

Department of the Senate
Community Affairs Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Sirs/Madams,

I write in regard to your Inquiry into the 'Social and economic impact of rural wind farms'.

I am the C.E.O. of McGregor Community Services, a non - profit community organisation providing services for people with a disability. We have been providing a range of quality, affordable community services for the Ararat and Stawell communities since 1980.

The service is auspiced by the Ararat & District Disabled Persons Assoc. Inc., and managed by a local voluntary committee. Responsibility for operations and service delivery is delegated myself, Program Managers and a team of qualified support staff who are fully committed to supporting people with disabilities to live fulfilling and integrated lives in this community.

Programs based on individual needs are structured to develop the full potential of each client and to assist them to participate in the community. Each client has an Individual Support Plan or Employment Plan which is used to set individual goals and progress towards achieving these goals is reviewed regularly.

Over 100 people use our services on a regular basis, including approx. 80 people in Day Programs, 31 in supported employment small businesses and in excess of 40 families accessing respite services. We employ approx. 70 permanent and casual staff. Our facilities are well resourced and include lifting aids, multi-sensory rooms, computers, commercial quality kitchens, accessible vehicles, information technology and audio visual aids.

We are committed to assisting our clients achieve their goals through the provision of quality, personalised services and programs.

We live in a small country town (population approx. 7,000 people) in rural Victoria, which has had a wind farm operating here for over seven years.

I believe that Pacific Hydro's Challicum Hills Windfarm has had a very positive impact on our local community in a number of ways (employment opportunities, increased farm income and viability, generation of clean power, investment in our local community, property values maintained or increased, local community organisations/projects benefitting from Pacific Hydro's annual grants program, etc.)

Whilst we hear debate on the positives and negatives of windfarms, at a local level, there is overwhelming support for wind energy and the local windfarm. To my knowledge, there has been no adverse effects for people living in close proximity to the wind farm, excessive noise and vibrations hasn't been a problem and the wind towers themselves compliment the scenery and are seen as adding to the aesthetics of the area, not as an eyesaw.

There is strong support in our community for the local wind farm and wind energy in general. I haven't heard of or are aware of any negatives attitudes towards the wind farm. Historically, people who are against whatever the subject matter may be will usually be the ones that respond to requests for submissions like this and that is why I feel so strongly about submitting what I believe to be the views and experiences of myself and this community.

Should you wish to discuss this matter with me further, you can contact me on the number below at any time.

Thanking you for taking the time to hear and consider views from the wider community.

Brian Burke