE WILL NOT BE THE MANPOWER TO FIGHT FIRES. This is due to -

- a. SPLITTING OF THE COMMUNITY.
- b. EXODUS of FAMILIES from the districts due to the fact (which is already happening at Waubra) that people just cannot bear to live next, or in fact, near to wind farms and continue to experience the extreme health effects from wind turbines being built too close to their properties.

For this reason, small towns will literally DISAPPEAR due to reduction of outlying populations and consequent lack of demand for services. The farming land surrounding wind farms will be vacated within a few years of wind farm construction. In our Western District of Victoria with the multiples of wind farms proposed already (I’d hate to quote the number so far - in our Moyne Shire alone there were at least 20 approved and more than 20 awaiting approval quite some time ago) NEARLY ALL FARMING PROPERTIES WILL BE AFFECTED BY WINDFARM HEALTH EFFECTS as most farming properties are within 10 kilometres of a wind farm. So there will be VERY FEW VOLUNTEERS living locally to fight the fires caused by wind farms.

IS ANYBODY LISTENING TO THIS SERIOUS FIRE CONCERN ? It is my very strong opinion that governments both Federal and State should take on board the advice and opinion of Professor David Packham, from Monash University, who is the eminent expert on bush fires and whom I heard during an interview on television, predicted Black Saturday a short time before it occurred in 2009.

5. AERIAL SPRAYING will NOT be able to be carried out on our properties adjacent to wind farms. However at the MACARTHUR wind farm panel, Macarthur Wind Farm Pty. Ltd. indicated to the panel that the wind farm will NOT ADVERSELY AFFECT AERIAL SPRAYING AND FERTILISER SPREADING on the wind farm site or adjacent land. In this rocky barrier country farmers are unable to spray using vehicles and have to rely on aerial spraying and fertiliser spreading. SO HOW DO WE ERADICATE NOXIOUS WEEDS and APPLY FERTILISER ? We won't be able to.

We have in our possession a letter from an Aerial Agriculture company which provides the aerial spraying service in this district, in which two massive wind farms are about to be constructed, ie. the Macarthur wind farm and the proposed Penshurst wind farm. This letter quotes "A wind farm development will cause us to reassess our procedures in that region and it is highly likely that the increase in risk to our flying operation will be such that we will be unable to operate at all within the wind farm area."

6. LAND DEVALUATION. Wind farm developers claim that land adjoining wind farms does not suffer any devaluation at all. However this is simply NOT TRUE. There is much evidence of reduced value of property adjoining wind farms both in Australia and overseas. A great proportion of the population just do not want to live next to a wind farm. Not only is there a significant reduction of one's land value, but it seems more recently that properties in close proximity to a wind farm just aren't able to be sold at all. So not only is the value reduced, THERE IS NO VALUE for land next to wind farms. Until recently there seems to have been little written evidence of this fact. However in recent weeks we have been sent a copy of a letter written by the National Sales Manager of Elders Rural for Australia claiming there is at least a 30% REDUCTION OF LAND VALUE - IF THE PROPERTY CAN BE SOLD AT ALL.

So as a farmer who has spent more than thirty years building up, through mostly my own and my wife's hard work, what was once a very run-down and unproductive farm into a highly productive farm with magnificent improvements, I now face the prospect of not being able to sell my farm at all. I am of retirement age, so WHAT DO I DO, and WHERE DO I GO ? My farm is my only asset and I will no doubt be forced to leave the land with no home to live in and no money on which to retire.

For most small farmers in particular, their farm is the only form of SUPERANNUATION they have. Due to the continued low incomes experienced for the last thirty years in agriculture, farmers have hardly been able to make a living, let alone set aside any money for retirement. So there will be literally thousands of farming families in the Western District of Victoria alone forced to leave their properties due to the health effects, and unable to sell their farm to buy a home, let alone have any funds to live on.

The effect of thousands of farmers being forced to abandon their properties due to inability to sell them, is going to provide Governments with huge concerns. The massive social and economic effects of wind farms on country Australia, let alone the detrimental effect on agriculture, should be ringing alarm bells with Government also. Once these

unreliable, inefficient political monsters are constructed and our once beautiful countryside is littered with thousands of turbines, there's no going back. They'll be there forever !!!