

Select Committee on Wind Turbines

PO Box 6100

Parliament House

Canberra ACT 2600

email: windturbines.sen@aph.gov.au

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Community submission from the Atherton Tablelands, Far North Queensland

Dear Senators

I am not here to discuss the merits or otherwise of Wind Farms, I am writing to you to outline the unethical process undertaken by the Mt Emerald Wind Farm (MEWF) partners, Ratch Australia and Port Bajool, to facilitate the location of this industrial complex in our backyard.

In 2007 the owners of Mt Emerald, John Morris and Jim Noli, flew onto our property to discuss the sale of a 100 acres to us of their land adjoining ours. During these discussions they announced that they were considering the introduction of a couple of wind turbines on the mountain behind us but we won't see or hear them as they will be in the hollow behind the ridges. In 2011, four years later, we discovered that the Council had, in their wisdom classified this huge Industrial Complex a Utility, which meant it was Code Assessable and not Impact Assessable and accordingly, we were unable to confront the many issues associated with placing an industrial complex of this size into a very sensitive rural community. I will now outline some glaring anomalies in their behavior during the development application process, to which we cannot do more than try to expose them in the media.

Although those points which I will outline below involve in many cases the wider community, many of them refer to me personally, so it is from this angle with which I present my case. I wish to display with indignity the unethical and condescending manner in which the developers have treated me personally and the community in general with total disdain.

Jennifer Disley with Jack Krikorian

Walkamin Enterprises

Ratch and Port Bajool Behaving Unethically

- In 2007 we (Jack Krikorian and myself) were informed that Port Bajool and the then Transfield were to build a small wind farm on the plateau, but we would not see or hear it as it was on the other side of the plateau and in the hollow. *It was in fact designed from the beginning to cover the majority of the plateau, certainly on the outer ridges which are also the main habitat of the endangered Northern Quoll; we will certainly see 150 meter structures and the Quolls will certainly feel them!*
- In 2011 the project was displayed to the public and after our discussions with the developers they conceded that all their maps were totally skewed in their favor. Maps showing (and many still do) inaccuracies included wind direction (wrong), surrounding residences (or lack of), roads (missing), noise and buffer zones. *With locals correcting them on their own development maps, it was apparent that limited time and research had been made during the development application process. Their Development Application was accordingly rejected by the Council and further information was sought.*
- To date information sought by our Council has not been addressed and glaring omissions are still included in all their literature. Ratch and Port Bajool continue to misrepresent the status quo in their latest Environmental Impact Statement to minimize the impact this proposal would have on the community. Their maps continuously neglected to include small roads giving the impression that the area surrounding the site was largely underpopulated. *All these inconsistencies and omissions in the maps were handed to the deciding Minister, then Deputy Premier Geoff Seeney, who visited the site and commented "I'll need a lot of convincing to approve this project". However, with the change in Government, it is our belief that this information has gone missing and we are not allowed to re-present the missing information.*
- In the proponent's original DA the land surrounding the site was described as "predominantly grazing and horticultural pursuits". *We believe this was an attempt to minimize the Good Quality Horticultural Land with water which surrounds the site. (3% of Queensland Agricultural land is classified as prime agricultural and 1.3% of that 3% is classified as prime agricultural land with water, we sit on that 1.3%). It was also an attempt to minimize the large number of viable horticultural industries, agricultural industries, agri-businesses, accommodation businesses, high end rural subdivisions and livestock enterprises which turns over \$320 million per annum within 5 kms of this proposal.*
- I personally invited RPS Consultant, David Finney to my property on 5 separate occasions, so that I could show him our community and the number of enterprises which employ large numbers of employees. *His response, "I know your road, I drove down it once". As locals we found this contemptuous.*
- On following community development guidelines for windfarms, Port Bajool stated that they had done letter drops of their newsletters. *We do not have a rural delivery service here, and we do not have letter boxes. The local Postmistress has never been given any information from the wind farm developers.*

- Wendy Morris (Port Bajool) stated on ABC radio that there was no one living within 2 kms of the wind farm. *In all instances false information has been given to minimize the impacts on the locals. There are in fact between 70 – 80 people residing within 2 kms (40 on my property alone as I have a rural accommodation business. My farm workers will not be able to sleep under these huge turbines and my business will have to close with no compensation).*
- Politicians and median have always been told that there is only a handful, or 5-6 people who object to the wind farm. *The action group has an emailing list hundreds of people long for those objectors in the area who want to keep up with the information.*
- Ratch conducted via a Melbourne Firm, a phone survey regarding the wind farm. *Their survey did not include local people to the wind farm. One third of the people questioned resided over 20 kms away. No one on Channel Road was interviewed, i.e. some of the most impacted people. With over 100 residents on Channel Road it is surprising they could not find one person to contact. 80% of people surveyed said they knew nothing of Mt Emerald.*
- The assessment on Community Impact has never been done. *This is a part of normal application process and has been bypassed.*
- John Morris and Jim Noli visited a few of the neighboring farmers. They stated they would get back with the information sought. *To date there has never been a second visit or information offered.*
- During some council meetings, despite Ratch stating they were open and transparent, council sessions were closed and the public had to leave. *I have been shut out of one of their meetings during the public session as were all other members of the public.*
- Following the first public information day in early 2011 the Project Manager for Ratch, Terry Johannesen asked if he could make an appointment with me at home. On arriving I told him that if he wasn't going to buy me I would show him the view, if he was going to buy me I would show him around. His reply, **"Jenny we have to buy you as you are going to be so severely impacted"**. I showed him around.
Back in the house he asked for an evaluation of the property. One year prior, looking at our options and developing major works we had an appraisal from Macquarie Business Brokers who had supplied written confirmation that they would market my property at \$6,000,000. Two years approximately later, Jack asked Terry again if he was going to buy us, and his response was, *"No you're too expensive"*. **Damage done! YOU WILL BE SEVERELY IMPACTED, but we are not going to do anything about it.**
- John Morris and Jim Noli sat at my table twice, stating that they will be cashed up upon approval and they would buy me. After hearing back comments from the local Mayor and one other, they had been laughing at the mere suggestion that I would get any money out of them at all. *Another example of being treated with contempt.*

- I permitted noise monitoring to be conducted on my property. *This was conducted by a local farm hand, not a qualified acoustician, and originally the monitor was placed under a huge tree. For the first two weeks he did not even turn it on.*
- The DA stated that my property would not be impacted by shadow flicker. However I challenged this with the Project Manager for two reasons. One, I have the photos to prove that at certain times of the year the turbines will be between the setting sun and my houses, and two, the DA states that there shall be signs placed on the road behind me, further away from the turbines, that state that drivers should be careful of shadow flicker. *The Project Manager still denies that I will be impacted.*
- The original photomontages hid the turbines so well that they were hardly visible on the distant horizon. When the council called for them to be redone, the same thing occurred. I had an architect montage the same single frame view from my property with totally different consequences which surprised MP Geoff Seeney greatly. *With 3 MW turbines, on top of a 300 – 400 meter high plateau rim just 900 meters from my property I will be looking up at them nearly 550 meters in the air. It is estimated they will be reaching more than a height of 500 meters above my property. I have 35 turbines in my immediate field of view and my houses are downwind of the turbines for the majority of the year.*
- Our questions remain unanswered. We have asked many questions on all aspects of the DA, e.g. will there be night lights, which road will the 14,700 concrete trucks be taking, where will the crushing plant be. *We only get generic answers and to date have not had one question answered honestly. Many of their answers simply state that it will be up to the individual contractors. We do not believe that an industrial 3 year build and 25 years of hell afterwards can be fobbed off with generic answers.*
- Port Bajool had developed the Oaky Valley subdivisions, a selection of acreages behind the plateau, of individual holdings between 10 to 300 acres approximately. Once the wind farm was proposed publically “Gag Clauses” were introduced to purchasers to sign off that they would not be “materially prejudiced” by the wind farm. *We say that this is unconstitutional in Australia. If they were not lying about the serious impacts, why feel the need to put in such a clause. A recent buyer was told the same as we heard over the years, the turbines are on the other side of the mountain and you will not see or hear them. The lies have continued since day one.*
- Ratch Australia offered the local primary school (Tolga) \$30,000 over a period of 3 years for natural studies. *This was rejected by the parents and teachers association within hours as they considered it a bribe. When challenged why the Walkamin School had not been offered any money, Ratch said they were unaware there was another primary school in the vicinity.*
- When asked by the TRC (council) to place a bond towards road damage in the shire, Ratch replied that they were an international company that took their responsibility seriously and no bond was necessary. *Ratch (Thailand) is developing this wind farm under a \$2 Australian company, namely Ratch Australia, which can be closed at the first sign of trouble.*

- In the early stages of the DA being public, Jim Noli used to dive his helicopter low over my houses and farm to annoy us. I took photos and told him that I would hand the photos over to CASA if he persisted. *Another example of their contemptuous attitude. The low flying has since stopped.*
- In regards to another wind farm, another employee of Ratch, Nick Valentine was caught posing as a fictitious Frank Bestic, in order to gain information from an anti-wind farm group. *Nothing open and transparent here.*
- Ratch contributed to the Queensland Wind Farm Guidelines and removed any reference to neighbors. *Neighbors should be of the highest priority in any code regarding wind farms.*

The area surrounding the Mt Emerald Wind Farm supports over 1,000 workers each day, and nearly 1,000 prison staff alongside 900 prisoners, and last year generated over \$320 million and \$41 million in wages, all within 5 kms of the site. Geoff Dutton of Ratch agreed that he had no idea how productive and vast the agricultural industry was here.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Please accept the above as just a few of the reasons why the local community is frustrated and angry. The word "contempt" often crops up in our conversations due to the treatment of the community by the developers. No one from Ratch or Port Bajool is secure enough to step foot in our community over the last few years. This wind farm site is unique socially in Australia, in that, the mountain range and plateau is owned by one developer who does not live near here, and no farmers stand to gain in any way from this development. What has been achieved is that our close knit community has become even closer and rallied ranks against the developers. Our mailed survey to every property owner within 5 kms returned a 91.2% objection to the wind farm.

As a Security Scientist, specializing in CPTED, I took the opportunity to respond to their Traffic Report. In this I found many errors, although their responses again came back with, it will be up to the traffic contractors to find the answers to my questions. I take the opportunity to forward to you a copy of my response by Express Post and hope that you accept this late submission. To add insult to injury our community is now struggling to deal with the outbreak of Panama disease on our banana crops and the impost of 37,000 vehicles coming up from Tully during their build stage could potentially compromise any Bio Security measures introduced to protect our farms from this disease. As stated I only had one afternoon to prepare this very brief and limited submission and my partner and I will look forward to addressing the committee at your convenience.

I would like to extend an invitation for the Select Committee to visit my and surrounding properties to view the damage an industrial complex of this size would bring upon the community and encourage you to advise Qld Deputy Premier Trad to delay her decision until your findings are public.

Thank you for the opportunity to prepare a submission for the Select Senate Committee, and we look forward to your stopping the destruction of people's homes, businesses and superannuations.

Jennifer Disley with Jack Krikorian

Walkamin Enterprises

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