

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

Simon Nelson

By email: community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Sir/ Madam,

A Response to the Social and Economic Impact of Rural Wind Farms

Please accept my submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Social and Economic Impact of Rural Wind Farms.

The recent floods, fires and cyclones which have swept Australia provide a timely reminder of the future impacts of Climate Change on Australia. They illustrate that climate change is real and is already happening. Sea temperatures around Australia are the highest they have ever been measured and it is extremely likely that this was a contributing factor to the recent weather events. All the science is telling us is that to avoid catastrophic changes to our climate we must swiftly move to a zero carbon economy.

Australia has a unique position not only does it have the highest per capita green house gas emissions in the OECD but it has some of the best resources of renewable energy in the world. We therefore should and could easily provide a leading example in shifting to a renewable energy future. Wind power is currently the most mature and cheapest form of renewable energy in existence. Beyond Zero Emissions and Dr Mark Diesendorf have both developed plans for zero or near zero emissions electricity production for Australia. They both estimate that wind energy should provide around 40 % of the energy mix. With wind currently providing less than 2% of Australia's electricity it is clear we need a massive expansion of wind energy. The means that planning restrictions need to be relaxed rather than tightened up.

Current community concerns around wind farms need to be acknowledged and sites do need to be chosen carefully. However the peer reviewed research has not determined any correlation between wind farms and ill health. There are also concerns around the visual impact of wind turbines. However the damage which will be caused by climate change – sea level rise, higher temperatures, drought and other extreme weather events will devastate rural communities and need to be considered when weighing up the impacts and far outweigh any visual considerations

The final consideration of the social and economic impacts of wind farms is that on the rural economy. The construction and then operation brings valuable jobs and investment into communities which are often short on both. Turbines also provide a valuable additional income for the farmers on whose land they are sited.

In conclusion I ask you to consider the future of your children and grandchildren. We need to ensure that wind farms can be constructed with ease in appropriate areas, otherwise their future may be very bleak indeed.

Yours faithfully

Simon Nelson