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Introduction to my submission was prompted by the total lack of concern by the proponent Transfield and prior to that Stanwell to the people living in 109 residences abutting the 12 landholders who have signed in secret with the proponent a memorandum of understanding to lease areas on their ridges to build up to 150 turbines. After five years or more they neither acknowledge correspondence or in any way try and allay many of the residents' fears and apprehensions as to their intentions. As the McHarg Ranges in Central Victoria is in the most fire prone areas in the State and is acknowledged as one of the worst in the World, coupled with the recent bush fires on each side of these ranges on the 7th February 2009 (Black Saturday) with the Kilmore East fire on one side and the Redesdale fire on the other, any further risk whether it is infinitesimally small is one risk too many. For as you will be aware each turbine as specified by Vestas has 160 litres of oil in each turbine hub which would mean that 24,000 litres of highly flammable material could be located 110 metres in the air over a range noted for its location in a highly flammable area. Even more concerning was the fact that a turbine at the Cathedral Rocks Wind Farm in SA caught alight on the 3rd February 2009 four days before Black Saturday and that it was spotted by fishermen at sea who notified the local CFA who contained and put out the fire. Where was the appropriate fire management plan? The proposed wind farm on the McHarg Ranges is not "similar to other facilities" in the area and the introduction of transformers, overhead power lines (as it is too rocky and steep to put them underground) will only add to a problem that we live with throughout summer but multiplied by many thousands of times.

The McHarg Ranges had a Wild Fire overlay covering nearly 100% of the area. By some obscure reason it was removed in 2006 without local consultation and the Bushfire Royal Commission is investigating this occurrence and has removed all the documents from the Mitchell Shire Planning Department to try to get to the bottom of the matter for it does seem that it was removed to facilitate the erection of the wind towers.

My concerns that do not seem to be addressed in your draft are as follows:

3.2 Noise

Noise including low frequency noise is an issue and has been dealt with in the past most unsatisfactorily. Standards seem to reflect city born noises and use this as a base for comparison where as country dwellers are not accustomed to that kind of noise level accepted by those living in suburbia. Distance is the best cure and turbines should not be placed as close as they can be in Victoria which goes by the NZ Standards which recommends 500 metres. In theory the standard could allow the proponent to build the turbines even closer to dwellings. A standard distance of at least 2km should be mandatory, especially when there are so many residences around the turbines and proper guidelines should address the now increasing problem associated with low frequency noise with compensation being afforded to those who can substantiate their loss of amenity.

3.3 Landscape

The assessment is carried out by firms or individuals engaged by the proponent. The obvious inherent weakness is that there is a conflict of interest and that these consultants are by the nature of their engagement tainted and not at arms length. Tribunals and the Appeals Board and Planning Ministers have a tendency to ignore local people's assessments even when they are backed up by independent landscape architects. Other than a couple of projects in Victoria such as the Great Ocean Road they all follow the same path and have been largely done by one or two firms which follow a similar format for each project.

This is such a subjective matter the clause should include an independent assessment by landscape architects not engaged by the proponents or that three opinions should be sought and paid for by the Government.

3.9 Fire Risk

A clause should be included addressing those areas identified by the appropriate authority that had or have a wild fire management overlay to prohibit the erection of wind towers however small the risk.

Land Values.

Enquiries to local and Melbourne based estate agents including the well known firm of Pat Rice and Hawkins, made it clear that land values would be affected if a wind farm was built on the McHarg Ranges. A report by Access Economics commissioned by local residents unreservedly made it clear amongst other conclusions that land values would be affected.

I would be pleased to supply you with Access Economics very comprehensive report which is largely applicable to all wind farms. There are many other issues which I am sure you are aware, however the divisiveness this proposed wind farm has brought to our local community is terrible, neighbour against neighbour and family members against each other which has even permeated the local CFA.

Yours sincerely,

David Maughan