

The Committee Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Industry & Resources
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600
Email: ir.reps@aph.gov.au

Dear Secretary,

29 June 2007

Re: Inquiry into developing Australia's non-fossil fuel energy industry

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission into a new case study examining the relative state of development of selected renewable energy sectors in Australia. Any electricity generation comparison study of renewables such as solar, wave, tidal, geothermal, wind and hydrogen should not be restricted to solely economic viability as social impacts must also be included in the analysis.

It is important that research and development of new renewable energy technologies is supported as well as creating the environment for component manufacturing in Australia. It is disappointing when something is invented here but opportunities are lost overseas.

The Federal Government's MRET program was highly successful and resulted in targets being reached well ahead of schedule and below cost. Extending the program unchanged may result in a lack of diversity and 'putting all our eggs in one basket' as the wind industry is probably the only one, at this point of time, which would benefit. Other renewables such as geothermal¹ (and solar) are on the verge of making significant breakthroughs which have the potential of major benefits for Australia's renewable energy sector (and substantially reducing greenhouse gas emissions)

Wind, in our opinion, is only a miniscule part of the answer for Australia and disappointingly has a very poor reputation when it comes to actual performance and grossly overstated benefits. Social division and dissention as a result of the wind industry has divided communities, neighbours and families and wind farms have been approved by State Governments where no other type of development would ever be considered.

There is now evidence that wind generation in South Australia only reduces greenhouse gas emissions half as much as mooted by the wind industry because in this State it replaces gas generators - which are approximately half as polluting as coal generation. Wind has also been considered by ElectraNet to contribute nothing (nought) to SA's peak demand during heat waves of 40+ degrees when airconditioners are most needed. Our concern is State Governments only support wind farms for the local investment dollars knowing full well the futility of actual performance.

This inquiry's wind generation conclusions should be formulated from authentic wind analysis data provided by reputable and reliable sources such as Electricity Supply Industry Planning Council (ESIPC) and National Electricity Market Management Company (NEMMCO) Analysis must include standby - backup, construction, maintenance, electricity use etc)?

More consideration and support should be granted to renewables which can provide real difference during peak demand and when most needed i.e., solar voltaic, solar hot water, geothermal etc.

Yours faithfully

Barry & Natalie Webb

¹ The authors wish to disclose they are shareholders in an Australian geothermal development company.