

## **Industry Capability Network Submission for Senate Committee Inquiry into the Social and Economic Impact of Rural Wind farms.**

This submission will focus on the derived economic and community benefits associated with rural windfarms, citing real examples of successfully completed projects. ICN will leave the scientific and perceived health issues debate to those more qualified to speak objectively on these matters, a suggestion that could be well heeded by other parties.

It is indisputable that wind farm projects stimulate local communities socio-economically, not just in the short term during construction but in the mid to long term. In addition, project approvals are subject to a significant community consultation process, along with environmental, heritage and indigenous land usage considerations. A very useful case study to highlight this conclusion is the Capital and Cullerin Range wind farm projects.

### **Capital and Cullerin Range Wind Farm Projects.**

In the initial preparation of the project the developers approached landholders with an offer of putting footprints for wind turbine towers on their respective properties. In the case of Cullerin Range and Capital Windfarms the offers were made at a time when farms were suffering an economic downturn because of the drought, this presented them with a lifeline of additional income for the farms.

The developers/owners of the two windfarms also provided community grants and sponsorship, and in the case of the Capital Windfarm, they sponsored the local Weerawa Festival as well as community grants.

The construction phase saw local skills coming to fore and being enhanced. Local Goulburn company Ainsworth provided riggers, a newly developed skill for the company and several civil works companies including Divalls sub contracted to Catcon and Built Environs. Divalls saw the opportunity for a concrete supplier to windfarm projects in general and went into a partnership to start a company called Concrete 4 Goulburn. The overall expenditure in the immediate local district to Goulburn was in the vicinity of \$15 million, on an Australian industry basis this figure was extended to \$95 million for the Cullerin Range and Capital windfarms.

The landholders now have upgraded road facilities, fencing, electrical connection as well as being assisted with a number of other services to the property.

The completed projects now employ approximately 12 full time staff on monitoring and maintenance.

Slightly further afield, other brief examples citing socio-economic and industry development benefits derived from the wind power sector in the state of Tasmania include:

### **Industry Development: Nacelle**

- Hydro Tasmania negotiated for local manufacture.
- Vestas has built a \$14 million factory to assemble nacelles at Wynyard with the first nacelle completed yesterday.
- Substantial Australian sourcing of materials
- 70 people have been employed

### **Industry Development: Wind Towers**

- Alstom of Hobart built the first six 60-metre towers for Woolnorth Stage 1.
- Haywards is now building 31 towers for Woolnorth Stage 2.
- This has resulted in 20 additional jobs
- Metal protection services at Breadalbane with several extra jobs

### **Industry Development: Operation and Maintenance**

- Woolnorth operation and maintenance functions will require a fulltime site presence and 5 FTE in North West Tasmania

### **Industry Development: Fibre Glass Components**

- Aus-Tech Composites Pty Ltd was established to produce turbine housing and nose cones to supply Vestas assemble plant.
- This has created 24 jobs
- 50 consultants from a range of companies provided a comprehensive range of services to obtain approval for the wind farm development projects.
- A further 20 jobs were established in wind engineering alone.

### **Industry Development: Engineering Works**

- Factory construction, steel, castings, concrete foundations, painting, engineering, road transport and road building services have resulted in 40 jobs and \$6 M in investment.

### **Industry Development: Transmission Lines**

- A 46km single circuit 110kV transmission line and 1.5km of underground cable, connects Woolnorth to Smithton Substation.
- Sixty contractors were employed and \$16 million was spent on the task.

### **Industry Development: Tourism**

- A daily tourism service to the Woolnorth wind farm has seen 15,000 visits since the opening and has resulted in 3 new jobs.

As the above examples demonstrate, significant socio-economic benefit has been derived from wind technology, which even now is still essentially a fledgling industry in Australia. It is worthwhile also noting that the above examples represent only a very small portion of current activity and future opportunity within this renewable energy sector. A robust local industry within the sector lends itself to R&D investment and subsequent improvements to the technology, as well as greater participation globally.

As initially stated, the submission does not seek to weigh into the health and scientific merits (or otherwise) debate currently surrounding wind power. It is, however, hoped that the material provided here will offer some objective, evidence-based information to promote similarly crafted debate.

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