

SkyFarming Pty Ltd

developing community windfarms

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Dear Committee

Please find our submission to the

Community Affairs References Committee for inquiry
regarding

The social and economic impacts of rural wind farms, and in particular:

(a) Any adverse health effects for people living in close proximity to wind farms;

(b) Concerns over the excessive noise and vibrations emitted by wind farms, which are in close proximity to people's homes;

(c) The impact of rural wind farms on property values, employment opportunities and farm income;

(d) The interface between Commonwealth, state and local planning laws as they pertain to wind farms; and

(e) Any other relevant matters.

attached.

Please note that SkyFarming is a Pty Ltd company and been developing windfarms in Western Australia since 2003, further details at www.skyfarming.com.au.

Kind regards

Andrew Woodroffe

Technical Director



SkyFarming Submission

(a) We understand that this has been proven time and again, NOT to have any real basis, scientific or otherwise. This CANNOT be said for instance, for bird and bat kills which is a genuine issue and one the wind industry has taken seriously. Given that most windfarms are located on farmland which is already cleared, this problem is not as bad as it would be if wind farms were built in National Parks or on Nature Reserves. It also needs to be put in perspective; like cats, driving and windows, wind turbines do kill wildlife but to a much smaller degree.

(b) Our understanding is that the only real guidelines we have in this country regarding distances to nearest wind turbines from residences, is related to noise, ie for a given windspeed, it needs to be less than background noise plus 5db, down to a minimum of 35db. This is a much more practical policy than some fixed number as it takes into account the size of the turbines, the distances to the turbines and the number of turbines. It is also much easier to measure and calculate than, say, visual impact.

(c) Our understanding and expectations are that any landowner that hosts a wind turbine on their property gets rent. That this income completely outweighs any loss of land hosting the turbines might incur. Our landowner will be receiving a five figure income for the next twenty years, in addition to having very high quality road access over his property, for a minimum loss of grassland. Where possible, construction has used local businesses and labour.

Wind offers landowners a rather unique opportunity for some additional income, without having to do much or lose other income. It can be seen as an agricultural industry with the potential to keep farmers on the land and maintain the local communities.

(d) Our experience is with very small windfarms (< 5MW). In Mt Barker, the local shire has maintained a strong support for the project since its inception. In Denmark, because of the controversial nature of the project and that the location is not on private land, support has varied.

As mentioned previously, noise is not a bad guide for determining distances to nearest housing. Our experience is that compared to gaining network access, gaining planning approval has not been particularly difficult.

(e) We are just about to commission our first windfarm, it consists of three 800kW E53 machines on 73m high towers about 3 1/2 kilometres north of the township of Mt Barker, Western Australia. It is located on a private sheep farm about 60km inland. It will be the third smallest grid connected windfarm in the country.

In getting the planning amendment gazetted, the 6 weeks of public notice produced FIFTY submissions, ALL positive. Our local shire, the Shire of Plantagenet, has been very supportive and our application for an amendment to town planning was gazetted within 10 months of being submitted. Further details at www.mtbarkerpower.com.au.

Stand near a wind turbine and feel the wind on your face and in your hair. Look up and you will see what it takes to turn the energy in the wind into electricity. There is no pollution, no NOx or SOx emissions, no particulates, and, of course, no carbon dioxide emissions. Neither does a wind turbine consume water. And, after twenty five years when the wind turbine will need replacing or refurbishing or simply removing (whatever is economically and politically desirable at the time), the wind will still be blowing! Wind is genuinely sustainable, now. (Of course, the same can also be said of photovoltaics and sunshine.)

Wind is simply the cheapest and quickest and most widely applicable form of sustainable electricity generation that neither pollutes nor consumes non renewable resources. At the moment, nothing else comes close. Year in, year out, decade in, decade out, wind has been averaging some 25 to 30% annual growth. Some time before the end of this year, we will have 200,000MW installed across the planet. By 2014, it will be double this, now, why is this?

How much wind can we have? Australia is a very big country and is sparsely populated outside the capitals and regional centres. We are not short of physical space and windfarm sizes will be determined by what the networks can cope with.

In Western Australia, there is a small off the grid system at a place called Denham consisting of 3 x 300kW Enercon wind turbines, some diesel gensets and a flywheel. Wind supplies over 40% of the electricity generated, which means there are times when wind supplies 100% of the power. Given the almost insignificant geographical spread of this small project, ie the variation of the wind over 1 km is minute. Scaling this up to supply the rest of the country would be technically much easier and economically much cheaper.