

Dear Sir/ Madam,

A Response to the Social and Economic Impact of Rural Wind Farms

Please accept my submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Social and Economic Impact of Rural Wind Farms.

I have recently returned from the Climate Project – Indonesia training provided by former US Vice President Al Gore, and I am more concerned than ever about the impact that climate change will have upon our ecological and social living conditions.

The scientific evidence presented at the Climate Project - Indonesia was unequivocal, carbon and temperature are part of a coupled system, when one goes up so does the other. In 2010, atmospheric concentrations of CO₂ on average reached 398.78 parts per million, far above the upper safety limit of 350 parts per million. The last decade has been the hottest on record with 2011 expected to be the hottest year yet.

Despite the profound challenges we face in combating climate change, we can make a difference if we use all of our technical, scientific and industrial capacity to reduce the amount of CO₂ entering the atmosphere. A core way of achieving this is through maintaining, and further developing wind farm technology.

Wind farms are a central plank of any concerted effort to combat climate change, and the Senate Inquiry should not propose provisions that would make the development of this industry more difficult or onerous.

There are currently no grounds upon which halting or impeding the development of clean energy through wind farm power generation can be founded. The National Health and Medical Research Centre (NHMRC) discovered that there is 'no published scientific evidence to positively link wind turbines with adverse health effects'. The Victorian Department of Health (Worksafe 2010) indicated that the weight of scientific peer reviewed articles and research showed that there are no direct health effects from noise generated by modern wind turbines. Further, research conducted on behalf of Clean Energy Council (CEC) by Sonus has shown that rates of complaints regarding wind turbines have been very low once power generation has begun.

There are often economic and social concerns regarding wind farms, however these too are tenuous at best. An assessment made by the NSW Valuer General considered the impact of wind farms on surrounding property values and found that there were no reductions in sale price or property value. What is often neglected are the economic and social benefits that accrue to a community through hosting a wind farm. Aside from providing a stream of income generation for the owners of the site where a wind farm is built, wind farms provide local employment opportunities both directly and indirectly. Studies focusing on the impact of AGL's Hallet wind farm project in South Australia found that the \$800 million spent on the project injected \$88 million into local economies and created 113 jobs in construction and on site management. It was also found that for every job created by a wind farm, at least three more jobs were created indirectly.

Australia is in a unique position. We are one of the highest per capita greenhouse emitting nations in the world, and also one of the wealthiest. Far more than many nations, we have the

opportunity and capacity to take real leadership, by reducing our emissions from coal based industries and moving toward a sustainable, clean energy future.

I strongly urge the members of Senate Inquiry into the Social and Economic Impact of Rural Wind Farms, to take stock of the scientific evidence that climate change is impacting upon our lives, and consider whether now is really the time to impede the development of clean energy industries such as wind farms.

When the weight of the scientific evidence is considered, any conclusion drawn must surely recognise that wind farms and other clean energy options must not only be encouraged, but seen as a core part of Australia's efforts to reduce our CO2 emissions, and provide leadership on climate change.

Kind Regards,

Sean O'Rourke

Climate Change Presenter 2011