Wind Turbines

Reference the use of wind turbines as a source of electric power for state grid networks.

1. The stated purpose of rural wind farms is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from existing brown coal electricity power plants already in operation and connected to the state electricity grid.

   Wind farms are extremely unreliable as they depend on air movement to operate, that is, below a pre-set air velocity they do not function and above a pre-set velocity they are shut down to protect the infrastructure from physical damage. This means that the operators of the coal fired electricity generating plants do not know what quantum of electricity will be fed into the state grid from the wind farms at any point in time resulting in a situation where they are unable to moderate their rate of electricity production with any of confidence and accuracy.

   Unlike hydroelectricity power generating systems wind farms are not suitable for connection to a state grid system and this practice should be discontinued. All that is happening is that energy costs to the consumer are increased. It would make more sense to divert the savings to undertake research on more efficient coal fired power generation.

   A better option is to use nuclear power in conjunction with coal fired power. Nuclear power plants are extremely efficient and reliable. The key to safe operation is to keep them small.

   These comments do not apply to small wind farms installed to provide electricity to isolated towns not connected to the state grid. In this situation, with generator back up, they would be quite suitable. It must be noted that this situation does not apply to any of the wind farms in operation or under evaluation.

2. Wind farms are ugly and emit significant sound and vibrations which result in health problems for anyone working or living close to the

turbines. This problem will increase in severity as a result of the trend to introduce much larger and faster turbines located closer together.

Because of this situation any wind farms which may be approved must be located at least 10 kilometres from any existing building with much stricter controls placed on the size of the turbines.

Furthermore, wind farms must not be connected in one particular area which only exacerbates the problem.

3. The proposal to install an industrial wind farm in the Penshurst District creates particular issues as follows:

    (a) The District relies entirely on underground water streams for the supply of all water. These water streams have never been evaluated and it is not known what will happen to the water supply system as a consequence of major excavation works in the area.

    (b) The area is part of a UNESCO Geothermal Park for which we must accept some responsibility to ensure compliance with the unique features of the area.

    (c) Several large industrial wind turbine projects have already been approved for implementation in the area.

    Approval of another large installation in the same area would be grossly unfair to the local inhabitants and create serious social and economic problems.

4. The use of developers such as RES is questionable. They are an overseas based company with a policy that all wind turbine infrastructure will be imported into Australia. This means that there will be no work or business opportunities for the locals.

    They have a cynical approach to the evaluation process which appears to rely on payment of bribes to any organisation which will support them.

5. To summarise, I recommend the following policy:

(a) Any wind farm proposed for connection into a state power grid be automatically rejected. Any permits approved by rescinded.

(b) Wind farms proposed for isolated farms etc be considered on their merits but must be located at least 10 kilometres from any existing dwelling.

(c) Australian companies to be used for all design, manufacture and installation works.

Thank you for your interest.

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