

Dear Senators of Australia,

We urge you to take a lead and protect your countryside, your citizens' health and the value of Australian land by limiting the number of industrial wind plants in your country and, by example, open the debate on wind energy worldwide.

In our community in Donegal County in the North West of Ireland, we are being forced to take the majority of the industrial wind turbines on the island of Ireland.

In addition to hundreds of unsightly turbines affecting our tourism industry, the number one employer in the County, our beautiful landscape and the many endangered species that live thereon are being threatened to extinction.

In spite of numerous laws to protect the environment, the rights of the wind companies surpasses those of the local people and planning and environmental laws are being broken to accommodate the wind developers.

These developers have used intimidation to position turbines up to 150m high within 500m of people's homes. They are targeting hillside owned by elderly farmers and as one hilltop is destroyed they move onto the next site, forcing people to move or suffer the ill-health effects of living withing 10km of these large wind farms. People are reporting disturbed sleep and depression while animals have aborted.

There is no consultation with the public and the planning laws and the so called 'Green' lobby are geared to support the private profit of the wind companies as opposed to the public good.

There are less than 170,000 people in our county which has the largest Gaelic speaking population in Ireland. The majority of people live in rural areas and many are being affected by the numerous turbines. The rights of local people are being subsumed to those of big business. It is an environmental injustice on our community.

The fact is more CO₂ is released into the atmosphere when hundreds of thousands of tonnes of peat are excavated to erect each wind farm than these wind farms will ever offset in hundreds of years. Turbines only work at 25% capacity for 70% of the time due to fluctuating winds which means that fossil fuels are used to back up the grid. This puts pay to the idea that wind plants are producing green energy.

The loss of precious habitats, the danger to our salmon and trout stocks due to silting of rivers and streams; the threat to the Golden Eagle, Grouse, Otters, Deer, various insects and plants, means that we loose far more than we gain.

Once a wind plant is erected the damage to the mountain is irreversible. The landscape is not renewable, nor is the language that sprung from it or the people who live in Donegal, people who are loosing the very land they stand on. We are being pushed out of our communities and neighbours are being turned against neighbour over the promise of small amounts of money which the wind companies are offering to lease hill land for the turbines.

In addition to the dangers from the wind plants themselves there is the added danger of the hundreds of kms of high voltage power lines and new sub stations, all of which are placed overground and cross country as this is the cheapest means of transmitting electricity and the power companies do not care about the health of local people and their increased risk of getting cancer due to being near high voltage power lines.

The experience of the Australian Aborigines, of being forced to forgo a way of life, a language and their heritage, is being threatened here due to our government's ignorance of the dangers of erecting giant wind turbines near homes and on precious landscapes. Don't let the Australian Government make the same mistake.

Regards, Pat Sharkey
for Gweebarra Conservation Group