

9 February 2011

Senate Community Affairs Committee  
Parliament of Australia - Senate

To whom it may concern

**Senate Inquiry - The Social and Economic Impact of Rural Wind Farms**

We refer to your request for submissions to the above inquiry published on the Parliament of Australia website.

We have been involved in a large number of wind farm developments and act for several wind farm developers who are prominent in the industry. In conducting these matters we have had the opportunity to engage with the developers and their employees, the owners of the land where the wind farms are developed and their lawyers and other professionals involved in the developments, including engineers, surveyors and building contractors.

In our opinion, wind farm developments bring significant financial benefits to all of the above stakeholders as well as landowners who reside and operate businesses in the local communities.

We have visited a wind farm site in South Australia during various stages of its construction and consider that the development was undertaken in a highly professional manner having regard to the rights and interests of the owners of the land. We have had the opportunity to confirm this opinion by discussing the impacts of the wind farm with the landowners at functions organised by the developer. These functions were organised to celebrate milestones of the development and, from the events which we have attended, appear to be very well attended by the landowners.

We have also visited a wind farm in New South Wales (operated by a different wind farm developer to the site visited in South Australia) which, at the time of our viewing, had been operating for a number of years. We viewed this wind farm with representatives of the wind farm developer, the owner of the land where the wind farm was constructed, a large number of other landowners who were negotiating tenure arrangements with the developer for a different site and their lawyers. The landowners and their lawyers were given an opportunity to view a wind farm in operation and have their queries answered by the landowner who had been through the process of construction and experienced the operation of the wind farm first hand.

We found this landowner to have a positive attitude towards the wind farm. He was satisfied with the financial compensation he received. His farming operations had not been affected post construction. He suffered minor disturbances during the construction phase. However, he felt that he was adequately compensated for those disturbances. He was pleased with the upgrade of roads and gates which had been undertaken on his property and was pleased with the overall financial benefit he received from the wind farm itself.

In our experience, the rural community as a whole also benefits greatly from these developments. Generally, it is uncommon for large power generation based infrastructure projects to be undertaken in the areas where wind farms are constructed. Often this results in the wind farm developer upgrading the roads in the area (to permit large vehicles to access the site) and upgrading the electricity infrastructure in the area (to permit the effective transmission of the electricity generated by the wind farm), both at the developers own expense.

In addition, these projects are usually constructed over a lengthy period. During that time, the region sees a large influx of construction workers, engineers and other building contractors who work and often live in the area. This brings significant economic benefits to the business operators in the community in the form of increased revenue. This is particularly the case for those business operators which provide accommodation services, provide food and entertainment services and operate retail outlets.

The local Council usually has significant involvement in the planning process and ensures that the community is not disadvantaged by the development. In fact, where most wind farms are developed, the Council has encouraged that development by providing for wind farm development (which meets certain requirements) in its development plan. Of course, notwithstanding the inclusion of a wind farm development in the development plan, such developments are often subject to significant public consultation. Further, the ultimate decision of the planning body is, in most jurisdictions, subject to judicial review. Accordingly, individuals in the community who are opposed to the development have an opportunity to provide comment on the wind farm development and to challenge a decision of a planning body to approve the development.

We consider that it is also important to note the extent that, in our experience, wind farm developers seek to ensure a landowner who enters into a tenure arrangement is fully informed, represented and able to make a proper decision. In our experience, wind farm developers in almost all occasions pay each individual landowner's legal costs in having the tenure agreement reviewed and negotiated by an independent lawyer of their choice.

Apart from the obvious environmental benefits, wind farm development creates significant economic benefits to farmers by giving them a source of revenue other than their crops or livestock (which are commonly affected by inclement weather), to local communities not usually exposed to large developments by providing improvements to infrastructure and significantly increased income for business operators during the construction phase and to a large number of external stakeholders (i.e. lawyers, engineers, surveyors, heavy transport operators and building contractors) who participate in these types of projects as part of their business. (...)

Yours sincerely  
(...)

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