

Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT. 2600

Dear Sir/ Madam,

Re – Inquiry into the Social and Economic Impact of Rural Wind Farms.

I have attached the submission that I made to the Kojonup Shire Council in WA, regarding the planning application for a 150 MW wind farm that sits across two shires, Kojonup and Broomehill-Tambellup. We were offered the chance of hosting turbines on our farms but rejected the income offered on the basis outlined in the submission.

I attach my submission not to argue for or against wind farms but to high light the fact that Federal Government legislation in the form of ‘ The Renewable Energy Target’ has lead to a greatly increased number of proposed Wind farms across Australia which are causing considerable debate and division within communities at a local government level. The cost both in time and disruption to people and communities is substantial, mostly driven by a lack of well developed or researched planning laws. This disruption and division seems only to get worse as time goes on with appeals and counter appeals at different judicial levels.

The other issue with the Renewable Energy Target is that the subsidies offered through it, by way of Renewable Energy Certificates has caused a rush of prospective wind farms. These certificates seem to offer little in the way of safe guards to the bearer of the subsidization,(ie consumers of electricity) , that the most effective wind farms are built first rather than those which can get off the ground quickest. This need for speed has in itself lead to community concerns and opposition, as developers fast track these projects in highly populated and valuable farming land, often at the expense of open and sincere public consultation. The fact that wind energy technology is in a position to quickly fill the gap in the 20% renewable energy target by 2020, has in my view caused research and development into other forms of renewable energy to be pushed to one side. There are forms such as Bio mass that may well suit some rural communities better, with the environment being enhanced and all members of the community being able to participate.

There is an urgent need for well funded and independent research to be done to fully understand the reported health problems and the impact on agriculture which is ultimately reflected in land values. Once this work is done the appropriate setback provisions to residences and property boundaries can be understood and implemented.

I would urge the inquiry to recommend a halt to wind farm development in populated areas until this work is done, it really is a case of act in haste and repent in leisure. Government has created this issue it surely must also lead research to solve it.

Roger Bilney.