

ORIGINAL SUBMISSION TO THE PANEL JUNE 2010 – FRANK KEARNS

My Name is Frank Kearns. I am a semi retired CPA Accountant with 30 years experience but I have had an attachment to the land all of my life. And I am here today to express and enlarge upon my objections to the proposed Moorabool West Wind Farm Project.

From the outset I am amazed at the way in which a panel, the members who are appointed by the Victorian Government by the Minister for Planning can be considered to be independent.

When I read the pamphlet, "What is a Panel" I found it a little difficult to follow and understand the process. In the end I decided that there are so many processes that would make objecting a futile exercise that it was hardly worth the effort. But as it greatly affects our family's future, and the future of the people objecting to this project, I feel I have to register my objection. It is clear from past panel hearings that it is Government Policy to place higher emphasis on Wind energy Projects than their impact on people, the environment and the community affected by the projects.

There has been a significant amount of information presented to the Panel from noise experts, information about people suffering at two wind farm sites and in my opinion based on the flora and fauna assessment presented to the Panel this planning permit should be rejected.

How could any permit conditions protect this community from the disregard the proponent has shown in complying with NZS6808:1998. It has been demonstrated that background noise monitors have been placed within 5m of trees when other suitable locations are clearly available at numerous locations, background noise monitors that have not been calibrated properly, background noise monitors that have not been used in accordance with the operating manual to name just a few issues. I have no confidence in the proponent's ability to comply with permit conditions specified by this Panel. They have not complied with NZS6808:1998 in submitting this Planning Application.

1. Community Safety

After listening to the proponent and the various objections and submissions and reading the CFA's Emergency Management Guidelines for Wind Farms I have not changed my opinion. I consider the CFA has not given this enough thought and the danger is still present. Fire usually breaks out south of a highway and if that occurred in this area

it is extremely close to the Bungal State Forest and the turbines thus causing aircraft to be restricted in fire fighting

The sites of the proposed windfarm turbines, in fact the whole project should be placed in a more appropriate area. This area is used by aircraft to fly to western Victoria as flight paths between the Dividing Range to the north and Mt Warrenheip & Bunninyong to the South. I have seen three layers of aircraft fly over our property, large domestic and international liners, smaller aircraft and helicopters sometimes simultaneously.

As stated by a submitter, Mr Donovan, who is a pilot, and a client of mine who also is a pilot, both claim this is a tragedy waiting to happen when a combination of wind farm turbines and adverse weather conditions occur. I ask you what a reasonable person would do.

He no doubt would shift the whole project to a place where it would be safer.

2. Environmental Impacts

This is a serious problem with wind farms so close to forests and natural habitats of many rare and endangered species. Wedge Tailed Eagles, Powerful Owls, migrating Birds such as Snipe etc are all at risk. The problem occurs when birds collide with spinning turbines and deaths of common and local birds occur.

The raptors and owls etc then come to eat the carrion and are themselves killed. There are huge numbers of birds killed at California's' and USA oldest wind farm at Altamont (Appendix 1). The Golden Gate Audubon Society record that 110 Golden Eagles, 380 Burrowing Owls 300 Red Tails Hawks and 333 American Kestrels are killed by Altamont turbines annually. It was so bad that in 2008 environmentalists filed a suit that tethered the turbines for 4 months to protect migrating birds. This could happen at Moorabool as it is situated in a flight path between two mountains and therefore is a 'stop over' "for tired migrating birds at certain times of year.

The Sunday Age news paper on the 13th June 2010 printed an Article on the Powerful Owl "Something is knocking the State's Owls off their perches" (Appendix 2) This brings into focus the powerful Owl and the changing environment that this endangered species has to endure. According to Mr. Lane's expert witness statement there is no great risk to the powerful Owl as the project area lacks suitable habitat and would not support the species. This I do not agree with as my wife and I have heard their call in old gum trees (Appendix 3) during nights. I asked Mr. Lane at what time of day he carried out his survey to investigate the powerful Owl. He replied in the afternoon. The powerful owl is a nocturnal bird and does not hunt until dark. After reading the article in the Sunday Age and viewing the trees about 1 km from the forest and 960 metres from turbines I cannot believe that the turbine danger to these birds can be dismissed. I believe it is the duty of all concerned to protect this endangered species especially with the devastation that has been endured because of the bushfires in 2009. If this endangered species is present and all evidence points to this then the project should be shelved until more and substantial evidence is gathered. I have photos of old gum trees in Condie's Lane properties. (Appendix 3) that are perfect habitat for powerful owls. An EES Statement in these circumstances should be demanded.

3 Future Energy

Renewable energy does appear to have a place in Australia as stated in my submission . Wind energy facilities need to be placed where there is no danger to health,environment and peoples' dwellings,businesses and future developments. This has not been taken into consideration with the Moorabool Project or many of the other Wind Farm Projects. Solar Power in Australia with advanced technology is the future. If we put all our money and hope into Wind we will be left high and dry when the wind does not blow, plus our environment will be ruined with out of date turbines. This is a reasonable assumption.

4 Conclusion

So members of the panel,the people who have come to the hearing with high hopes of having their points of view listened to, and have put their faith in you to take the approach of a reasonable person, please look to the future by carefully considering our objections in a fair and reasonable manner.We the objectors had to endure the far from perfect conditions for the duration of the Panel Hearing .This hearing if nothing else has given me a far greater insight into the plight of our indigenous people in their struggle for Land Rights. During this hearing we seemed to be against insurmountable odds just like the Aboriginals. The dreams and aspirations of many people rest in your hands; please do not let us down.

We realize that private economic considerations are not given great weight by the panel, but having sat here through almost the whole hearing and listening to the plight of so many people, the word of the Fureys song, "The Belfast Mill" with the words –"I'm too old to work and too young to die" come to mind. The panel faces an invidious decision. On the one hand the host landholders stand to gain increased income with no actual work input while the non host landholders, most of whom have small properties are unable to realize their assets or feel confident that they will be able to support themselves in their old age. The late submitters, who have every right to speak, have not been here day after day to hear both sides of the story.