

I wish to make a few points to The Federal Senate's Committee on Community Affairs (the 'Community Affairs Reference Committee') enquiry into the social and economic impact of rural wind farms.

We are landholders on a proposed wind farm site at Keyneton, South Australia and have an option for a number of generators on our property.

Due to the probable effects of climate change in this region (ie) drier and hotter, the ability for us to remain at historical stocking rates will create degraded pastures, erosion and loss of native vegetation due to higher grazing pressure on the reduced amount of pasture produced.

The potential for natural resource degradation including loss of biodiversity and lower farm profitability is great. A new source of income available to us is the harvesting of the wind resource on our property, ironically, made profitable by the effects of the burning fossil fuels and creating climate change. The income earned will allow us to run our farming business at more conservative levels whilst maintaining a level of profit. This will ensure we can remain a sustainable farm into the future. It will also have good natural resource management outcomes.

We have had to balance the visual, sound and farm management disruption that will occur with the long term environmental and financial outcomes for our property and community. If we had a high quality mineral resource, it would be mined with little consultation or regard for local landholders. We are fortunate to have a high quality wind resource that will provide benefit to our whole community in a variety of ways and will only proceed after a long period of planning, consultation and the gaining of broad acceptance. We have lived in this community for 6 generations and are mindful of that long connection. After weighing these factors the balance tipped in the favour of signing an option agreement.

Globally we have to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels for our energy needs. Wind energy is one form of renewable energy technology that is available now. It is only one option and other more efficient technologies may be developed and could mean the longer term future for wind is not be viable. The option for our wind farm will have to be re-negotiated in 25 years. The towers would have to be dismantled if no agreement was made in the future, due to any number of factors. The towers will not remain in perpetuity if they become an obsolescent technology.

We have enjoyed an excellent relationship with a responsible and ethical wind energy company and am beginning to see them building that relationship with the community to allay their fears of a wind farm development. They are proactively working with individuals concerns and modifying their plans where they can to address those concerns. This approach needs to be encouraged to meet the social impact of wind farms.

I hope the Senate committee recognises the overall long term economic and social that rural wind farms produce and produces recommendations that address community concerns. It will assist the proponents of wind farms to be recognised as important members of rural communities.

Regards,  
Joe Keynes

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