

SUBMISSION FOR THE SENATE ENQUIRY INTO THE SOCIAL & ECONOMIC IMPACT OF WIND FARMS

We purchased our beautiful 100 acre “lifestyle” property in November 2007 for our retirement – a return to the peace and beauty of the country for us. Weeks later, while researching the area on the internet, we discovered that a 100 turbine wind farm was proposed adjacent to our property. Our neighbours had signed contracts, with confidentiality clauses, with Union Fenosa, the proponent, in 2006. The selling agents and the original owners stated that they knew nothing of the proposal and nor did many adjacent landholders. Two of these major stakeholders are leasing their land and moving from the area.

The conditional permit to build the facility was granted in August 2010 and has not been finally approved by the Minister for Planning.

Our home will be surrounded on three sides by 16 turbines within 2 kilometres, 30 turbines within 3 kilometres and 57 within 3.5 kilometres. The cumulative effects will be increased because of the prevailing south-westerly winds and the flat terrain of the site.

We employed an Acoustics Engineer, Dr Bob Thorne, who investigated our position relating to the Berrybank wind farm and presented his findings to the Panel Hearing in February 2010. He stated that our home would be **severely affected and made untenable** by the close proximity to the turbines.

Even under the inadequate New Zealand Guidelines, used by the Brumby Government, our property is at the very cusp of allowable noise limits when using a Vestas V90 turbine, the lowest noise emitter of all the turbines proposed. To comply with the amended permit, Union Fenosa is required to provide new predicted noise levels for **all** of the turbines considered. It is vital that these predictions are independently peer reviewed. We repeatedly requested the Government and Union Fenosa to undertake independent audible and inaudible noise testing but were refused or ignored. We paid Noise Measurement Services, accredited acousticians, to conduct noise level testing on our property. The background levels measured by them were **lower** than those of Marshall Day (employed by Union Fenosa). All noise measurements must be repeated and include low frequency noise recordings, thought to be the primary cause of turbine health issues. All measurements must be undertaken by independent, peer reviewed acousticians.

It can now be proven, with reasonable certainty, that significant health problems, physical and mental suffering, is occurring due to wind farms. In Victoria alone, many have been forced to vacate their homes, particularly at Waubra, Toora and Cape Bridgewater. Confidentiality clauses ensure that the true extent of these effects is not revealed. Thorough and independent research is imperative. Noise monitoring at sufferers and potential sufferers homes is essential and must be undertaken by private and totally independent contractors, possibly overseen by an experienced EPA representative. There is a desperate need for noise and health studies to be undertaken before any projects are activated.

The NH&MRC’s Rapid Review of the health impacts of wind farms is a disgracefully inadequate “quick desk study”, with no attempt to contact sufferers or organizations gathering proper data. To state that “any potential problems can be minimised by **following existing planning guidelines**” is unprofessional and totally unacceptable. Health problems, anecdotal and evidential, have arisen **under existing guidelines.**

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We have huge concerns regarding the devaluation of our hobby farm. With increased public awareness to the probable negative health effects from wind turbines and the new Victorian Government's stance on "no turbines closer than 2 kilometres to any home" for future projects, our property (with 16 turbines within 2 kilometres) will be **unsaleable as well as untenable**. The National Sales Manager for Elders Rural Services, a real estate agent for 30 years, specialising in rural property, states: **"There is absolutely no doubt that the value of lands adjacent to wind towers falls significantly in value."** An appropriate compensation process should be instigated.

The Berrybank wind farm, through lack of planning and foresight, has been placed on deep furrowed, "raised-bed" terrain. The CFA will not allow fire vehicles, with personnel, on to "raised-bed" country because of the danger to personnel and equipment. Aerial fire control is usually used to fight fires on this country, but it now cannot be used due to the height and dense placement of the turbines, and the danger to pilots. **Berrybank is the first wind farm to be placed on "raised-bed" country – an extremely dangerous situation.** A senior CFA representative, in his submission to the Panel Hearing for the Berrybank wind farm, stated that the CFA is opposed to any fire fighting vehicles and personnel on the site. The recent turbine fire at Starfish Hill, South Australia, is alarming. Safe Work would not allow fire fighters (CFS) within 1 kilometre of the burning turbine. This is the third turbine fire in four years for South Australia. At Berrybank, and many other wind facilities, turbines are placed 1 kilometre, and closer, to homes. The safety of the properties and residents on, and surrounding, the Berrybank wind farm is severely at risk. We have written to the CFA many times, but as yet, have not received a reply. These unacceptable and potentially dangerous circumstances must be addressed.

The submissions to the Minister for Planning by the proponent, Union Fenosa, were flawed and inaccurate. The information presented lacked vital detail. The Flora and Fauna Study failed to identify many common animals such as hares and bats. The DSE Manager, in his submission to the Panel Hearing, stated that the Study failed to identify broilga sites and that local experts were not consulted. The Minister for Planning decided that an Environmental Effects Study was not necessary for Berrybank. This decision was made on a misleading, inadequate and deceptive Flora and Fauna study.

The assessment of Visual Impact presented by the Union Fenosa "Expert" states that the wind farm will have "a low visual impact" viewed from 1 kilometre away. Surely 100 turbines on virtually flat terrain and 130 metres in height – as tall as the Sydney Harbour Bridge - will have a massive and dominant impact! This Expert also recommended that some plantings would be adequate to screen the turbines from homes. He made these recommendations to the Minister without ever setting foot on any of the surrounding properties that he was assessing.

There are numerous instances of inaccurate and inadequate assessments presented by these experts employed by Union Fenosa. They are employed by most other wind farm developers as well. **Thus, any information that is presented as "Expert Statements" must be seen as biased and their validity questionable.** The Berrybank community that was not involved with the wind farm development was unaware of it. Union Fenosa held only one session with the residents. The

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information provided was scant and vague and lacked detail pertaining to the placing, number and size of the turbines. The company, at our request, has met with us only once and shows little regard for the dire situation we are likely to be placed in. We have repeatedly informed them that our home will most likely be untenable. They say that they are complying with the New Zealand Standard requirements.

The “average” person, who is impacted by wind farms, or the proposal of them, is often daunted by the money, legal teams and spin of these huge wind companies. You feel powerless and lacking in resources and money to interact with them. Most of these companies attempt to get a community “on side” by “bribing” communities with their large donations to local groups and organizations, and many belong to the Clean Energy Council – a very misleading named (sounds like a government organization) group of self-promoting wind farm proponents.

Much has been written about the wonderful community spirit and solidarity displayed during the recent floods and bush fires. Wind farms, and the prospect of them, often cause deep divisions, discord and isolation within communities. The “sense of community” collapses, neighbours and friends are forever alienated and community spirit is lost.

People everywhere have had their lives changed and many feel that their lives are on hold because they are powerless to do anything about their future. This leads to anxiety, alienation and stress.

Our vision for a peaceful, self-sufficient rural life on our lovely small farm has been severely compromised by the prospect of 57 turbines surrounding us within 3.5 km. We are extremely stressed and worried for our future.

We thank you for the opportunity to present this submission and welcome any contact and advice.

Yours Sincerely

Anne & Allan Schafer