

Open Letter to the Premier of Victoria, Mr John Brumby

20/10/2010

My name is Dr Sarah Laurie, and I am the Medical Director of a newly formed national organisation called the Waubra Foundation. Our task is to act as a catalyst to ensure that independent peer reviewed research into the emerging issues of adverse health effects associated with wind turbine developments is urgently carried out. We have the current situation where our peak health body, the National Health and Medical Research Council, rightly says there is no peer reviewed evidence of adverse health effects from these wind turbine developments, but this does not mean there is no problem.

In the light of the extensive and growing anecdotal reports of health problems being experienced by those who live and work close to these turbine developments across the world, and the planned deployment of turbines close to homes and workplaces, it is imperative that such research is urgently carried out, independent of all those with vested interests in the outcome of such research.

As part of my duties as Medical Director, I have recently spent 2 weeks in Victoria, and spoken with people from Toora, Waubra and Cape Bridgewater. I have listened to the stories of those people who claim their health has been adversely affected since the turbines in their area started operating, met with public health and local council officials, provided information to interested Medical Practitioners, given public presentations, and spoken with the media, and discussed possible areas for research with interested researchers.

I was shocked at the extent and severity of symptoms which have been experienced by some individuals which appear to be related to the turbines when they are operating. Some patients experience symptoms when they are five km away from the nearest turbines.

Five people have had a clinical history consistent with a very rare and serious condition known as an acute hypertensive crisis, where they develop a sudden acute severe headache, nausea, a sensation of their heart leaping out of their chest, and they feel extremely unwell. This pattern of symptoms is associated with a dangerously high blood pressure, and warrants immediate medical attention. The Director of the Emergency Department at Ballarat Base Hospital is now aware that patients who develop these symptoms will be coming to his department. I was also shocked at the extent of acute psychiatric distress which some of these patients have been experiencing. Both the episodes of apparent hypertensive crises and depth of psychiatric distress have also been noted by the Canadian researchers I am in contact with, although this has not yet been described in any formal published medical studies.

I am appalled at the number of families I spoke to or was told about, who have had to leave their land because of poor health which they attribute to the turbines, thus losing not just their health, their homes, but often their livelihoods as well, as they were unable to

continue working their land. This pattern has been experienced across the world, and has been well described by Dr Nina Pierpont (USA), Dr Robert McMurtry (Canada), Dr Michael Nissenbaum (USA), and Dr Amanda Harry (UK).

Two individuals from different parts of Victoria who have signed confidentiality agreements restricting them from talking publicly about their symptoms and health problems spoke with me, in confidence, and I was dismayed to hear of this practice by the wind companies. I understand it is also widespread overseas. This has unfortunately contributed to a situation where health problems have gone undetected by the medical community because of this restricted access to information which inevitably delays proper public health research.

At the end of this month I am attending the International Wind Turbine Health Conference in Ontario, Canada, together with clinicians and researchers from across the world, who are all concerned about this issue and wish to share current knowledge and plan future research. This is a growing international issue, impacting many rural communities. Rural residents, clinicians and acousticians working in Canada, the USA, the UK and Scandinavia are all becoming aware that turbines appear to be affecting people's health in unexpected and unexplained ways. The patterns of symptoms being experienced are however, remarkably similar. Some countries, such as Denmark, have decided to only build new turbines out to sea. Mr Peter Jorgensen, the Danish Wind Industry Expert recently in South Australia as the guest of the premier Mr Mike Rann, confirmed this at a public meeting at the Adelaide Town Hall and during a radio interview on ABC Adelaide local radio with Carol Whitelock. Mr Jorgensen specifically stated that this was because of concerns about noise and health.

Our request is simple and not unreasonable. We agree that the peer reviewed independent acoustic, scientific, and health studies have not yet been done. So let's do them properly, independently, and with the appropriate levels of funding. Let's proceed with caution, delay construction and approval of further wind developments which are closer than 10km to homes and workplaces, until the results of these studies are known.

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