

Department of the Senate

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Australia

I definitely object to the Penshurst Wind Farm Proposal by RES consisting of 225 turbines, ranging from 135 – 175 metres tall. The highest geological feature in the immediate area is Mt Rouse (100 metres). The township of Penshurst is situated at its base while the remainder of the surrounding countryside is soft undulating stony rises, so there is nothing that will screen these turbines and they will dominate the landscape, clearly visible on all tourist roads in and out of Penshurst. This project is just too huge an industrial project and completely out of character with this rural and historic township.

Not only will it be less than 3 kms from the school, the hospital, the nursing home, shops, private residences, the botanical garden, the hotel but the cumulative effect of the adjoining Wind Farms at McArthur (140 turbines approved) Hawkesdale (30 turbines approx.) Orford (190 turbines) to the east Mortlake (80 approx. Approved) which adds up to 800 plus turbines within ¾ of an hour drive from Penshurst, makes it environmental vandalism!

I am a new resident (10 months) and I certainly would not have purchased here had I known of the proposal so close to the township. Of course I am thinking of the devaluation of my retirement investment but also the desecration of the unique landscape that drew me here in the first place. The strange desolate beauty of this volcanic plain which is part of the geo-park 'Kanawinka' that stretches from Colac to Mt Gambier and where the stony rises and isolated volcanoes, lonely farms and sheds has 'the beginning of time' feel. But this will all be lost with the addition of a plethora of industrial sized Wind Farms!

Secrecy in setting up the Wind Farms!

The developers get landholders to sign confidentiality contracts (some up to 12 months) before the general public read about them in the newspapers. These contracts mean that **No-One** - meaning family; friends; neighbours; real-estate agents; (who are by the way are promoting the Southern Grampians to people like myself as a rural lifestyle or sea change as Port Fairy is so close) **No One** finds out until it is in the local paper. Not even the shire representatives have this information. For example Cr Mayor Pat Toohey stated "...for a

while there we weren't even notified about an application. We'd find out like everyone else; in a press release!"

Sadly members of the Penshurst community are still under the impression that the 'Southern Grampians Shire' will look after them and protect their rights but final decisions on Wind Farms this size are made by Melbourne Town Planning Office so there is no one batting for us 'at the top end of town'.

Why the Secrecy?

- Because the developers know that Wind Farms upset and divide communities
- That residents don't like to live near a Wind Farm
- That turbines do make noise (particularly at night)
- That there will be significant property devaluation

Don't forget the NOISE! Developers keep denying the noise and health issues that ensue. These include sleep deprivation, hearing problems and headaches and of course there is the noise which is prevalent at night which is a grim reality.

I have spoken personally to some Warbra landowners who are living in the firing line of a large operational Wind Farm (128 turbines). One of the residents said she could no longer open her doors and windows at night to cool her home after a summer scorcher. Surely this is rite of passage for all Australians after all its free and effective. Now these residents have to keep their homes shut up (because of the turbine noise) and crank up their power guzzling air-conditioners, split systems and fans. It's ironic that the turbines are suppose to help lower emissions, yet while they whirl away into the night, boosted and backed up by gas generators we turn on our electrical whizz bang appliances. Where is the sense and saving in this?

Another Warbra resident was told that there would be no overhead flashing red light (at the top of each turbine) yet they are there for all to see, flashing on and off for miles disturbing the inky black nightscape so imbedded into rural life and snatching it away.

From ground level conversations with residents living with operational Wind Farms, to a gentleman who has worked on site at a Wind Farm, it is clear they have been lied to on numerous levels by the developers. They have attended open days like we have had at Penshurst and like us they has been mislead with incomplete results on geological tests, endangered species eg – broilgas, enhanced photographs that give no indication of the true size of the turbines in relation to town landmarks and developers openly admit 'that this all could change after the open day'. This includes turbine position and proximity to residents. (A critical piece of information that we need to know)

Summing up

So where do we go from here? Who do we trust? There has to be more guidelines on Wind Farm set ups, particularly the 2 kms set back from residential homes. It should be at least 10 kms – 2 kms is inadequate protection both visually and audibly.

Residents should have the same privilege of knowing about the proposals at the same time as the landowner is approached by the developer, so we can have time to decide to sell or stay. Stakeholders don't stay on their properties, they become absentee farmers and they are compensated handsomely. The residents should have access to compensation to compensate them for loss of view and surrounds as well as devaluation of their property.

I felt intimidated and daunted when I started this submission and I am sure there are others in Penshurst that are too overwhelmed to put pen to paper because they are in the belief that their shire will not let them down and will make a good decision for them. But as Cr Toohey (Mayor of Moorabool) said on 18/11/2010 in regards to the Brumby Government "The Wind Farm planning process wears people down; it exhausts them; it absorbs their lives. The government has turned its back on its core responsibility; the rights of the community!

Enough said

Thanking you

Cheryl Small