

THE SOCIAL and ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF RURAL WIND FARMS

"I write to you supporting rural wind farms.

Wind power is the most commercially and technically viable form of renewable energy and is an essential part of our response to climate change.

The wind industry employs more people per unit of energy than either coal or gas generation and the resulting jobs are widely spread across many regions.

Land owners benefit from a new source of income, without any measurable impact on farming operations.

Wind farms are widely supported in the community. Hepburn Shire received 343 letters in relation to the Hepburn Wind Project, with 95% in support. Recent NSW polling shows more than 85% support wind power. This project is a success environmentally, socially and economically.

Communities benefit from job creation, local investment and the community funds that are commonly implemented by project proponents. The Hepburn Wind project is expected to provide more than \$1,000,000 to the local community over the next 25 years — the local community will benefit more than the landlord.

Community wind farms are common in Europe — Denmark has more than 2,100. These projects empower local communities to constructively engage in the transition to a future without pollution.

Wind farms, especially at a local level give the opportunity to develop hybrid systems using a biogas burning generator automatically linked to the wind farm with an automatic start-up process which would take load when the wind farm cannot. A biomass-fired generator serving as reserve capacity for a wind farm is unlikely to be fully utilised but it certainly addressed the constant criticisms relating to “base load” which is thrust at all alternative energy systems.

The success of wind farms in Europe stands in stark contrast to assumptions and criticisms in Australia that they are not good for rural communities. Their uptake in several European countries shows that Australians living in rural communities would do well to go on fact finding missions to these very communities in Europe which have embraced and successfully live with wind farms.