

The Social and Economic Impact of Rural Wind Farms

**Submission to the Senate Community Affairs Committee, Senate Inquiry
2011**

by

Boorowa District Landscape Guardians Inc. (BDLG)

1. INTRODUCTION

The Boorowa District Landscape Guardians Inc. (BDLG) was incorporated by concerned citizens of the Boorowa and surrounding district in March 2011 in response to a multitude of proposals in our area for industrial wind power station developments, commonly known as “wind farms”. Our community consists of farmers and residents, some with deep roots in the area and others who have moved to the area for a quiet, rural lifestyle. The area we represent encompasses Boorowa, Bango, Rugby, Rye Park, Yass Valley and the surrounding areas at the edge of the iconic landscape known as the Southern Tablelands. There are over 600 industrial sized wind turbines of a height up to 160metres currently proposed, covering a vast area stretching from Adjungbilly to Rugby. **This is causing significant concern, ongoing community divisions within the district and is a planning disaster for NSW.**

We would appreciate the opportunity to appear as witnesses at any hearings the Committee may hold before submitting their final report. Should the Committee require any further information from the BDLG we would be happy to provide this. We apologise for the late submission. This is due to our community only very recently being informed of these proposed industrial scale wind power stations by the wind developers, we are therefore stretched in our capacity at the present time to write a submission. Indeed, the most recent development proposal for our area, the Bango Wind Farm consisting of more than 100 turbines, has only just appeared on the NSW Dept of Planning website.

The BDLG calls for an **immediate moratorium** (as is now happening in the USA) on approvals and construction of all “wind farms” for an initial period of 12 months to facilitate research, investigation and implementation of appropriate legislation and regulation. The moratorium should be subject to extension pending a concluding review of the initial period.

We feel that the public are not being presented with balanced information on the issues surrounding industrial wind energy. Landholders are being persuaded to host industrial wind turbines with little knowledge of the impact this will have on their own and other people’s property, the environment or the wider community in general. We are very interested in the development of farming strategies to offset carbon emissions, it is a fast advancing industry, and we regard it as an imperative global/local issue, where farmers will have an increasingly important role and responsibilities.

We have conducted significant research about the industrial wind power generation industry. We conducted this research when we and our community were approached by industrial wind energy developers, in order to inform

ourselves and others. Based on this information we have concluded that, with its significant social and environmental impacts, industrial wind energy developments are not sustainable, and are to the detriment of rural areas, their landowners, environment and surrounding communities. We are strongly opposed to all inappropriate industrial wind turbine power station developments of this type.

An excellent overview article "*Wind Policy Failures*" has recently been published about this current inquiry and associated policy issues by Max Rheese (Executive Director of the Australian Environment Foundation), where he states : "*there is sufficient evidence to conclude that current policy settings are producing serious unintended consequences which must be addressed, and these same policy settings fail to provide an economic or environmental rationale for wind energy.*" The complete article is available at Quadrant Online :

<http://www.quadrant.org.au/blogs/doomed-planet/2011/03/wind-energy-policy>

We strongly suggest obtaining the extensive critique of the NHMRC report "*Wind Turbines and Health – A Rapid Review of the Evidence*" by the Society for Wind Vigilance :

www.windvigilance.com/downloads/nhmrc_analysis.pdf

We also request your support for the recommendations of the **NSW Parliamentary Inquiry on Rural Wind Farms 2009:**

<http://parliament.nsw.gov.au/Prod/parlment/committee.nsf/0/5289EFFDED250AE4CA2575E10007D079>

There are 21 recommendations detailed in the Committee's report, the media release states :

"Recommendations to address the issues raised during the Inquiry include implementing a minimum setback of two kilometres (unless otherwise negotiated with neighbours), providing improved certainty for wind farm decommissioning, increasing the period that Environmental Assessments are on public exhibition to 90 days, improving noise modelling and improving the consultation and complaint handling process."

We request that these recommendations be given the **utmost importance and attention** in relation to industrial scale wind developments. We request the immediate implementation of a minimum 2km setback from the buildable boundary of a property to protect public health and amenity. Current research into the health and noise impacts of industrial scale wind turbines may likely require more than a 2km minimum setback distance. We also point out the

importance of the decommissioning issue, which to date has also, along with the other recommendations, **failed to be adequately addressed by government** despite the Committee's recommendation on these matters. The decommissioning issue was highlighted in the 2009 inquiry with reference to the California Wind Rush, which has resulted in approximately 14,500 abandoned industrial scale wind turbines due to a failure of government to implement adequate decommissioning legislation. We must not let the iconic Australian landscape be turned into scrap heap for obsolete industrial wind turbines as result of government incompetence and developer greed. For an excellent summary of the Californian experience, with some stark and alarming photographic documentation, we suggest the following :

<http://wattsupwiththat.com/2011/03/19/the-reality-of-wind-turbines-in-california-video/>

http://www.americanthinker.com/2010/02/wind_energys_ghosts_1.html

We thank the Committee for taking the time to consider our submission, and we reserve the right to provide additional information in this matter.

Charlie Arnott
Boorowa District Landscape Guardians Inc.