



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

Dear Sir/ Madam,

A Response to Senate Community Affairs Committee inquiry into the Social and Economic Impact of Rural Wind Farms.

Please accept Climate Action Newtown's submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Social and Economic Impact of Rural Wind Farms.

Climate Action Newtown is a local community organisation based in Newtown, NSW, representing local residents from the inner-west of Sydney with an email newsletter list of just under 900. We have strong links with other groups in our community including environmental organisations, local student organisations, and bicycle groups. All members of Climate Action Newtown are volunteers and the group is politically unaligned.

Our goal as a group is to educate and activate the local community about the climate crisis we are facing – and the solutions that exist now. We believe Australia needs to take urgent steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and transition our economy to a low carbon future based on 100% renewable energy.

Climate Action Newtown feels that renewable energy technologies (and wind in particular) need to be an essential part of Australia's response to climate change, and the Senate Committee should not propose provisions that would stunt the development of this industry, or make progress in this area unviable, onerous or impractical.

Current research and scientific investigations have found that there are no adverse health effects for people living in close proximity to wind farms. The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) recently found that "there is currently no published scientific evidence to positively link wind turbines with adverse health effects", and the World Health Organisation states that "There is no reliable evidence that sounds below the hearing threshold produce physiological or psychological effect".

In Victoria itself, the Department of Health (WorkSafe, 2010) after examining both peer reviewed and validated scientific research also concluded that "the weight of evidence indicated that there are no direct health effects from noise (audible or inaudible) at the levels generated by modern wind turbines." Further international studies in North America and the United Kingdom also support this finding.

Research conducted on modern wind turbines has also shown that the levels of infrasonic noise and vibration radiated from modern wind turbines are within accepted thresholds, and indeed are at such a low level that they lie below the threshold of perception, even for those people who are particularly sensitive to such noise and even when very near to turbines (British Wind Energy Association, 2005).

In contrast, coal-based energy production, a major contributor to our current greenhouse gas emissions, is literally fuelling climate change and hence impacting directly on human health. The individual and public health implications of climate change are well documented, widespread, and already occurring on massive scale.



Studies have also found no statistical evidence that wind farms reduce property values.

The U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (LBNL) found from extensive and rigorous assessment that home sales prices are very sensitive to the overall quality of the scenic vista from a property, but neither the view of wind farm nor the distance of the home to wind farm was found to have any consistent, measurable, or significant effect on the selling prices of nearby homes. The data analysed for "The Impact of Wind Power Projects on Residential Property Values in the United States: A Multi-Site Hedonic Analysis" was collected from almost 7,500 single family homes situated within 10 miles of 24 existing wind facilities in nine different U.S. states, between 1996 and 2007, spanning the period prior to the announcement of each wind energy facility to well after its construction and full-scale operation.

However, the employment benefits of wind farms to local regions are substantial and widely spread, providing considerable opportunities for individuals and communities where they are located, including the land owners for whom wind farms provide a reliable and on-going income. They also provide direct employment opportunities for locals, and flow-on employment for local businesses through provision of products and services to the project and its employees.

Evidence from overseas is now showing that the installation of wind farms is actually dropping wholesale power prices. As a result, Climate Action Newtown members and supporters believe Australia needs to invest further in wind power as a way of managing rising energy prices.

It should be remembered that while there has been a vocal and fierce campaign organised by some people and organisations, the development of the wind industry remains well supported in the broader society.

Recently, Climate Action Newtown undertook doorknocking of over 3000 households in the local area and in surveying almost 600 residents, determined that 83% of respondents thought that renewable sources should power any new energy infrastructure, and that 89% of respondents believed the Government should develop a plan to move Australia towards 100% renewable energy. Our survey also showed that 90% of respondents felt it should be a priority to boost investment in renewable energy industries and create clean energy jobs.

Research conducted by other authorities has had similar findings. A Newspoll survey commissioned by the Clean Energy Council in December 2009 found that in regional areas 90% of people said that Australia should produce more renewable energy, and an AMR Interactive survey commissioned by the NSW Government in 2010 found that wind farms were regarded as an acceptable form of power generation by 81% of the population. The AMR Interactive survey also found that 80% of residents were supportive of wind farms being built in their local region and more than 60% supported them at a distance of 1-2 kilometres from their residence. There was also broad acknowledgement of the benefits of wind farms to the local community including economic and employment benefits and broad endorsement of more wind farms being built in the area.

With appropriate controls and robust planning processes, wind has proven itself to be an excellent form of energy as part of a broader mix, while driving investment and employment in rural areas, improving the health of our communities and acting to reduce our greenhouse emissions.

Yours sincerely,

Lydia Andrews, on behalf of Climate Action Newtown.