

Dear Clerk of the Senate

On behalf of the membership (300+) of WISE (Woodend Integrated Sustainable Energy) and the Macedon Ranges Sustainability Group I provide the following brief submission to the above senate enquiry

Renewable energy is central to addressing climate change and presents a great local opportunity for many parts of regional Australia.

The greatest obstacle to the development of renewable energy projects is securing a community licence to operate.

Community ownership enables a licence to operate and returns significant benefits to host communities.

The Macedon Ranges Sustainability Group (MRSG) and WISE (Woodend Integrated Sustainable Energy Inc) has been investigating the prospect of a small wind park part-owned by the local community.

The benefits of a community-owned wind park include:

- o retention of income from energy sales within the shire
- o a potential source of income for local residents and local sustainability projects
- o a local source of energy, providing energy security for the region
- o immediate access to clean energy as electricity generated would be fed to local homes via the grid
- o avoidance of transmission losses (up to 30%) from energy currently supplied from the Latrobe Valley.
- o enhancing the reputation of the Shire as a progressive and active community on climate change
- o further inspiration to community groups elsewhere seeking to secure their clean energy future.

With this in mind, WISE (the energy project group of MRSG) has worked with industry professionals and local stakeholders for two years to research the most appropriate renewable energy generation facility for the Macedon Ranges.

We have identified a site with many attractive features, including:

- o very high modelled wind speeds
- o excellent road access and grid connectivity – reducing project establishment costs
- o negligible native flora and fauna issues
- o negligible visual amenity impact

The site offers a low impact, commercially viable, locally-owned, sensitively located, renewable energy asset for the region.

There is still considerable work to be done. WISE has secured funding support to erect an anemometer, or wind monitoring mast, to accurately measure the site's potential. We are now investigating current Victorian Government policy which currently casts significant doubt over the immediate future of the project.

We are confident that based on merits and supported by community consultation the project will prove commercially viable and deliver many local benefits.

Local commercially viable projects, supported by the community should not be held up by a small minority of unaffected objectors or for spurious health, noise or adverse property value effects.

As with climate change we need to follow the overwhelming science and act on the facts and we need to do so quickly.

Community based solutions (including small scale wind parks) need to be encouraged and supported.

Peter Hansford  
President, WISE Group