

Tasmanian Renewable Energy Industry Development Board

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

community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Sir or Madam

Inquiry into the Social and Economic Impact of Rural Wind Farms

The Tasmanian Renewable Energy Industry Development Board was established to advise the Tasmanian government on the development of the renewable energy industry in Tasmania.

Wind power is a key part of Tasmania's energy future and the board makes the following high level comments to the inquiry.

Tasmania has a long history in the development of hydro-electricity and more recently wind power. Tasmania produces around 50 per cent of the nation's renewable electricity from a State with around 2 per cent of Australia's population.

Tasmania has significant untapped high capacity factor (40%+) wind resource sites. A recent high level study for Transend Networks¹ identified that the highest quality wind resource sites in Tasmania could support 24,000MW of installed wind capacity. This is a gross figure before limiting factors such as planning, commercial and other considerations are taken into account.

Wind power is one of the most technically mature and low cost of the renewable technologies available for development in the short to medium term. Tasmania therefore has an important role to play in meeting the Australian Government's target that 20 per cent of Australia's electricity supply will come from renewable sources by 2020.

The board notes the inquiry includes examination of any adverse health effects, concerns over excessive noise and other impacts of wind farms.

The health, excessive noise and vibration, employment, property value and other issues raised in the inquiry are considered in a comprehensive and robust planning and approval process that applies to wind farm developments in Tasmania. An independent expert body (Tasmanian Environment Protection Authority) ensures a rigorous approach to the identification, quantification and assessment of wind farm impacts and any avoidance or mitigation measures.

¹ Wind power modelling and analysis of simulated output for regions in Tasmania, Executive Summary, Transend Networks, 2010

Tasmania's development assessment process allows the flexibility to alter a project's parameters to take account of the characteristics of a proposed wind farm site and its surrounding context in meeting the requirements of a rigorous planning and approval process addressing health, noise and other factors. This is the process that successful wind farm developments such as Woolnorth (140MW) have been subject to.

The issues identified in the inquiry such as potential impacts on people living in close proximity to wind farms are most appropriately dealt with on a project by project basis. Buffer zones and other prescriptive measures cannot take proper account of how a potential project might be structured to address the characteristics of a proposed wind farm site and the surrounding context.

Tasmania has a number of large renewable energy generation projects at various stages in the development pipeline, the most advanced of which is the 168MW Musselroe wind farm in North East Tasmania for which development approval has been obtained. Wind farm projects at White Rock (440MW) and Cattle Hill (300MW) have been submitted for assessment under the planning and development approval process.

The Board supports the development of Musselroe wind farm and other wind farm or distributed/embedded generation developments that meet the requirements of Tasmania's planning and approval process.

Yours sincerely

Peter Rae AO
Chairman

10 February 2011