

10 February 2011

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

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

Re: Senate Inquiry into the Social and Economic Impact of Rural Wind Farms

The Moreland Energy Foundation (MEFL) welcomes the opportunity to provide input to the Senate Inquiry into the Social and Economic Impact of Rural Wind Farms.

MEFL is an innovative not-for-profit organisation established in 2000 by the City of Moreland in the northern Melbourne metropolitan region, to develop and implement energy efficiency and renewable energy projects and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. MEFL works within and beyond the Moreland community to implement a range of energy efficiency and greenhouse gas abatement programs, including behaviour change programs, research and demonstration projects and advice and information services.

Any adverse health effects for people living in close proximity to wind farms

MEFL understands that there is currently no published scientific evidence to positively link wind turbines with adverse health effects, and this was the conclusion reached by the National Health and Medical Research Council's 2010 Public Statement on Wind Turbines and Health and by a review published in 2009 in the United States entitled *Wind Turbine Sound and Health Effects*.

Concerns over the excessive noise and vibrations emitted by wind farms, which are in close proximity to people's homes

If wind farms did emit excessive noise or vibrations that impacted upon nearby residents, this would clearly be a concern and would need to be taken into account in the planning process. However, MEFL understands that noise and vibration issues with wind farms are minimal. For example, the 2010 research report entitled *Infrasound Measurements from Wind Farms and Other Sources* and produced by Adelaide consultancy Sonus concluded that low frequency noise levels at the beach (from waves) and in the CBD are typically higher than near wind farms. Unless evidence is presented demonstrating a link between wind farms and excessive noise or vibrations, their development should not be obstructed on this premise.

The impact of rural wind farms on property values, employment opportunities and farm income

MEFL understands that rural wind farms can create employment opportunities, including construction, operation and maintenance jobs. For example, the Hepburn Wind project near Daylesford has already created three direct jobs, and brought more than \$2 million to regional Victoria. Wind farms also provide farmers with a relatively easy source of additional income, particularly as farming activities can continue on the majority of the land once construction is complete. We are not aware of any evidence to suggest that existing wind farms have negatively affected rural property values. Indeed, it seems likely that the prospect of additional income for the landowner from hosting a wind farm would increase property values.

Emissions and network benefits of wind farms

Wind farms have the potential to make an enormous contribution to reducing Australia's greenhouse gas emissions, to ease the burden on expensive network infrastructure to more remote communities by generating electricity locally and avoiding the need for transmission over long distances, and to create a more diverse and therefore resilient electricity supply network.

Benefits of the community owned model

Wind farms can also provide a buffer for rural communities against rising energy prices, and at the same time allow local communities to engage with energy and climate change issues in a tangible and affordable way. The Hepburn Wind Farm is an excellent example. This project will eventually generate more electricity than the entire consumption of Daylesford at an affordable cost to resident investors, and despite a small number of objections, it is widely regarded by most community members as a positive initiative that has made the community more cohesive, engaged and informed. By using a community ownership model, the Hepburn Wind Farm ensures that all community members can benefit from the establishment of a wind farm in their community.

Yours sincerely

Paul Murfitt
CEO