

WIND FARMS — SECRET BUYOUT REVEALED

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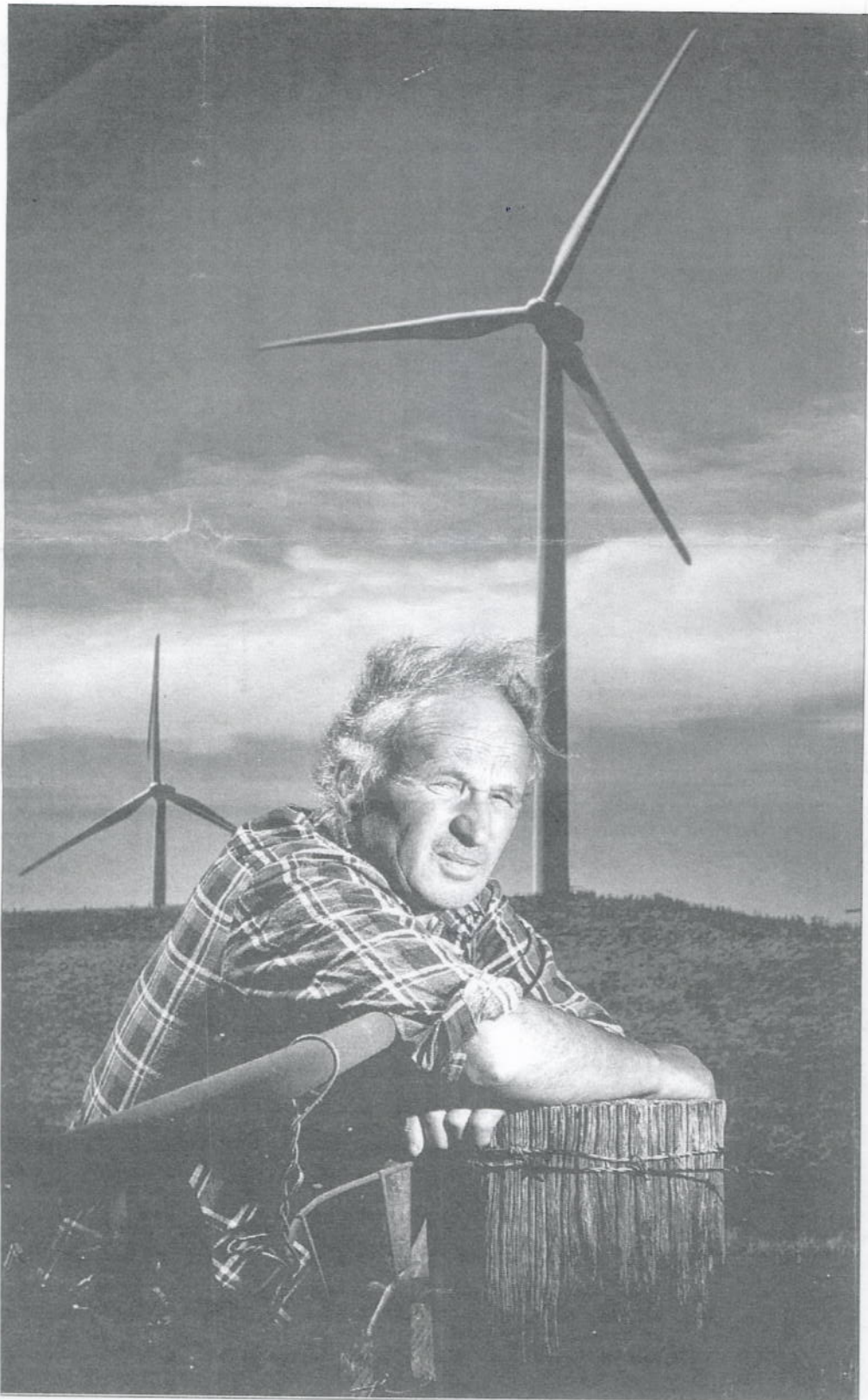
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More than he can take: Noel Deans has shifted to Ballarat owing to health problems.

Buy-up gags locals

PETER ROLFE
state politics reporter

VICTORIANS who have endured years of health problems from living next door to a wind farm have been gagged from talking about their suffering in return for the sale of their land.

Spanish multinational energy company Acciona has been quietly buying farms adjacent to its sites. Waubra, near Ballarat, as an increasing number of residents in the tight-knit community complain of the effects of living near turbines.

Since the wind farm started operating in July 2009, about 11 houses in the area have been vacated by people complaining of noise problems.

Acciona has bought at least another seven houses, the purchase of two of which appear to have been prompted by the new State Government's threat to shut down the farm unless noise abatement permit conditions were met.

Locals in the tiny town of 700, 35km northwest of Ballarat, say the sales took place on the proviso landowners would not talk about the price of the purchase or negative health effects they blame on the wind farm.

Residents who refuse to move have accused the company of trying to buy their way out of trouble.

Noel Deans moved from Waubra to Ballarat 18 months ago because he could no longer stand headaches, tinnitus and poor health he believes are caused by high-frequency vibrations from turbines.

"The word is they're buying everyone out and buying some of the other properties nearby just to hush them up," he said.