

Dear Federal Senate inquiry into the 'Social and economic impact of rural wind farms'.

I wish to make a submission in support of renewable energy and in particular, small community wind farms such as Hepburn Wind's model .

While respecting the right of expression to those who reject windfarms, it's time to take another perspective. I feel qualified to compare the experience of both coal and wind. I grew up in the LaTrobe Valley in Traralgon in the midst of three coal-fired power stations and their associated Open Cuts, the source of all the comforting electricity sent across the state to where I now live, in Ballarat. I have lived in western Victoria for 30 years.

My father worked at the Yallourn Power station. As a child the classic nursery rhyme was a fairy tale to me, because in Traralgon stars didn't twinkle. And our washing was dirtier *after* it was hung out on the line ~ dirty with black particulate that we breathed in. My family lived in a locality with a significantly higher death rate than the rest of Victoria. As well we lived with a background of constant industrial noise and visual ugliness. Compare that to a windfarm and you remove physical health detriments to a broader community of thousands (not single families or individuals as applies to windfarms), you also remove visual ugliness, barren unusable land (Open Cut land) and most associated environmental ill effects.

Perhaps the filtration has now improved but I am dismayed that those coal fired power stations that provided the rest of this clean-aired state with its dirty electricity are still at it. Still polluting the air, still belching out carbon dioxide and, as we've recently woken up to, still dangerously warming our climate. Traralgon is still the most polluted town in Victoria. Brown coal is so inefficient it is like burning wet socks to create heat.

The dangers of the LaTrobe Valley Open Cuts' dangers are totally taken for granted. They are massive earth wounds. Put end-to-end they'd spread five kilometres wide and run from Bacchus Marsh to Ballan in Victoria's central west. The exposed coal self-ignites and must be constantly kept extinguished. If a bushfire fell in (as nearly happened at Churchill in the Black Saturday fires of 2009) and a serious fire began, it could burn for decades, (there are examples in other countries of fires still alight after 30 years), with drastic pollution and CO2 release the consequence. Extreme incidents such as more bushfires are a likely consequence as climate change kicks in (as we are told by the CSIRO and the Bureau of Meteorology: see recent flooding, bushfires and cyclonic activity as pointers to what we may expect with increased frequency). In the long term I would rather put my money on greater community safety through electricity generated by windfarms.

Comparison is needed so that people gain an accurate perspective. I would like to inquire whether this senate inquiry will also look into social and health impacts of rural coal-fired power stations? Will you examine the increased death rate in the LaTrobe Valley and other areas of Australia where coal is mined and burnt? Will you examine the rates of respiratory illness there? (I grew up with regular bouts of bronchitis, which have ceased since I moved to this side of the state.) By comparison the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) concludes "there is currently no published scientific evidence to positively link wind turbines with adverse health effects."

Will you examine social impacts of coal mining such as the whole town of Yallourn being entirely dug up and extinguished? What about impacts upon people living in other small country towns near the power stations and their open cuts? And what about the loss of hundreds of square kilometres of

prime farming land as occurs with this massive open cut mining? Shouldn't these be seen as social impacts to compare windfarming to? As food production becomes more critical in a rapidly growing population in Australia the area of arable fertile land will matter increasingly. By comparison there is no loss of farming land with a wind farm.

I am a supporter of "Hepburn Wind" not just for environmental reasons, or social reasons, but for economic reasons. The two turbines are expected to cost \$13m and generate more electricity each year than is used by the houses in Daylesford and much of the surrounding area. At the equivalent of less than \$6000/house, no other renewable energy solution comes close. It has already created three direct jobs, and more than \$2m has been spent in regional Victoria with more to come. It is projected to contribute \$1m to community initiatives over the next 25 years. It was subject to strict planning conditions through the approvals process and will be closely monitored for compliance with some of the strictest environmental controls in the world. Recent polling in regional NSW has shown that 85% of people support wind power.

To me there is no comparison. We look through blinkers at coal because we are uncomfortable with change and because we have taken an opportunistic approach that has overlooked the social, health and economic problems associated with coal. We have become too used to the products that coal brings. It is a drastic failure of imagination to undermine wind farms, in particular the small community wind farms such as Hepburn Wind which have overwhelming local support. In my view we must vigorously stand for an alternative future and a healthier world.