

Submission to: Department of the Senate
Stephen Mitchell
Date: 10 February 2011



THE SOCIAL & ECONOMIC IMPACT OF RURAL WIND FARMS

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1. ON BALANCE – WIND FARMS DO NOT STACK UP

“RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITIES SHOULD ENDEAVOUR TO BALANCE ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL & ECONOMIC MATTERS IN FAVOUR OF COMMUNITY BENEFITS & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT”

Balance Sheet (Scored from 1-10)	For Windfarms		Against Windfarms
ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS			
Landscape destruction	0		-9
Endangered Species	0		-9
Flora and fauna	0		-5
Greenhouse gas savings (vs. gas natural)	1		0
Fire Risk	0		-3
SOCIAL MATTERS			
Health	0		-8
Safety	0		-5
Local community unity	0		-10
Local jobs	2		-1
Heritage effect	0		-10
Disruption during construction	0		-2
ECONOMIC MATTERS			
Value to turbine hosts	1		0
Value destruction to landowner , neighbours	0		-8
Cost of electricity generation	0		-6
Cost of electricity to consumer	0		-6
Cost of electricity to business	0		-5
Impact on inflation	0		-8
Impact on interest rates	0		-8
Impact on Victorian jobs	1		-6
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT & COMMUNITY BENEFIT	5	VS	-109

VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT DIRECTIVE TO VCAT

- The dangers to threatened species are just too great. State-wide credible studies over reasonable periods of time are essential. Proponents have time and again proven they cannot be trusted on providing independent or credible research
- The destruction of an important landscape is not justified
- The threat to other precious or endangered flora and fauna from birds to important grasslands is not justified
- Many regions are too heavily populated for such projects
- The noise and health issues have clearly not been addressed adequately
- The safety problems from fire have not been adequately addressed
- Neighbours rights to use aviation to manage their farms have been completely disregarded
- The overall impact on a communities have not been adequately considered
- The destruction of important cultural and historic sites are rarely considered
- With negligible Greenhouse Gas Savings, massive community damage, higher subsidies and higher energy prices, wind farms fail every important test.

2. DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY VALUE – ONE EXAMPLE FROM VICTORIA

DESTRUCTION BY WIND TOWERS

- The property was valued a few years ago at \$13-15m. Elders “conservative” estimate of a 30% reduction in value would therefore equate to \$4-\$4.5 million loss. If the property could be sold at all
- The main feature of the garden being the Guilfoyle designed vista will be totally destroyed thus eliminating its Heritage value.
- It may be possible to sell the property piecemeal to neighbors but the “icon” status of the property would be removed by the proximity of the towers rendering the historic infrastructure worthless.
- Who will spend the money to maintain the heritage infrastructure to enjoy the towers?
- This would be a direct appropriation of value from our family by the State Government to private enterprise without redress.
- This is not “just” nor “equitable”.



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4 May 2010

Re: Lowell – Peter Mitchell Planning Matter

My name is

My current employer is Elders Rural Services Australia Limited, and my role is National Sales Manager, based in Melbourne (160 Queen Street).

My experience in selling rural property spans in excess of 30 years, marketing and negotiating the sale of all types of rural property, mostly in Victoria, the Riverina and Tasmania.

During this time, I have personally transacted over two thousand sales, ranging in value from under \$100,000 to in excess of \$25,000,000.

I have transacted properties of all types, from horticultural to large pastoral station holdings.

I am an Associate of the Real Estate Institute of Victoria, Chairman of the Real Estate Committee of the Australian Livestock and Property Agents Association, and represent that body on the Estate Agents Council of Victoria, advising on various matters to the Minister of Consumer Affairs.

Throughout my career, I have been Melbourne based selling property to city investors, interstate buyers and international purchasers, from across the world.

During the last 10 years, there has been increased activity by parties signing various landholders to options for the placement of wind towers for the generation of electricity to the existing State grid.

The growth in this activity and the actuality of wind towers has been significant in the last half decade in particular.

Challicum Hills, Coddington and other sites have emerged in recent years. I have provided my unbiased opinion on the effect of these wind towers to the value of immediately adjoining lands to Mr Peter Mitchell of “Mawollock” in a letter dated 18th September 2007.

To have a density of towers erected immediately adjacent to a holding of such significance as “Mawollock” has a devastating effect on the value of such a unique property.

“To have a density of towers erected immediately adjacent to a holding of such significance as “Mawollock” has a devastating effect on the value of such a unique property”

The measure of this effect has been estimated by me to be at least 30% of its value, due to the reduced number of buyers that would compete for the property in any method of sale, due to the intrusive effect of the towers. This conservative estimate of 30% may in fact be far greater, depending on the density and proximity of the towers.

Visually the towers would be viewed by the majority of the elite market as repulsive. Audibly, the towers may effect the stillness the property enjoys, and be particularly resonating at night times, creating a harmony of sound that many may find invasive to their serenity, or natural enjoyment of the homestead precincts of this exclusive property.

A proliferation of wind towers immediately adjacent to any land holding has the similar effect to high voltage electricity towers, quarries, rubbish tips, hatcheries, sewerage treatment plants, in that if given the choice, do not wish to be near these sites, when buying rural property. This particularly applies in the case of historic properties of significance requiring million of dollars in investment, whereby capital gain is a consideration in the purchase decision.

Buyers in this category are able to find alternative properties, they have significant capital. Buyers in this category are intolerant of “shakes on value”.

It may be argued that subdivision of the property “soften” the effect of adjoining wind farms. The fact is the opposite, with more buyers needing to be “lower tolerant” which is unlikely to reduce its attractiveness as a multi-lot subdivision.

Properties such as “Mawollock” are appealing, extensive historic infrastructure and size, allowing good economic Subdivision dilutes this value.

Reference has been made to the possibility that these towers may interfere with the underground water source to “Mawollock” enjoys, which significantly adds to the unique garden ambience the property enjoys. Whilst I am not qualified to make statements in this regard, I am sure that in the event such source was hampered or restricted, where the induced reduced flow or capacity, the entire ambience of the property would be effected, and the ability of the property to be adequately valued. “Mawollock” needs would be in jeopardy, thereby reducing the overall value of the property of the farm livestock operation, and hence its entire viability.

I have made all the enquiries that I believe are appropriate, and no matters of significance which I regard as of importance to my knowledge been withheld from the panel.

Elders Rural Services Australia Limited ABN 72 004 045 121 Licensed Estate Agent
Peter Mitchell Licensed Estate Agent

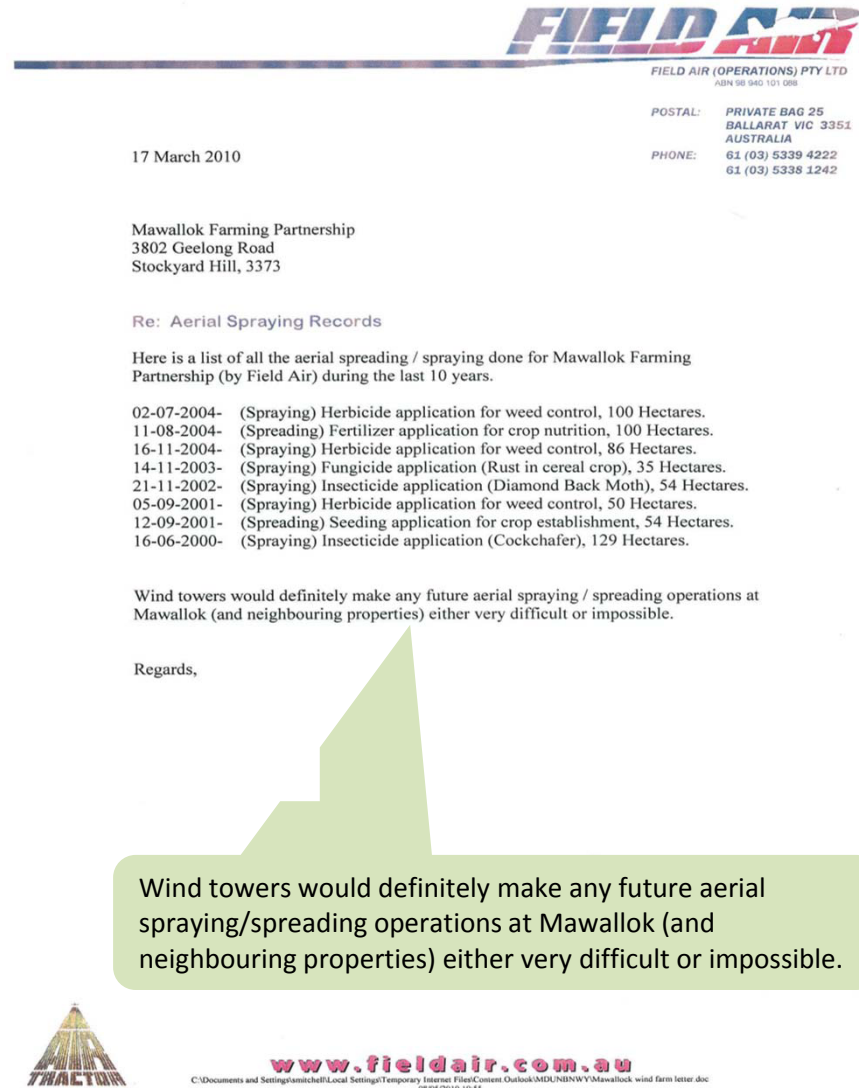
“The measure of this effect has been estimated by me to be at least 30% of its value”

3. THE THREAT TO HEALTH AND SAFETY

As a family man and an employer, the wind energy facility, as proposed, poses unacceptable health risks-many of which have been made evident at this hearing

(1) AERIAL MAINTENCE & IMPROVEMENTS

- The only effective way to control weeds, fertilise and seed the stony rises around Mawallok (south) is by air. We have done this on 8 occasions in the last 10 years and will do so in the future
- The Applicant has surrounded Mawallok's boundary with numerous turbines with no consideration to the health and safety of people working on Mawallok. CASA and the Pyrenees shire recommended a 750-850m buffer zone for these planes to turn around safely.
- There must be a minimum safe requirement for boundary setbacks in this area should this deeply flawed wind energy facility proceed.



3. THE THREAT TO HEALTH AND SAFETY (Continued)

(2) FIRE

- Wind energy facilities pose an unacceptable risk of fire to vulnerable landscapes. A history of devastating fires in regions where wind farms exist or are planned is well recorded
- A large number of wind turbines will add to the risk of fire. Over 123 turbine fires were recorded worldwide between 2002-2009. It is a statistical certainty that there will be future fires
- These fires often start with a malfunction at the top of the tower which causes hundreds of litres of oil from the transmission train to leak, ignite and then be sent flying over a wide area. No equipment exists that puts out the fire at its elevated source. THIS ACCIDENT PRONE TECHNOLOGY SHOULD NOT BE DEPLOYED IN A FIRE PRONE COUNTRY
- We, like many farmers in the district, have our own fire fighting equipment operated by our own people. In our stony rise country this poses a significant threat of entrapment to our people or local fire fighters that is a totally unacceptable risk. This leaves air support our only option and turbines in the region would certainly rule aircraft out in a fire.



3. THREATS TO HEALTH AND SAFETY (Continued)

(3) Health – Well covered by others submitters – but this is a critical issue

There must be an immediate nation-wide moratorium on any turbine with 5-10km of a residence until proper, independent, public, peer reviewed studies are completed

Protecting the health of Australian citizens is a key responsibility of parliamentarians and there is enough credible evidence to demonstrate proximity to wind towers makes people very ill.

- Noise
- Shadow flicker
- Strobing should lights be added later (as at Waubra)
- Impacts on mental health need to be better understood
- Impacts on concentration for those operating heavy equipment need to be better understood

4. THE SIGNIFICANT THREAT TO FLORA, FAUNA AND NATIVE VEGETATION

- It is inconceivable to me that a responsible business would plan wind energy facilities in areas where threatened and endangered species live. In the case of the Victorian Stockyard Hill wind farm it is the beautiful and threatened Brolga with a wind farm planned for where it is known to breed and flock
- With only some 200-300 hundred pairs of the Southern Brolga left, no amount of hypothetical modelling will protect these birds-even if that modelling is undertaken by a credible group
- Wind turbines kill cranes – that is a fact. These beautiful birds need our protection and we can not risk any further threat to their very precarious existence nor leave their fate in the hands of an irresponsible developer and their paid “experts”
- Other significant threats were also very well articulated in the WPLGA response on flora and fauna especially on native grasslands. All I can do is concur with their findings and express my disappointment by the work done by the Applicant and their “Experts”



Cranes flying among turbines - Spain



Turbine kill - Spain



The cranes in Spain lie slain on the plain

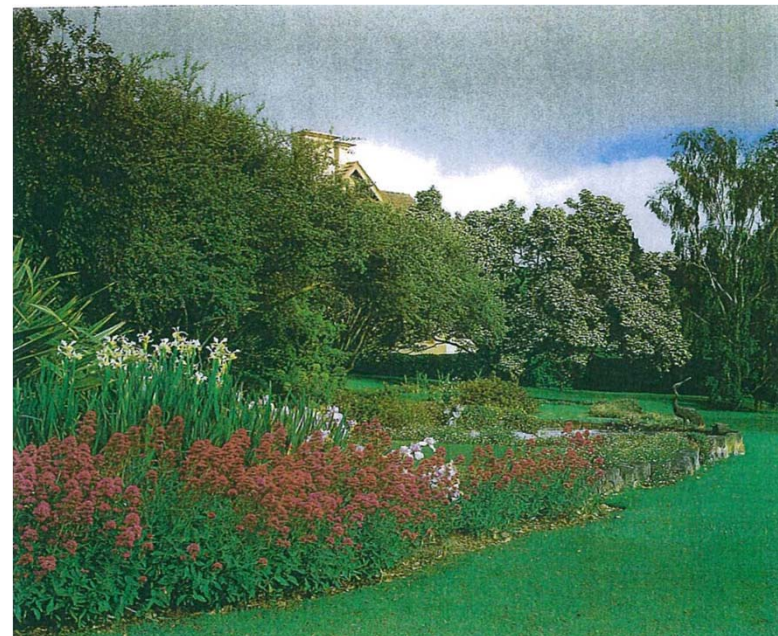
5. THE THREAT TO MAJOR AQUIFERS AND SPRINGS – NEVER PROPERLY CONSIDERED, E.G. STOCKYARD HILL

- Three springs from the aquifer recharge area around the Black Lake-Stockyard Hill region are an extraordinary geological feature over which it is planned to site many turbines. It was only the ignorance and brutal disregard for historic and important water and landscape features which led WPL to plan turbines for this area
- One spring, of 10,000 gph waters the garden, 4 houses and together with another spring of 4,000 gph, the stock troughs for the 6,000 acre property
- The main spring is the source of water of the Sir John Monash-designed lake and a string of further lakes used for irrigation. The lakes are home to hundreds and sometimes thousands of water birds, some of which are on the threatened species list
- I note the Applicant's expert in this regard testified he did not even know of the whereabouts of these springs
- The Applicant has been very vague about where they intend to source the significant quantities of water needed in the construction phase. It is simply not credible that after 4 years of design work they cannot tell us where this water will come from
- We seek the Panel's support to apply the "precautionary measure" and ensure no turbines are placed in water recharge areas or within a 100m corridor between the sources (Black Lake) and the major springs in the region



6. THE VISUAL THREAT TO A BEAUTIFUL LANDSCAPE – E.G. AT STOCKYARD HILL, VICTORIA

- The region includes “Significant Natural Features” according to Pyrenees Planning Scheme including Lake Goldsmith, Black Lake, Fiery Creek and Mt. Emu Creek. It is inconceivable to me that these were not mentioned in the LVA
- Stockyard Hill is a site of “Regional significance” (DPI) and one of “High conservation value” (1980 Land conservation Report). Again ignored by the LVA
- Monmot Hill was also noted in the LCL as a feature of “high conservation value” and as “especially scenic”
- Attesting to the significant landscape value are the famous artists who have sought to capture its beauty, including Von Guerard and Dacre Smyth
- The plains grasslands are particularly special and is considered by the Federal Government as “critically endangered”. These grasslands exist around the region and require protection
- This wind energy facility will destroy this special landscape.

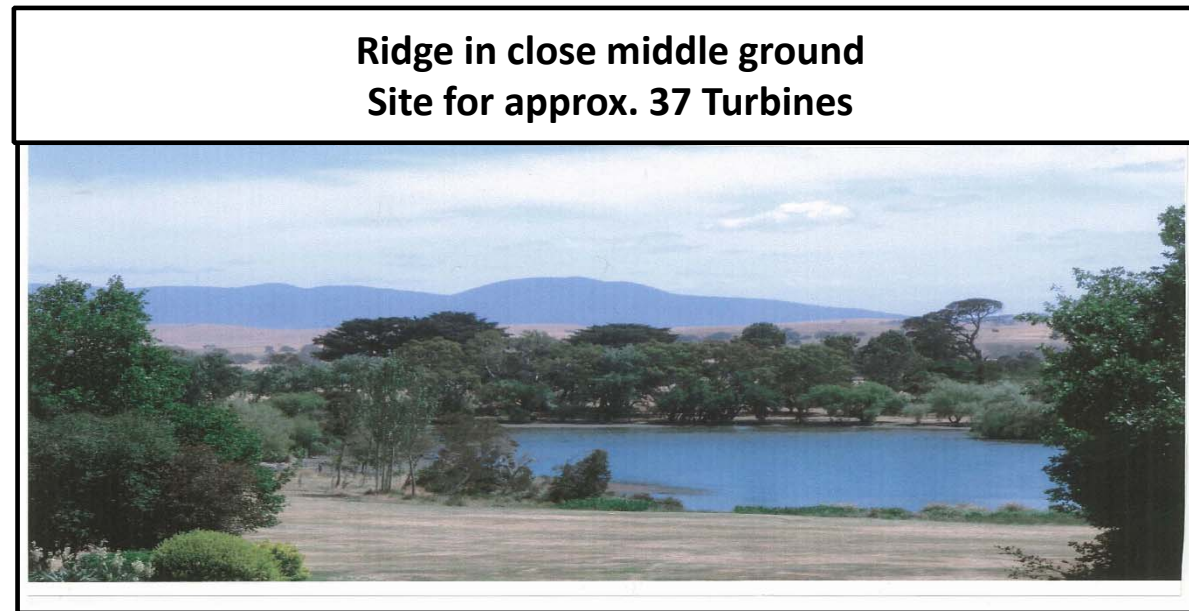


7. THE POTENTIAL RISK OF FURTHER DEPOPULATING REGIONAL AUSTRALIA

- Wind turbines and people do not mix. The tragedy of Waubra and other places is a testament to this. People leave turbine effected areas – they do not move into them
- Many farms will become vacant as owners and workers refuse to live on them – creating absentee landlords
- Wind energy facilities belong in depopulated and very windy places. The Stockyard Hill wind energy facility offers neither. The proposal only exists because guidelines are too weak, the dangers only partially understood, the proponents unrestrained and heavy government subsidies.
- Wind energy facilities deeply divide the community.

8. A PERSONAL STORY- A THREAT TO A PROPERTY OF SIGNIFICANT HISTORIC AND CULTURAL IMPORTANCE

- My wife and I are the current custodians of Mawallok. As such we feel a strong sense of responsibility to preserve the asset for our family and the country
- As custodians we are also directed to preserve this asset by Heritage Council Victoria

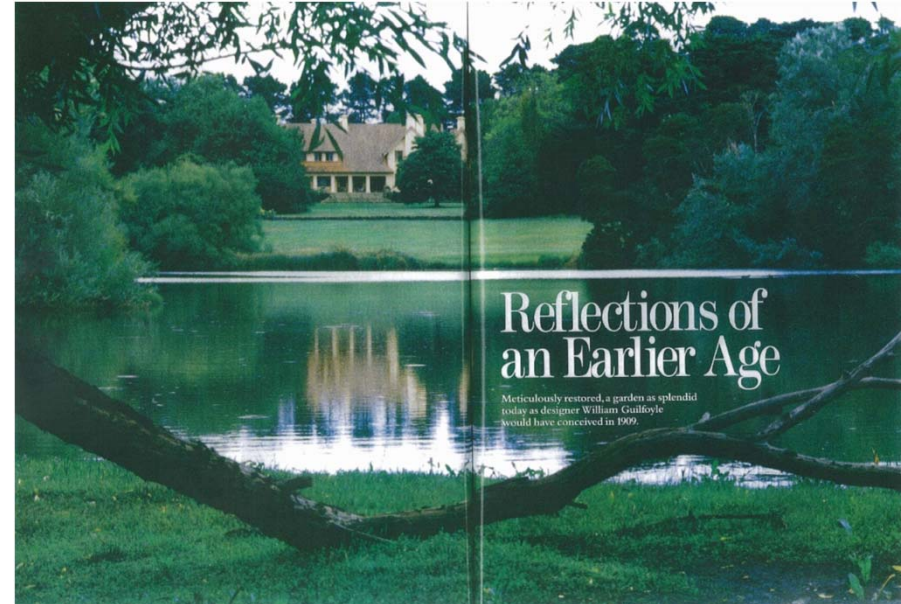


- “A major feature of the site’s significance is the view from the homestead across the Monash Lake to the Pyrenees ranges and Mt. Cole. The view should be retained and protected” (CEO – Heritage Council Victoria)
- “The significance of the homestead and gardens is enhanced by the view across the Monash Lake and the distant vista of the Pyrenees ranges and Mt Cole. Management of the registered place should seek to retain these views.” **(Heritage Council Victoria)**
- Despite removal of some offending turbines – enough remain to compromise the heritage value of this special Australian treasure.

DESTRUCTION OF A PROPERTY OF SIGNIFICANT HISTORIC AND CULTURAL IMPORTANCE

GARDEN AND HOUSE

- Historic property in the context of Victorian Settlement, the development of the Merino Industry and the Cultural history of Victoria
- Arts & Crafts 100 year old house, designed by Alsop and Klingender-quite rare
- A 7 acre garden in the English Landscape manner, designed by William Guilfoyle, the major landscape designer of the Melbourne Botanic Gardens. Well restored and maintained and probably the best surviving example of a Guilfoyle garden in private hands
- Back dropped by a large lake designed by the famous Australian Sir John Monash
- Guilfoyle had a special talent for enfolding the landscape vista into the garden and this was the basic purpose of the siting of the house and garden around the vista to the Pyrenees Mountains and specifically to Mount Cole
- Garden is known around the world and featured in many magazines and books including “1001 Gardens to See Before You Die.”
- Bibliography: Books: 1. Historic Gardens of Victoria: A Reconnaissance, Peter Watts (1983), 2. The Great Gardens of Australia, Howard Tanner (1976), 3. The Oxford Companion to Australian Gardens, Edited by Richard Aitken & Michael Looker (2002), 4. Private Gardens of Australia, Sarah Guest (1990), 1001 Gardens You Must See Before You Die, Rae Spencer-Jones (2007). Articles: Belle Magazine (Aug/Sept 1989) Reflections of an Earlier Age, Country Style (Nov 2000) Defining Design



DESTRUCTION OF A PROPERTY OF SIGNIFICANT HISTORIC AND CULTURAL IMPORTANCE

- The responsibility of maintaining the House and garden we estimate at over \$150,000 year
- In 30 years our family has owned Mawallok, we estimate that close to \$5 million has been spend on its restoration and preservation
- It requires 2^{1/2} fulltime gardeners and often contractors
- The wind energy facility as proposed will completely destroy not just the cultural and heritage value of the asset, but also our family's ability to live at, enjoy and maintain the asset
- With heritage value destroyed and our ability to enjoy the asset destroyed - no family member is willing to live here to see such an asset turned into an industrial estate. Under these circumstances it would be pointless to continue the vast expense and dedication required to maintain the asset (and I cannot imagine anyone else who would)



DESTRUCTION OF A PROPERTY OF SIGNIFICANT HISTORIC AND CULTURAL IMPORTANCE

PUBLIC USE AND HERITAGE LISTING

- Because of its spectacular vista, garden, house and history, Mawallok has been used for major charitable events as well as many local charities. Events have been held for the Royal Children's Hospital, CARE Australia, The National Stroke Foundation, the Skipton and Beaufort hospitals and aged care facilities and it has opened 15 times for Australia's Open Garden Scheme.
- An estimated 20,000 people have visited during my family's tenure with the next major public opening scheduled for October.
- This is a cultural and heritage asset we share with the community and for the community benefit
- As mentioned earlier the house, most of the buildings on the property and the garden are listed on The National Estate Register and The Victorian Heritage Register.
- Some of the many observations of Mawallok are worth noting:



4. Original homestead



5. 'Mawallok' Stables

Sanity still blowing in the wind

Herald Sun

Terry McCrann

August 04, 2009 12:00am

THE Rudd Government's 'green power' strategy has been utterly shredded by detailed analysis which shows the total uselessness of the one form of power on which it is almost entirely based - wind.

Further, this independent analysis is a damning indictment of not only the [federal government](#) and all state governments for their betrayal of their most fundamental duty to the public interest. But it also exposes the disgrace of the so-called 'public service' bureaucracies.

Where is the official analysis of what wind power generation does in practice - at either federal or state level? Which, if it had been done, would have embarrassingly exposed its uselessness. Why has it had to be done by 'privateers'?

The answer is of course that the public service at both state and federal level has abandoned not just its broad general duty to the public, but even its narrower duty to tell political government the truth by providing policy advice and analysis.

Simply and damningly: If you don't ask the question, if you don't do the analysis, you won't come up with the 'wrong' answer.

If you do, you find that not only does wind fail as a power source. Not that that's a surprise to anyone who's prepared to 'look'. When the wind don't blow, the power don't flow. Even more devastatingly, as this analysis shows, the wind not only don't blow an awful lot of the time. It tends to not blow 'everywhere' at the same time.

This utterly shreds the claim that if we build enough of the so-called 'wind farms' across southern Australia, the wind will always be blowing somewhere.

No it won't. But you'll look in vain for 'official' advice saying that.

What makes the analysis even more damning is that wind fails even in the main reason for its costly and ineffective existence - to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Precisely because of that pesky little problem.

An unreliable 484MW wind farm would not only cost more than two times a gas-fired 550MW power station. But it would allow perhaps only 25MW of coal-fired generation to be shut down - whereas the gas plant could close its full 550MW.