

Part 4: Impact of turbines on property values

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Introduction

I can see all of the red flashing lights on the 128 Waubra wind farm turbines from my place, even though I live 35 kilometres away. They can be seen from Daylesford, more than fifty kilometres away.

They flash on and off all night, whether or not they generate any electricity at all - even on wind-still nights, when the turbines use up electricity to power the lights. The more recently proposed turbines would all require lights to alert aircraft, due to their enormous height – in NSW at Collector, they would be 150 metres high – taller than the apex of the Sydney Harbor Bridge from the water.

In the event of my selling my property, I would feel morally obliged to tell any prospective owner that the view towards the west is marred forever.

And no – turbines are not considered part of a beautiful view in advertising for resorts and get-aways for your holidays. I have been a member of RACV for more than ten years and received their magazine, and I have yet to see a single turbine as an attraction in their glossy photos of beautiful country tourist destinations. The same goes for the ‘Travel’ inserts in the weekend newspapers.

Consider the draw cards in the following advertisement in ‘The Age, Travel’ (*The Age*, May 19, 2007) for an overnight stay at ‘Abode’ in Moonambel, Victoria, in the Pyrenees Shire.

‘When was the last time you saw the stars? And not just the mere smattering of celestial lights that permeates Melbourne’s pollution haze, but the entire sweeping gamut of the Milky Way? Abode’s southerly facing observation deck provides sweeping vistas of the Pyrenees by day, and breathtaking views of southern skies by night.’¹

¹ *The Age Travel*, Saturday May 19, 2007, Mark Hawthorne ‘On starry, starry, nights’

In April, 2010, there were over 550 Industrial wind turbines proposed, or already operational, in the Pyrenees Shire at:

Waubra, Waubra 'Expansion', Stockyard Hill, Chepstowe, Lexton, Amphitheatre/Lexton, Crowlands - many of them fast-tracked as the previous Victorian government sold out Western Victoria to speculators in wind energy.

For the over-200 turbine wind farm proposed for Stockyard Hill, the previous Minister for Planning, Justin Madden, rejected the need for an Environmental Effects Statement. He said the wind company's assessment was enough.

So forget the 'breathtaking views of southern skies by night' – all you'll see is lights on turbines going on and off. You may as well have stayed in the city, where they don't let you build turbines.

More of the same in the same ad:

'Abode is just over the ridge from Dalwhinnie's vineyards, in the heart of the Pyrenees ranges, and a five-minute drive from Moonambel' – the sort of ranges that wind companies love to put turbines on.

The owners of 'Abode' would have to rewrite recommendations like:

'The bathroom on the southern side has a wide, high window that has stunning views of the Pyrenees from the shower.' And again: 'If there's even the slightest hint of sun, you will feel drawn to the wooden deck to watch the colours of the Pyrenees transform as the light changes.

'Ewan Jones designed the open-plan living area to take advantage of the views through big windows. On colder days, the vistas are starkly fabulous, especially in front of a fire...'²

Frankly, I feel sorry for Ewan Jones – and all of his carefully designed house to take advantage of the views – should the turbines proposed for the beautiful and stunning Pyrenees Shire go ahead. Stockyard Hill has already been approved. Lexton has already been approved.

The above article goes on to praise nearby Avoca and its wineries and pubs.

The final verdict: 'An abode that provides glorious views and a wonderful rustic setting.'

² The Age Travel, Saturday May 19, 2007, Mark Hawthorne 'On starry, starry, nights'

People leave cities in droves at every long weekend and every chance they get to go to the great outdoors.

At an estate agency at Daylesford I remember reading the 'spiel' for a property advertised in their window as: 'very scenic with rocky outcrops.' I thought sadly of how that would once have applied to Waubra - a stunning rural landscape, undulating and interspersed with rich agricultural land and wooded hills and dales - and of the 128 turbines there now, covering those 'scenic rocky outcrops.'

Views matter. Nature matters.

The Wind Companies' views on land values

The wind companies and wind associations are unanimous in stating that land values do not decrease due to the turbines nearby.

In Fact Sheet 12 put out by the Australian Wind Energy Association (AusWea) we read:

'In Australia, there is no evidence to suggest that the value of properties with views of distant wind turbines, are adversely impacted by the wind farms.'³

Please note the wind association's favourite use of 'suggest,' and this is supposed to be a 'fact' sheet; and please note the use of 'distant.' I assume this would be distant enough not to hear the noise from the turbines.

Despite its insistence that there is no detriment to land values, in other parts of the same fact sheet, the information gets vaguer; we've gone from the 'no evidence' to 'little evidence:'

'There is little evidence to suggest that because of landscape values, wind farms negatively impact upon the land values of neighbouring properties.'

This is their comment in Fact Sheet 12, even though earlier, in Fact Sheet 7, they discuss the problems of destroying visual amenity:

'Nevertheless, a wind farm's impact on visual amenity is generally the dominant issue in the reviews of wind farm proposals and it can be the cause of bitter and acrimonious debate.'⁴

In Fact Sheet 12, Wind Farms and Land Values, AusWea suggest that if you have

³ Wind Farm Basics, Australian Wind Energy Association, www.auswea.com.au, 'Fact Sheet 12, Wind Farms and Land Values

⁴ Wind Farm Basics, Australian Wind Energy Association, www.auswea.com.au, 'Fact Sheet 7,

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turbines, the property will be easier to sell:

‘From a property value perspective, the greatest actual impact will be if revenue stream is derived from the development.’⁵

This is not borne out by people who had eight turbines on their land at Codrington:

‘Doonbar’
Princes Highway
CODRINGTON VIC 3285

21 November 2001
Planning Panels Victoria
Department of Infrastructure
GPO Box 2797y
MELBOURNE VIC 3001

‘Dear Sir/Madam

‘Our family property is ‘Doonbar’ at Codrington and it accommodates eight of the fourteen turbines that make up Pacific Hydro’s Codrington Wind Farm.

‘It might seem hypocritical for farmers hosting a wind farm to object to wind farms, but we feel that we are amongst the few people who have the benefit of hindsight. Living with a wind farm is a daily reality for us and while we do receive financial income from it, we are now aware of many of the costs and repercussions that occur after installation. It is for these reasons we object to the wind farm proposed for Yambuk.

‘...We saw the turbines as something that would make the property a more attractive proposition to buyers, and hopefully result in a quick sale. While we had some reservations, we felt pressured to sign the contract by the specified time.

‘The outcome has been quite different to what we had hoped for. While we have had many prospective buyers, none have been willing to purchase the property and some have stated that they were put off by the lease arrangement with Pacific Hydro (specifically, the clause relating to the caveat).

‘What we had hoped would be our ticket out has turned out to be an obstacle to a sale.’

⁵ Wind Farm Basics, Australian Wind Energy Association, www.auswea.com.au, ‘Fact Sheet 12, Wind Farms and Land Values

The letter is signed

Their experience is borne out by others. It puts to shame the simplistic and false statement by Sustainability Victoria, in their 'Wind Energy: The Myths and Facts, October 2006,' where they state:

'Myth:

Wind farms reduce property values

Fact:

Studies have found no evidence to support the claim that wind farms decrease property values.

'>While no formal studies have yet been carried out in Australia, studies in USA and Denmark have found there is little to suggest that wind farms impact negatively on the value of neighbouring properties.'⁶

Please note again, as in AusWea's 'fact' sheets, the change from 'no evidence' to 'there is little to suggest' and the point that they have stated something as 'fact,' which they admit, has not even been tested in Australia.

The (not) so happy Danes, yet again

Seen in the AusWea's fact sheets and in Sustainability Victoria's 'wind energy: myths and facts', the Danish people are again held up as having no trouble with wind farms.

AusWea states:

'Denmark: A report by the Institute of Local Government Studies [AKF] found that "the economic expenses in connection with noise and visual effects from wind mills are minimal."⁷ [Auswea quotes from: Institute of Local Government Studies Denmark: Social assessment of wind power. Jorgen Jordel-Jorgensen, April 1996]

That study used was from April 1996. We are now in 2011, and more recent results show us otherwise:

'Neighbours on the barricades against wind turbines in Denmark'
by Peter Skeel Hjorth, journalist, July 24, 2010, in the *Jyllandsposten* newspaper

'Protests from more and more Danish neighbours of wind turbines on land have stopped wind projects and made local politicians reluctant to approve licences. This is evident from a front page article in yesterday's edition of *Jyllandsposten* which is one of the country's biggest national newspapers....'

⁶ Sustainability Victoria, October 2006, 'Wind Energy, The Myths and Facts'

⁷ AusWea quotes this from: Institute of Local Government Studies Denmark: Social assessment of wind power. Jorgen Jordel-Jorgensen, April 1996

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‘ “People are thoroughly fed up having their property devalued and their sleep disturbed by big wind turbines 130 and up to 200 meters high”, says the chairperson of a new Danish national association to Jyllandsposten.’⁸

The effect on land values in Denmark is further supported by the following article in *The Copenhagen Post*, July 30, 2007:

‘Residents may get windmill compensation’⁹

‘Stalled plans to build new high-efficiency wind turbines could get a jump start thanks to the government drafting a proposal to pay residents compensation if wind turbines placed near their homes depreciate property values.

‘The government is working to introduce a plan where ...homeowners living in the shadow of the 150-metre giants be compensated for lost property values.

“‘If you live near a new wind turbine, you should be able to receive economic compensation from the state,” [Connie Hedegaard, Liberal Environmental Minister] told Weekendavisen newspaper.’¹⁰

The chilling loss of democracy engendered by the turbines’ invasion of rural land, and subsidised by the government, is shown in the following statement by the opposition to the above plan:

‘The opposition parties, however, are pushing her to bypass the meetings [with the mayors] and use her authority to dictate where the turbines should be placed...’

The same loss of the democratic process is seen in the following letter to the editor – and this is **in England**, the seat of the Westminster system of Government that underlies our own democracy – where Lord Reay, of the House of Lords, criticised the government for pushing through its turbine policy by ‘forcing them through the planning process against ever-growing opposition...’ and aided by ‘the right of local authorities to retain business rates as an inducement to them to allow more planning applications.’¹¹ [I have mentioned this in my section on community divisions.]

When dealing with turbines, we see the same loss of the usual democratic processes in Australia:

⁸ Jyllandsposten, July 24, 2010, <http://jp.dk/indland/article2131636.ece>, Peter Skeel Hjorth, ‘Neighbours on the barricades against wind turbines in Denmark’

⁹ The Copenhagen Post, July 30, 2007, <http://www.cphpost.dk/get/102872.html>” accessed at: <http://www.windaction.org/news/11049?theme> 19.10.2007

¹⁰ The Copenhagen Post, July 30, 2007, <http://www.cphpost.dk/get/102872.html>” accessed at: <http://www.windaction.org/news/11049?> 19.10.2007

¹¹ Country Life, November 17, 2010, ‘Turbines: for and against’

In 2008, the then Planning Minister, Justin Madden, refused a call for the usual test for major projects – a formal Environmental Effects Study – and: ‘...rebuffed not only the self-appointed landscape guardians and several birds’ groups but also the Pyrenees Shire Council, which received no response to its submission calling for a thorough study.’¹²

The landowners were left alone to fight the proposal, not just to protect endangered broilgas, but to protect the heritage listed Mawallok homestead; they finally got the number of turbines reduced. But 180 turbines are going ahead.

The ‘host’ landowners who want the money from turbines on their land are being advantaged by government decrees that override the usual democratic processes.

One person’s use of his land is being devalued by his neighbour’s, without the usual democratic processes that apply to other large developments.

As I said earlier, the Pyrenees Shire is being flooded with turbine proposal, some of which have been passed.

What once would have been a dramatically beautiful landscape (if you have ever been to Mt Cole, or visited Amphitheatre, you will know of the rugged Australian beauty there), will be permanently ruined. The advertisement for the tourist accommodation ‘Abode’ at Moonambel would make no sense, and the careful planning of the house to take advantage of stunning views a wasted effort.

At Stockyard Hill, Gary Taylor, who wants 22 turbines on his land, said:

“‘And nobody owns a view in today’s world.’”¹³

But **he** will – for \$165,000 a year – to the detriment of his neighbours.

I maintain that ‘in today’s world,’ with houses and industry encroaching on rural land, with its diminishing wildlife, and people desperate for a holiday from the cities, with the increasingly aged population that is flocking to one country tourist site after another, that preserving the rural peace and natural landscapes is vital.

The effect of turbines on nearby rural properties

The huge heritage-listed Mawallok homestead at Stockyard Hill requires many thousands of dollars for its upkeep. It is a multi-million dollar property that brings with it responsibilities for its maintenance. Who is going to buy it with a view of 180 turbines?

It would be totally out of the question for a turbine to be put in prime real estate, for example in the middle of Toorak, in Melbourne, where similar heritage listed properties are sited.

¹² The Age, Saturday, October 18, 2008, Adam Morton, ‘Winds of change stir up rift in rural community’

¹³ The Age, Saturday, October 18, 2008, Adam Morton, ‘Winds of change stir up rift in rural community’

Yet it's being done in the country. Turbines were proposed for the Tuki site near Smeaton in Victoria. Close by is the estate of Thornbarrow - not on the same scale as Mawallok, but still a historic property, which was brought back from a burnt out shell to its former glory at great expense and effort by the Gillespies.

Its resale value would have plummeted if the 19 turbines had gone ahead at Tuki.

This is evidenced by the following letter from an interested purchaser of a newly built magnificent Victorian-style house with broad verandahs, on about 40 acres on the northern slopes of Mt Kooroocheang with a beautiful tranquil vista of Stony Rises, the hilly site of the Tuki estate. This estate was not nearly as close as Thornbarrow would have been and the turbines were a proposal, and not up.

The following letter is used here with permission from Dr Andrew and Dawn Clift. The house and land would have been valued at close to \$500 000.

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Dr. A. P. L. Clift 1384 Daylesford Rd DEAN VIC 3352 AUSTRALIA ABN: 95 886 062 848

3rd July, 2007

To Whom It May Concern

Some months ago we inspected a property for sale on the outskirts of the Smeaton township. We were very keen on the house and had intended to submit an offer, but changed our minds when we learned of plans for a major wind farm on a neighbouring block. The proposed structures would seriously impact upon the outlook from the house we inspected, and as a result of this we have reluctantly chosen not to proceed with the purchase.

Victoria's central goldfields are now a major tourist destination, in no small part because of their picturesque landscapes. Although we strongly advocate alternative energy sources, we feel that this is the wrong place for such a large industrial construction as it will seriously detract from the surrounding beauty and, we believe, adversely impact upon tourism and development in the area.

Sincerely,



Dr Andrew & Dawn Clift

COPY

The complete loss of interest from a potential buyer of a property is seen again and again when turbines are mentioned. It was reported at Codrington, mentioned earlier, and by the following article in January, this year [2011]:

‘Chepstowe wind farm: VCAT takes look at plan’

‘Meanwhile, local resident Margaret Leontic has written to Premier Ted Baillieu saying the sale of her home near Chepstowe had been adversely affected by the proposed Stockyard Hill and Chepstowe wind farms.

Renate Metzger
February 7, 2011

“We have had our home on the real estate market for ten months now...In all (three) negotiations with prospective buyers, when information regarding the Stockyard Hill and Chepstowe wind farms were brought up, all three decided against the purchase.”
Ms Leontic wrote.

‘Ms Leontic said she was “terrified” that her home would be devalued “to such a state that we will not be able to afford an aged care retirement unit”.’¹⁴

Her fears are based on fact. The same scenario was played out in Wisconsin, as seen in an affidavit to the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin. (I mentioned this letter in the section on noise)

Allen Haas, who has three turbines on his land, wrote:

‘I feel really bad for the folks who don’t have contracts cause they’re still all stuck. Even if a realtor [estate agent] wants to sell a place, the first question a buyer asks if there are windmills in the area. They just hang up. They should be paying everyone around who is affected, that way everyone who wants to move could get out and move. So many want to move and leave, but they can’t sell their property. The developers deny devaluation, but it’s real, the ones without contracts lost half the value of their property and can’t move because they have no money, still trying to pay off their homes.

‘It turned out to be a real shocker. This whole thing is not right, it should not be done in small communities...If I could write out a check from all the money they gave me and give it back, wake up tomorrow morning and all the turbines be gone, that’d be the best thing that ever happened to me.

‘I affirm that these comments are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

‘Allen Haas
Malone, Wisconsin’¹⁵

Land devaluation due to nearby turbines is vehemently denied by wind companies, and wind associations. But they don’t want any rules on the issue, as is evident in the following case:

At Hammond, NY Town Council wrote an ordinance that: ‘...would require wind farm developers to compensate property owners who see drops in their land values because of the presence of wind turbines. The proposal also requires the company to buy out any property owner who objects to living near a turbine.’¹⁶

¹⁴ *The Courier*, January 28, 2011, Brendan Gullifer, ‘Chepstowe wind farm VCAT takes look at plan’

¹⁵ Affidavit to the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin,
http://windconcernsontario.files.wordpress.com/2010/08/fs-357_3.jpg>by Haas, Allen

¹⁶ Acoustic Ecology, December 16, 2010, ‘Town, wind company spar over property-value rules’
<http://aeinews.org/archives/52#more-52>

The company in question, Iberdrola Renewables, ‘...stressed that property values are not threatened and so the proposed rules are unnecessary...’¹⁷

So why did they also say: ‘...these provisions in the rules “would eliminate any possibility” for a planned wind project in town.’¹⁸

‘Town Supervisor Ronald W. Bertram said he’s in favor of it [the rules]:

“Personally, I believe it’s vital in protecting the citizens of Hammond.”

‘Given the evidence Iberdrola Renewables has presented to the town showing property values aren’t affected, Mr. Bertram said: “I don’t understand” the company’s objections.

‘Wind committee chairman Ronald R. Papke concurred, saying “If there aren’t any negative effects to property values, then they are no worse for wear if this agreement is included.”¹⁹

Protecting the buyer of rural land

There is a common adage that says, ‘Let the buyer beware.’

But the South Gippsland Shire Council, in 2007, deemed the effect on land values from turbines so considerable that it felt moved to attach conditions to a planning permit it had issued to subdivide land adjoining Bald Hills wind energy facility.

The Council requires ‘...future land owners to be advised that “residents on the lots may experience detrimental amenity affects arising from the facility such as noise, blade glint and blade flicker.”’²⁰

Mr Peter Hall, [then Victorian Nationals Energy spokesman] said ‘...this latest legal requirement comes on top of sworn independent assessments of land devaluation in areas where wind turbines are or are planned to be located.’

He went on to say:

““The State’s planning guidelines blithely ignore the impact wind turbines have on the value of neighbouring properties and at the very least this impact should be part of the planning considerations. In every other form of development, such impacts are legitimate considerations when determining whether or not a permit should be granted.””

17 *ibid.*,

18 *ibid.*,

19 *ibid.*

20 Press Releases, December 18, 2007, ‘Windfarms devalue land,’

<http://www.wind-watch.org/news/2007/12/18/windfarms-devalue-land/> accessed 14.01.2008

‘...Wind turbines in the numbers envisaged by the Government will have a major detrimental impact on landscape values, a major impact on nearby residential amenity, an environmental hazard for birdlife and produce comparatively little energy.’²¹

In 2008, Peter Hall, then Victorian Nationals MP, follows up this point:

He ‘...is calling on the State Government to amend planning laws to alert property buyers to wind farms.

‘Mr Hall says there have been recent cases of buyers in Gippsland, in the south-east, checking property titles and local planning schemes which have had no mention of nearby wind farms.

‘He says that it was only after his constituents bought the property did they discover a 100-turbine wind farm was planned for the adjoining property.

‘...there needs to be a system that alerts potential buyers to these facts,’ he said.’²²

And it matters:

An estate agent’s view

Estate agent Shane McIntyre, of Elders Australia Limited, would agree with Peter Hall. In his letter (January 18, 2011) to a concerned resident – Bryan Lyons – about property values, he wrote:

‘A proliferation of wind towers adjacent to a property has the same effect as high voltage power lines, rubbish tips, piggeries, hatcheries, and sewerage treatment plants, in that, if a buyer are given a choice, they choose not to be near any of these impediments to value.

‘The ultimate effect is that the number of buyers willing to endure these structures is significantly less than if the structures were not there. This logically has a detrimental effect on the final price of the adjoining lands.

‘Experts assess the loss of value to be in excess of 30%, and sometimes up to half.’ [also the estimate of Allen Haas in Wisconsin, USA]

‘My personal experience is that when an enquiry (potential buyer) becomes aware of the presence of wind towers, or the possibility of wind towers in the immediate district of a property advertised for sale, the ‘fall out’ of buyers is major. Very few go on to inspect the property, and even fewer consider a purchase. On the remote chance they wish to

²¹ Press Releases, December 18, 2007, ‘Windfarms devalue land,’

<http://www.wind-watch.org/news/2007/12/18/windfarms-devalue-land/> accessed 14.01.2008

²² ABC News, February 12, 2008, ‘Planning changes urged to highlight wind farm locations.’
<http://www.abc.net/news/stories/2008/02/12/2160060.htm>

purchase, they seek a significant reduction in the price.

‘There is absolutely no doubt, that the value of lands adjacent to wind towers falls significantly in value. The ambience of rural property is important, and often times, the sole reason why a purchaser selects a particular area or district. The imposition of wind towers, destroys this ambience forever.

‘Shane McIntyre
‘National Sales Manager
‘Elders Rural Services Australia Limited’²³

Wind companies by-pass local councils

It is partly because of council’s concerns for land values and residents’ rights in a shire, that wind companies do their utmost to bypass local people’s concerns, and go ‘straight to the top’ to people who are not immediately affected by land use decisions regarding turbines.

The wind companies have a tendency to override local councils, whenever they can, and look for governmental intervention that tends to support large industrial concerns, and as we have seen here in my section on land values, to the point of dismissing environmental studies into large wind farm concerns, like at Stockyard Hill.

In the Chepstowe case recently (2010/2011), the wind company, Future Energy, was dealing with the Pyrenees Shire Council. The company used the council’s concerns regarding noise, and flora and fauna, and the subsequently changed time frame, to go straight to VCAT, thus ensuring that the local council would not have the deciding say. In this case – three turbines being within a council’s control – the Pyrenees Shire Council would have had the decision-making role.

The Council ‘... had trouble with the scarcity of information supplied by Future Energy to the project.’²⁴

According to Pyrenees mayor Michael O’ Connor:

“‘When the original application came to council, we met with Future Energy and raised some concerns re: noise studies and flora and fauna studies that we felt were lacking in substance,

“‘We asked for more information.

“‘When they came back to us with some of that information, it was suggested because of the time frame they lodge a new application.

²³ Email from Shane McIntyre to Karen and Bryan Lyons, Tuesday, January 18, 2011 ‘RE: Wind farm affect on land values’ Karen and Bryon Lyons said that Shane ‘is happy for it to be widely used to support our argument that wind farms have a negative effect on adjoining land values.’

²⁴ *The Courier*, January 28, 2011, Brendan Gullifer, ‘Chepstowe wind farm, VCAT takes look at plan’

“The next thing we knew they had lodged the issue with VCAT.”²⁵

A similar scenario took place in eastern Wisconsin, in Calumet County.

(The information comes from an acoustic ecology website:
‘<http://aeinews.org/archives/52#more-52>’)

The Calumet County Board took two years to consider the issue - unlike many other counties, who ‘...have taken a cursory look at complex reports submitted by companies, taken assurances of “no noise” at face value, and later regretted not learning more.’²⁶

In March 2010 Calumet County instituted a carefully considered ordinance to govern wind farm development.

‘Two requirements are especially striking: a requirement that turbine noise not exceed 5dB over the current background sound levels during the quietest time of the day (night) will assure that turbines will not make any dramatic changes [to] the overall sonic ambience at any nearby residence, and a related requirement that excessive low-frequency noise at any nearby residence will require shut-down of the offending turbine. In addition, when the turbine noise is repetitive (as can occur due to blades passing the tower)...the 5dB requirement is further reduced to 0dB.

‘Midwest Wind Energy, the company planning the wind farm, responded two days later by announcing that these requirements would preclude the development, and **that it would expand its plans (combining turbines proposed for several towns and adding a few turbines), so that the project is large enough to become subject to state regulation, superceding the local ordinance.**’²⁷[my emphasis]

The company’s attitude is threatening towards rural residents that don’t want turbines:

‘Despite the delays (18 months plus litigation time) and cost (\$2 to 4 million dollars), the company said that it is “fully committed to this effort as we now see this as “the war to end all wars” regarding wind power in Wisconsin.”’²⁸

So much for the rights of the people actually left to live with turbines.

Considering that most wind companies are from Europe – Germany (Westwind at Lal Lal and Mt Mercer, Victoria), England, France, Spain (Acciona at Waubra), and China (part owner at Woolnorth, Tasmania) that attitude seems excessively arrogant – when building 100-metre (and more) high steel towers all over another country’s rural land, especially when you keep in mind that what keeps wind companies going are tax subsidies from the

²⁵ *ibid.*,

²⁶ Acoustic ecology, April 2010, ‘Wisconsin Country Implements Strict Noise Regulations on Wind Turbines; Company Declares “War to End All Wars”

²⁷ Acoustic ecology, April 2010, ‘Wisconsin Country Implements Strict Noise Regulations on Wind Turbines; Company Declares “War to End All Wars”

²⁸ Acoustic ecology, April 2010, ‘Wisconsin Country Implements Strict Noise Regulations on Wind Turbines; Company Declares “War to End All Wars”

very people whose lives are being destroyed by wind turbines.

Had Noel Dean and his family at Waubra had the same protection from his council – and the state – as is now being offered to the people living at Hammond and in Calumet County, he would have been able to get the offending turbines shut down, instead of having to leave his property to go and live in Ballarat.

Wind companies misrepresent facts:

When interviewed on ABC News on **July 15, 2009**, Noel Dean [ABC News called him ‘Mel’] said: ‘...he and his wife have had to move out of their Waubra home because of noise from neighbouring turbines. He says he hopes Acciona Energy will fix the problem.’²⁹

However, ‘The Company says in a statement that it’s installed sound monitoring equipment at its Waubra farm, and that noise levels are within Government standards.’³⁰

Two years later, on January 27, 2011, we hear:

‘Waubra wind farm operator Acciona has been criticized by Planning Minister Matthew Guy for inadequate noise testing at its wind farm 35 kilometres from Ballarat.’³¹

‘...Mr Guy details concerns about a noise compliance report submitted as part of the facility’s planning permit.

‘Mr Guy condemns the report for using a “very simplified approach”.

‘He seeks further explanation about the type of testing equipment used...and he says the report does not discuss noise compliance at a number of dwellings identified on a complaints register.’³²

I have mentioned this fact in my section on health effects from turbines – that recent sound testing by Acciona Energy at Waubra had not included homes that had complained of problems with noise. Donald Thomas, who had health problems from the turbine noise, three and a half kilometres away, had also never been visited by Acciona.

So it is with a certain amount of diffidence I read in the article:

‘Yesterday an Acciona spokesperson said the company provided a “complete response” to Mr Guy last week, and would be pursuing a face-to-face meeting to discuss the Waubra wind farm.

29 ABC 13:00 News, July 15, 2009, ‘Ballan Residents are concerned about the health impacts of wind farms’

30 *ibid.*

31 The Courier, January 22, 2011, Brendan Gullifer, ‘Wind farm setback: Compliance report “very simplified”’

32 The Courier, January 22, 2011, Brendan Gullifer, ‘Wind farm setback: Compliance report “very simplified”’

And ““These actions are consistent with Acciona’s commitment to regulatory compliance and constructive relationships with government, regulators and the community of which we are a part,” the spokesman said in a written statement.”³³

I don’t see how they can be ‘a part’ of the community, when they came to exploit it, and have consistently denied any health problems that the turbines have caused.

After buying out Trish Godfrey, who had repeatedly complained in the media – on TV, radio, and in the newspaper – about being ill from the turbine noise, Acciona still stated that they’d bought her property because of visual intrusion and loss of amenity due to 65 turbines around her. So it seems that loss of visual amenity does matter, even if they don’t admit to health problems.

In the same article above, we read: ‘In Adelaide this week, former Waubra resident Trish Godfrey gave evidence at the Environment Resources and Development Court on health effects from living close to turbines.’³⁴

Wind companies have consistently denied any problems with noise or land devaluation, while quietly buying out landowners that complain. Most of the studies are financed by wind companies or associations with a vested interest.

In America ‘...a study financed by the Energy Department concluded late last year [2009] that, in aggregate, property values were unaffected by nearby wind turbines.’³⁵

Despite this: ‘Lawsuits and complaints about turbine noise, vibrations and subsequent lost property value have cropped up in Illinois, Texas, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Massachusetts, among other states. In one case, DeKalb County, Ill., at least 38 families have sued to have 100 turbines removed from a wind farm there.’³⁶

My point is this: if wind companies buy out landowners who then sign ‘gag’ agreements, and if landowners are too scared to tell of problems from turbines in case their land is even further devalued, or even unsaleable, how can you get clear results from studies? The whole issue is riddled with fear.

A person at Waubra told me his parents were interviewed on the phone by the Clean Energy Council about what they thought of turbines. When his parents told them that they weren’t happy about them, the people doing the survey hung up. That’s one way of getting the answers you want about turbines.

In England, in a document: ‘Wind turbine land leases and options’ giving advice on

33 *ibid.*,

34 *ibid.*

35 Vinalhaven, Maine:

<http://www.wind-watch.org/news/2010/10/05/for-those-near-the-miserable-hum-of-clean-energy/>

36 Vinalhaven, Maine:

<http://www.wind-watch.org/news/2010/10/05/for-those-near-the-miserable-hum-of-clean-energy/>

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Senate Inquiry into: The Social and Economic Impact of Rural Wind Farms

Part 4: Impact of turbines on property values

contracts with wind companies, to landowners that were thinking of hosting wind turbines on their land, we read:

- **A wind turbine will almost certainly reduce the value of your property.**

The advice ends with: **TAKE CARE**³⁷

Ads keep silent on nearby turbines

The following advertisement in *The Courier* January 15, 2011, is for a farm for sale at Waubra. In the top left hand corner, two turbines can just be seen behind the irrigator in the paddock. The article makes no mention of the turbines. They're certainly not advertised as part of the view or the 'old world charm' of the house.

³⁷ Stamp Jackson and Procter, Solicitors, 5 Parliament Street, Hull HU1 2AZ,

FOR SALE BY TENDER

'HEATHERLEA'
OUTSTANDING WAUBRA IRRIGATION PROPERTY ~ 360 ACRES VOLCANIC SOIL ~ 335 ML WATER RIGHT



ACCOUNT LD & AC DEAN

This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to purchase some of the most productive country in the Ballarat district. Property has exceptional water rights and is eminently suited to the growing of huge tonnage potato crops and high yielding cereal and summer fodder crops. Livestock thrive on the rich red volcanic ground sown to magnificent stands of Lucerne. Large irrigation dam & 3 equipped bores together with centre pivot (2 points + 3 potential points) make this farm an outstanding package. Property is in 8 paddocks with good shade and shelter belts. A newly sown crop of Pyrethrin is enjoying the fertile ground and abundant water. Structural improvements include solid 5 BR WB home featuring old world charm and character including high ornate ceilings, OFPs and pressed tin bathroom - a stylish home ideal for faithful restoration. Outside is enclosed GI shed with concrete floor, 3 stand shearing shed, machinery shed and hay shed. **TERMS: 10% Deposit. Balance 60 Days or by Negotiation**

AGENT'S REMARK: *In my 40 years in the agency business, I have not come across a property offering so many outstanding features - A property with immense versatility and a wonderful lifestyle.*

Selling Agent
Philip L McCunnie

TENDERS CLOSE 18/2/2011 - THE HIGHEST OR ANY TENDER NOT NECESSARILY ACCEPTED

VR1107673 *The Courier Jan 15, 2011* 14 STATION LANE, CARNGHAM. PH: 0418 449 445
"Domain"

Conclusion

Wind companies consistently deny that turbines devalue land, yet world-wide reports show that prospective buyers lose all interest if they hear of turbines there, or even of the proposal for some. Lawsuits are sprouting up in many countries, suing wind companies for making misleading promises in regard to noise from turbines, and loss of land values.

Wind companies aggressively resist any ruling by councils on devaluation of land, or excessive noise from turbines, yet they deny that there is a problem with those issues.

Advertisements for the above ad make no mention of huge 100-metre steel structures nearby that are noisy, have driven some people off their land, and have red flashing lights on them all night. I wonder why.