

7 Feb 11.

Senate Community Affairs Committee
Department of the Senate,
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

We enclose this submission to the Senate Community Affairs References Committee Inquiry into the social and economic impacts of rural wind farms.

Social Impact.

The social impacts of wind farms on rural communities are considerable. Selected landholders are secretly offered large sums of money to host wind turbines. In some instances contracts have been signed without landholders being fully aware of the facts. The contract is binding.

Neighbours suddenly find that a wind farm is planned nearby. They are unable to do anything about it. They have the option to stay where they are and put up with the disadvantages of noise, possible adverse health effects, etc. They live in an industrial zone with their landscape and visual amenity destroyed.

Alternatively they decide to sell their property and move away. In doing so they find their property is devalued because of a wind farm in the vicinity. Buyers go elsewhere or offer a lower price.

They see their wind farm neighbours, sometimes absentee farmers, receiving large sums of money who are thereby able to live elsewhere if they wish.

Thus deep resentment destroys otherwise harmonious relationships within closely-knit rural communities and even within families, often over a long period.

Economic Impact

The economic benefit of wind farms to rural communities is insignificant in the long term.. Installation on site is done by construction teams who eventually depart. There are relatively few long term maintenance jobs after construction for local workers. Employment opportunities could be created by manufacturing towers and turbines in Australia. Currently these are mainly imported.

Health

The adverse health effects on some people living close to wind farms are at last being investigated. Sleep disturbance has long-lasting health implications and the effect on children's learning is of great concern.

The cost of ill-health to the nation has considerable economic impact.

Planning

Power lines are a feature of renewable energy facilities. The proliferation of wind farms require, in many cases, high tension power lines to the grid.

Currently, in Victoria (7th Feb. 2011). regulations pertaining to power lines under 220 kV need only consider the impact on Fauna and Flora. People are not considered. There are no restrictions on placement of HT power lines close to homes.

Wind power is one form of renewable energy. It has disadvantages. The infrastructure is costly, turbines have a limited life, it is inefficient, noisy, needs back-up, causes health problems, is disruptive to communities and has a negative impact on landscape values. There is also a potential fire hazard

It is vital that other alternative methods of renewable energy be developed to provide an acceptable power source rather than coal.

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