

Submission on wind turbines and wind farms from David Formby of Keyneton, South Australia.

To the Australian Senate Select Committee on Wind Turbines.

Honourable Senators,

Six years ago in 2009 it became apparent that the hills around Keyneton in the Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges were to be developed into a 60 large turbine wind farm. Secretive negotiations had been taking place with some of the prominent district landowners for many years prior so, upon hearing of it, I approached the local press and a front page story made the whole thing public.

My first reaction as a practising conservator of our local flora and fauna which includes a 100 hectare registered sanctuary was to weigh the balance between the production of “clean energy” and the overall effect on the landscape, the wildlife and the human population. My considerations included the fact that I have been personally responsible for the regeneration of many hundreds of thousands of native trees and so have played a large role in the local sequestration of carbon.

The first practical research I undertook was to visit an operational wind farm and study the impact on the surrounding area. I also met with quite a few of the residents of the nearby town of Waterloo and was troubled to hear they had all elected to live away from their homes because of the unpleasant and unsettling noise and effects from the turbines. Some of these local people came back to their homes when they were upwind of the turbines, in effect leaving when the wind was easterly and returning with the westerlies.

Some of them took me up to the hills approximately 3 ½ kilometres to the east of the town and we entered the turbine zone. The first thing that struck me was the destruction of the landscape and the vegetation which consisted mainly of *Eucalyptus odorata*, Peppermint Box which is listed officially as a threatened species. However, even though the turbines were revolving I found the effects to be reasonably benign.

I was then 67 years old with quite acute industrial hearing damage and sinus problems and was pleased that so far I was not experiencing any adverse sensations or effects. However this changed when I went 2 kilometres downwind of the turbines and after 10 minutes I started to experience a very nasty sensation akin to a pulsing headache in tune with the deep low sound from the blades that soon became intolerable. For anyone to suggest this was purely psychosomatic would be insulting and offensive and I am constantly appalled by such denigrators as

professors Chapman and Wittert accusing honest and capable country folk of making it all up.

The visit to Waterloo raised serious questions that badly needed addressing and I called for a meeting of Keyneton district people to discuss the situation and found there were enough with sufficient misgivings to form a group of concerned residents which we named Stop Keyneton Wind Farm, SKWF.

Opposition to the Keyneton Wind Farm grew very quickly and SKWF evolved into the Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges Landscape Guardians Incorporated which is an independent group dedicated to a number of environmental protection projects as well as the Keyneton and now Palmer wind farms.

The EMLRLG galvanised local and district debate and subsequent opposition to the Keyneton project and produced a very professional and comprehensive submission to the State Development Assessment Commission opposing the wind farm proposal from a number of critical standpoints. Well over a hundred personal submissions went into the DAC as well and the first public hearing in Adelaide was almost completely and emphatically against the development.

At a subsequent hearing in Cambrai the opposition was such that the proponent, Pacific Hydro was almost overwhelmed by the intensity and emotional conviction of the local residents. We do feel that this must have played a part in PH's eventual decision to put the project on hold notwithstanding SA Planning Minister John Rau's rather questionable decision to rubber stamp the approval despite the considerable opposition. Mr Rau was responsible for changing the planning laws to facilitate "approval of developments that will benefit the State", an action that has removed any possibility of country people having influence in these circumstances over their own lives and physical and mental well-being.

EMLRLG are now involved in evaluating the TrustPower Palmer large scale wind power development that combined with the Keyneton and other projects to the north would see the entire Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges plastered with giant ugly monsters as high as 165 metres. These will do nothing "to save the planet" as they are unreliable when it comes to base load power and considering their size and environmental impact an insult to nature and creation, just a salve for the conscience of inconsiderate politicians and city based consumers of electricity.

There certainly are far better options available for electricity generation in the long term without incurring the enmity of hills dwellers and dominating our God given paradise with the ugliness of mankind's insensitivity.

This submission is not intended as a scientific or professional evaluation of wind generated electrical energy as others can do a far better job in that respect. My thoughts on the subject are more personal and include some viewpoints that may not be covered as part of the general thinking.

Machinery in operation can be very disruptive through the range of scale commencing shall we say with the humble washing machine and spin dryer right up to the biggest and nastiest industrial behemoth. It is easy to be disturbed quite markedly during the spin cycle of the washing machine and that may be as much from the regularity of the sound as the volume. There is one alleviating factor however and that is the knowledge that the machine will click off in a few minutes. Imagine if it was to continue ad infinitum; tolerance would be seriously compromised and the distress would be compounded. Add to this a few turbine related factors such as the necessary air pressure disturbance that is required to drive the turbine and the low frequency of the sound and the monotonous continual repetition and we are getting into some very distressing influences.

We know from experiences throughout the world of the dangers to wildlife such as the death from barotrauma of bats to bird strike from the spinning blades to eagles and other soaring birds. We have heard from the environmental staff of one turbine developer to expect that the more mobile of the indigenous wildlife will "leave the district". We have seen the huge physical destruction of the landscape as part of the construction and development of wind farms and are desperately aware of the dominance of these giant machines over everything we may hold dear.

Wind generated electricity is essentially a darned good idea. I remember 55 years ago listening to the whistle of the Dunlite as it filled the batteries and being relieved that with a good breeze the evening may not be disturbed by the clunking of the Southern Cross diesel generator. So now it is a matter of scale, as mankind's demands on the planet's natural resources increase exponentially so does the means to extract and exploit. Instead of the humble Dunlite we now have huge 100 metre high towers with 65 metre blades and not just one or two but hundreds.

One does not need to be a seer or prophet to evaluate mankind's future prospects, one only needs to be a mathematician. Given the continued destruction of forest and farmland, the horrendous scale of the removal of all natural resources and the exponential increase in human population the continuation of this "system of things" can only be measured in decades not centuries.

It takes only a gram or two to throw a tyre off balance so the mining and relocation of millions of tonnes of ore and oil may yet be our undoing as our planet shudders and spins off into the void.

There are many and varied beliefs aside from those of the main stream churches and scientists and none of these should be discounted in our arrogance and ignorance. There are those of us who believe that the total subjugation and dominance of Nature, Providence, God or Earth Mother is inherently wrong and we will collectively reap the rewards of our single minded pursuit of comfort and gadgetry. Plastering our once beautiful Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges with these gigantic symbols of mankind's greed and insensitivity will without doubt contribute to

our undoing. The same can be said of all the other similar disasters worldwide, the huge gaping holes in the land, the removal of whole mountains, the continents of floating plastics in the oceans and so on and so forth without end or even any attempt at moderation or modification.

We know from various religions and “holy” prognostications that this world of man will come to a sticky end and nothing speaks more to me of this than what is proposed for my little corner of paradise. It is symbolic of the wider disease.

Regrettably I know from current events that the voice of country folk will be drowned out by the exploiters and good farmland will continue to be mined, poisoned and turned into industrial precincts and there is nothing we can do about it as we do not “have the guns”.

We do have our lives however and if necessary some may be prepared to sacrifice theirs in defence of paradise. The man they call Jesus once said that he who is prepared to lay down his life in defence of paradise will be born again into Paradise. Consider those brave “greenies” who were prepared to confront the bulldozers, chainsaws, guns and harpoons in defence of nature. That is courage that God really takes notice of.

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Yes, I would be prepared to speak to the Committee or Senate if anyone would consider listening to my views.