

As an investor in the community wind farm project at Hepburn Springs in Victoria, I wish to urge the senate inquiry to consider carefully all of the direct and indirect benefits of rural wind farms to the nation.

The Hepburn Wind project, although very small, has injected substantial money into the economy of regional Victoria, directly and indirectly creating jobs in its immediate region. This community-led project is a great example of efficient, low-impact energy generation: its single turbine will generate more electricity than is used by houses in Daylesford and its surrounding area. The cost of electricity generation from this project is far less than any other currently available renewable energy solution.

The recent media-driven misinformation about claimed adverse health effects have been comprehensively discounted by the National Health and Medical Research Council. The idea that low-frequency noise from turbines has some adverse health effect certainly did not come from any reputable scientific source, and has been shown to be fanciful by simple demonstrations that city and coastal environments produce higher levels of low-frequency noise than do turbines. I urge the inquiry to put greater stead in published scientific information than in media reports.

The inquiry is likely to have received a large number of submissions from people with vested interests against wind farms. I urge the inquiry not to be swayed by the disproportionately loud voices of those with vested interests, and instead to consider more controlled surveys, such as the recent one that showed that 85% of the regional NSW population support wind power, with most supporting it in their own communities.

Finally, I urge the inquiry to consider the larger, longer-term impacts to regional communities from *not* investing heavily in renewable energy projects. The recent decade of extreme climatic events, bringing enormous heartbreak and economic losses to regional communities around Australia, are consistent with the predictions of climatologists. For thirty years, the scientific community has been in general agreement on the reality of human-induced climate change. Of course there are inherent uncertainties in any scientific prediction, but as the global climate models continue to be refined, earlier predictions continue to be proven correct (or proven to have been too conservative). To postpone action to insure against predicted major detrimental changes to our cities, towns and natural environment because the predictions have some inherent uncertainty is not just daft, it is negligent.

Wind farms are just one way in which we can respond positively to the dire risks we face globally (that also bring multiple community benefits). I believe the senate would be better spending its limited resources inquiring into the social and economic impacts of the coal export industry that makes our embarrassingly large domestic carbon emissions look tiny.

Yours sincerely,
Chris Walsh.

Assoc. Prof. Christopher J Walsh
Department of Resource Management and Geography
The University of Melbourne