

Senate Wind farm Inquiry

Submission to the Senate Community Affairs References Committee report on the social and economic impacts of rural wind farms.

Submitted by

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(...)

Submission summary statement

International and local research shows often severe health effects caused by living near wind turbine towers, including elevated blood pressure, anxiety, sleeplessness, nausea and fatigue.

Wind companies hide these by demanding confidentiality agreements when they buy nearby properties after their towers are operating.

A moratorium on new wind farms should be in place until more independent research into health effects is done.

Properties near wind farms suffer from the same degree of devaluation as those near sewage treatment works and high voltage power lines.

Local Government voters are disenfranchised when their Council's Development Plans are overridden by State Governments.

State governments are being put under pressure by Federal demands for Renewal Energy targets imposed without sufficient research into the possible ramifications for public health.

State guidelines and standards governing the Wind industry are hopelessly inadequate and in some cases have been informed by data supplied by the industry itself.

Already existing bushfire risk is increased and made more complex by the presence of towers.

Community cohesion has already been threatened by confidentiality agreements and

Company practices.

There are significant prices to be paid in physical , mental and emotional health, as well as the financial area by those of us prepared to live and work and produce in the rural areas without adding the potential costs of living within an industrial power plant.

I would like to comment on the following:

(a) Any adverse health effects for people living in close proximity to wind farms

An increasing body of research, both overseas and here, shows adverse health reactions to living in near proximity to wind turbines. This research is available on the Internet and includes work by the following; Dr. Nina Pierpont (USA), Dr. John Harrison (UK), Dr. Robert McMurty (Canada), Dr. Michael Nissenbaum (USA), Dr. Amanda Harry(UK) and in Australia, Dr. Sarah Laurie (Waubra Foundation).

Dr. Laurie's research shows that people living close to turbine towers experience alarming rises in blood pressure during the night. These same people tested away from towers showed no such overnight increases.

Other research shows symptoms such as

- Fatigue
- Sleeplessness
- Nausea
- Memory loss
- Psychiatric malaise (depression etc.)
- Dangerous lifts in blood pressure

Apart from the above, which seems to be linked largely to infrasound/ audible sound emissions, there are symptoms caused by living in the constant flickering light. These include

- Disorientation
- General distress

.Wind Power companies deny the existence of these symptoms, of course, but significantly, insist on confidentiality agreements when acquiring the homes of those who can no longer bear to live in proximity to turbine towers.

Origin Energy proposes building 90 of these towers in Beetaloo Valley where I live. These

power stations should not be built until thorough and independent research is done into their health effects. If such thorough, independent research had been done in earlier times the adverse effects of cane toads , Thalidomide and Asbestos may also have been avoided or mitigated.

(b) Concerns over the excessive noise and vibrations emitted by wind farms, which are in close proximity to people's homes

Published anecdotal evidence of people living near towers reports:

- Gearbox whine / blade swoosh
- Infrasound and pressure waves

Separately and together, these cause balance difficulties, nausea, headache and emotional distress, such as anxiety.

The cumulative effect of these and their overlay on pre-existing health issues such as weak hearts are self- evident. I believe that this has been supported Dr. Laurie's work in Waubra.

(c) The impact of rural wind farms on property values, employment opportunities and farm income

We bought land in Beetaloo Valley when choosing where to settle down because it was beautiful, quiet and there was a community here. We've spent 25 years hand crafting a stone house, designed to be lived in efficiently without air conditioning and the use of excessive power. We have established an olive grove and a local market for our extra virgin oil based on quality and an image of minimum impact and "green" credentials.

Origin Energy's representatives claim that the presence of 90 wind towers near our land will have no effect on our land values.

This has not been the case in other Australian communities living near wind generating plants. In Waubra alone, according to the Courier newspaper, up to 15 places are empty or for sale and significantly, 9 have been acquired by the wind company under confidentiality agreements. What are they hiding?

In a widely circulated letter to a resident of Hallett, (...), National Sales Director for Elders Rural Services says, "A proliferation of wind towers adjacent to a property has the same effect as high voltage power lines, rubbish tips, piggeries, hatcheries, and sewage treatment plants.." and, "Experts assess the loss of value to be in excess of 30% and sometimes up to half."

Some international research is linking deformity in animals and plants to wind tower presence.(US Army Aero medical research lab: Shannon et al 1994, Frey et al 2007, Penkov 2007, Silianov 2005)

It will be detrimental to our oil marketing strategy to have an industrial power plant on the next hill. The view from our grove, at present completely rural, will be dominated by white towers the height of Sydney Harbour Bridge. It is inconceivable that our property value will continue to increase as a result.

(d) The interface between Commonwealth, state and local planning laws as they pertain to wind farms

In our council area the proposed building of a large shed occasions a notice in the paper and the call for objections or comments to be sent to Council before approval is given. Our council's development plan states "the conservation of the scenic, scientific and heritage features of the environment is intended as the paramount objective when assessing future development proposals in the Ranges Zone"

All this is swept aside by a State government which has "made provisions that give wind farms special project status and exempt them from normal planning rules and environment court oversight"(Weekend Australian Jan 22-23 2011 pg 3)

Pressure has been applied to States to comply with Federal demands for renewal energy targets. These targets have been set without any recourse to research, old or new, regarding risks to public health.

Local councils have been instructed by State government to amend their Development Plans to accommodate wind farms. In a letter to us (3/11/2010) Paul Holloway said that Council Development Assessment Panels, made up of independent experts, will address Development Plan provisions, along with concerns raised by third parties. Where will councils find these independent experts as research into the field is so new that most current expertise is within the wind industry or consultant to it?

This overriding of local government by State government constitutes a disenfranchisement of all voters at this level.

In public "consultation" meetings, Origin Energy's representative Mr. David Gladwin has said that although there are very few government guidelines governing the wind industry, the Company would comply with all relevant standards.

- What standards do exist are based either on ancient data or on those provided by the Wind industry itself.
- Compliance with compromised 'current standards' is an excuse to do the minimum ,regardless of cost to the public, in the pursuit of maximum profit

.(e) Any other relevant matters.

Bushfire risk. Tower blazes cannot be fought by CFS crews. Fire bombers cannot fly near them. They contain vast quantities of flammable gear oil. Disintegrating blades can be flung for considerable distances.

Community Division. We are surprisingly isolated here and community adhesion is an asset. This adhesion is eroded by one neighbour acquiring significant wealth by having wind towers on his land(without having to consult the neighbours) while those same neighbours have their land significantly devalued by that same act.

Confidentiality agreements mean that secrecy surrounds all the Company's dealings. Unsettled doubts and worries make some of us anxious.

We have no say in what may potentially ruin us. Our neighbour may agree to a tower on his land kilometres from his house but only metres from ours.

The Company has tried to have meetings with individual members of our community .This was seen as a form of intimidation as there were two representatives of the Company meeting with potentially one person alone .

Isolation Costs

It costs us to live here.

Freight, petrol prices, the need for 2 cars, distance from hospital, dirt roads, no landline when it rains, patchy mobile coverage, ditto web access and fire fighting to name a few.

We pay these costs because it's beautiful and we can sleep at night with all our windows open. There is no traffic noise, no background noise, no neighbour's noise, no noise full stop. All we hear is the breeze, the occasional owl, fox or dog barking. On a frosty night we might hear the train as it passes 15km away.

Even under frosty conditions, turbines can catch high level air currents or descending air and continue turning.

Introduction of continuous audible and inaudible sound will destroy the ambience, aesthetics and physical capital of our property and our Valley.

Submissions can be sent in the following ways -

1. in electronic form submitted online at

<https://senate.aph.gov.au/submissions/pages/index.aspx> or sent by

2. email to community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au as an attached Adobe PDF or MS Word format document.

3. posted to

Department of the Senate, PO Box 6100, Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600.

Notes to help you prepare your submission are available from the website at

http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/wit_sub/index.htm.

Alternatively, the Committee Secretariat will be able to help you with your inquiries and can be contacted on telephone +61 2 6277 3515 or facsimile +61 2 6277 5829 or by email to community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au.

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