

I am writing in regards to the Federal Parliament enquiry. I am a third generation farmer on our Waubra farm, we farm 4200 acres of high quality farming land and are currently running 16,000 - 20, 000 sheep, 500 acres of crop and 100 acres of irrigated land included.

From the first day we were asked to have wind turbines on our farm we were very concerned about the impacts of a wind farm in our community. We declined to have 4 wind turbines on our land.

Eventually the Waubra wind farm was under construction, with large amounts of destruction to poor local roads, and destruction of quality farming land. Consisting of new roads through farms, thousands of tons of concrete poured into the ground, massive power grids in paddocks, machinery and administration offices in paddocks and worst of all, hundreds of kilometres of new above ground power lines. Which are a whole new danger in the summer fire season.

It was at this stage, when the foundations were laid for the Waubra wind farm. The Lexton wind farm was approved which is not under construction yet, we were approached by a representative from wind power that they needed to run a new above ground power line from the yet to be built but approved Lexton wind farm, straight through our farm to connect to the Waubra wind farm grid. Obviously more cost effective than building another grid at the Lexton site. We declined, therefore weeks later we were approached then by an Acciona representative to put a further 4 wind turbines on our farm, making a total of 8. We declined once again, therefore the proposed new above ground power line has to follow the roads near our farm as we didn't want it through our farm.

The destruction if the power line goes ahead will consist of cutting native trees down and disturbing large amounts of native grasses, then follows the disturbance of bird life, including brolgas and countless other species. This is very concerning and distressing.

Then before long the Waubra wind farm was up and running.

The closest wind turbine is 900 metres from our house and we have 5 wind turbines within 1500 metres from our family home. Where I live with my wife

Samantha and three children Jacob, Courtney and Joshua. There is about another 6 wind turbines within 2000 metres of our land at another location on our farm.

We can see nearly all the wind turbines from most areas of our farm. The first day the wind turbines started operating closest to our home, my wife Samantha started feeling ear and head pressure. Similar, she described as when flying in an aeroplane. About six months after, I started feeling similar affects as Samantha. As the weeks went on it has gotten worse and worse. We now suffer headaches, chest pains, a feeling of heart palpitations, continuous lack of sleep. Every night we can't sleep, we go to sleep then wake and just never settle into a good night sleep.

I have never seen my wife of 18 years look so tired, stressed and unhealthy. This is a huge concern. My children are also more tired and emotional. We have no other illness or medical conditions that could cause us feeling like this, we have not changed anything in our lifestyle since we started feeling like this. We have had talks with the operator of the Waubra wind farm, Acciona Energy telling them of our concerns of our health effects of living to close to the wind turbines and the effects of the asset values of our land.

Acciona Energy have replied that we don't have any evidence the wind turbines affect our health, we have large concerns about the lack or any evidence wind turbines don't affect our health. We have lived near wind turbines for about 14 months and are feeling the worst in regards to our health and the depressed feelings we get from the visual effects of wind turbines day and night, as they have aviation lights at night. The noise they create and the inaudible noise that I know effects our lives. And the effects in changes to bird life such as our decreased number of brolgas breeding in our area. The total loss of bats we used to hear nearly every night and so on.

We have now gone to the desperate measure and moved out of our family home on our farm and into Ballarat, which is 45 kilometres drive away and we will travel daily to our farm. This is a large financial outlay. Our house on the farm is only 10 years old and will remain empty as we could not rent or house farm employees due to wind turbines being to close and therefore having health effects on them.

In conclusion we have massive concerns about the health effects of living and working too close to the wind turbines. We are members of the Lexton Land Care group, we have planted thousands and thousands of trees, fenced off creeks and are all for the environment and green energy such as wind power or solar or whatever it takes to help our environment, but to watch myself and family suffer from health effects from living too close to wind turbines is a very big concern.

There has to be a compromise.

Carl Stepnell

I have been a Licensed Estate Agent for 30 years, specialising in the sale of Rural property, essentially all over Australia, with an emphasis on Victoria and the Riverina. I have held senior Management positions with the largest Rural real estate Companies in Australia.

In recent years the growth of activity and the actuality of wind towers throughout the Victorian rural landscape has been significant.

Challicum Hills, Coddington, and Mt Mitchell have all emerged as large scale wind farms, located on the tops of the low hill country, interrupting the landscape for many kilometres.

Of significant importance, is the negative effect on the value of adjoining lands where wind towers have been erected. Visually, the towers are seen by the majority of the market as repulsive. Audibly, the towers effect the stillness a property enjoys, in particular the resonating tones in the night, invading serenity of the adjoining lands.

A proliferation of wind towers adjacent to a property has the same effect as high voltage power lines, rubbish tips, piggeries, hatcheries, and sewerage treatment plants, in that, if buyers are given a choice, they choose not to be near any of these impediments to value.

The ultimate effect is that the number of buyers willing to endure these structures is significantly less than if the structures were not there. This logically has a detrimental effect on the final price of the adjoining lands.

Experts assess the loss of value to be in excess of 30%, and sometimes up to half.

My personal experience is that when an enquiry (potential buyer) becomes aware of the presence of wind towers, or the possibility of wind towers in the immediate district of a property advertised for sale, the "fall out" of buyers is major. Very few go on to inspect the property, and even fewer consider a purchase. On the remote chance they wish to purchase, they seek a significant reduction in the price.

There is absolutely no doubt, that the value of lands adjacent to wind towers falls significantly in value. The ambience of a rural property is important, and oftentimes, the sole reason why a purchaser selects a particular area or district. The imposition of wind towers, destroys this ambience forever.

Acciona Energy

30 September 2010

Dear Sir,

re: Carl and Samantha Stepnell

I saw this couple on 29 September 2010 regarding health problems related to wind turbines which are located nearby in Waubra. They have a 4500 acre farm on which they run sheep and grown grain. The farm is surrounded by wind turbines but the ones that they feel are contributing to their current symptoms relate to five turbines, located within 900 metres of their home.

These turbines have been in operation for the last fourteen months, as I understand, and Carl and Samantha acknowledge they have been aware of a constant sound while the turbines are in operation since this period of time. However, in the last six months the Stepnell's have had increasing problems including increased feeling of pressure in their head and ears, a feeling of uneasiness and frequent waking at night. This has led to increased lethargy and inevitably a lowered mood.

Last May, Carl and Samantha noticed when the turbines were not in operation for two weeks that their symptoms significantly improved, but worsened again when the turbines came back on line. Carl and Samantha have also noticed that they have significantly less problems when away on holidays. Samantha Stepnell notices that her symptoms are more persistent and severe as she spends more time in the house closest to these five turbines. Her husband, Carl, is also constantly affected but is able to move around the farm doing his usual work and therefore at times, is further away from the turbines. Their three children spend most of the day away from the farm, and as such, have minimal symptoms. The couple has not had a past history of these symptoms, nor has there been a past history of depression, stress or anxiety. They feel that they can accept the visual impact of the turbines and the red flashing lights at night, but it is the noise from the turbines that are causing their symptoms.

I also confirm that I have one other patient who lives at Waubra on a 10 acre farm who is distraught with exactly the same symptoms as the Stepnells. I believe from the circumstantial evidence that there is a strong correlation between their symptoms and the operation of the wind turbines nearby.

I hope therefore that you can take this into consideration in your discussions with Carl and Samantha Stepnell to try and come to an outcome that will resolve these symptoms.

Yours sincerely

Scott Taylor
M.B.B.S.Dip.R.A.C.O.G.D.A.R.C.A.