Transition Kurilpa
Local Resilience in Action

We, Transition Kurilpa, make this submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Social and Economic Impact of Rural Wind Farms in support of rural wind farms that are sited appropriately. Large wind farms have been operating in several countries overseas for several decades. Research from those countries, rather than opinion, has demonstrated that appropriately sited and managed wind farms have minimal adverse impacts on rural communities, but in fact lead to strong benefits.

Renewable energy is essential to prevent dangerous climate change. We know we need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions immediately, to less than 350 ppm (CO_2) and keep the global temperature increases to at the most, 2 degrees. We can only do this by transitioning away from the use of fossil fuels towards 100% renewable energy in a very short time frame.

Wind power is a commercially and technically available renewable energy technology that has been demonstrated to have minimal impacts if sited correctly. Not only is wind power available now, it is the cheapest form of renewable energy, especially if unfair subsidies are removed from the fossil fuel industries to create a fairer playing field. The senate committee needs to refrain form interfering with a globally and scientifically accepted approach to climate change.

Current research by respected institutions supports claims that wind farms pose no health risks for people living in close proximity. Research conducted on modern wind turbines has shown that the levels of low frequency sound are well within accepted thresholds and are comparable to naturally occurring phenomena. The following is a summary of some key research:

- The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) recently found that "there is currently no published scientific evidence to positively link wind turbines with adverse health effects".
- World Health Organisation states "There is no reliable evidence that sounds below the hearing threshold produce physiological or psychological effect".
- The Victorian Department of Health (WorkSafe, 2010) after examining both peer reviewed and validated scientific research also concluded that "the weight of evidence indicated that there are no direct health effects from noise (audible or inaudible) at the levels generated by modern wind turbines."

Further international studies in North America and the United Kingdom also support this finding. For instance, the American and Canadian Wind Energy Associations established a scientific advisory panel (comprising medical doctors, audiologists and acoustic professionals), concluding that labels such as "wind turbine syndrome" are not a recognised medical diagnosis, but rather ***reflective of symptoms associated with annoyance***. Factors culminating in annoyance include the "*nocebo"* effect defined as "an adverse outcome, or worsening of mental or physical health based on fear or belief in adverse affects".

The large volumes of negative media coverage related to the effects of wind turbines we are seeing in Australia only serve to create fear in some people that they will experience adverse effects from wind turbines. Often once the farms are actually

operating, the resulting intrusion is far less than had been anticipated by people living around the developments. Research produced by Sonus for the Clean Energy Council (CEC) highlights this fact. It also found that if a noise can be heard, then annoyance can result for some people, regardless of the noise level experienced.

The wind industry employs more people per unit of energy than either coal or gas generation and the resulting jobs are widely spread across many regions. Many of the jobs and skills currently utilised in fossil fuel industries are transferable to a domestic renewable energy industry. A key advantage of wind farm development is that the jobs created by are spread over several regions, not concentrated in a few areas.

There are also considerable 'down stream' employment opportunities. IN addition, there are obvious economic boosts for towns and communities, helping them to diversify and strengthen opportunities in these communities. This in turn reduces the need for individuals to leave these areas to seek employment. These areas also develop a sense of place, giving members a sense of pride in their community.

Studies have found no statistical evidence that wind farms negatively affect property values. Landowners benefit from a new source of income, without any measurable impact on farming operations in a climate such as Australia enjoys. Community owned wind farms in particular offer a great opportunity to those communities. Fossil fuel industries do not offer the same opportunities to those communities, and in fact have adverse social and health impacts. Coal and coal seam gas have considerable adverse impacts on rural communities, when we should be protecting food producing areas and communities, especially as we are expecting further fuel price rises.

Communities benefit from job creation, local investment and the community funds that are commonly implemented by project proponents. The Hepburn Wind project, for example, is expected to provide more than $1,000,000 to the local community over the next 25 years — the local community will benefit more than the landlord.

Wind farms are widely supported in the community. Hepburn Shire received 343 letters in relation to the Hepburn Wind Project, with 95% in support. Recent NSW polling shows more than 85% support wind power.

With more than 100,000 turbines installed globally, wind farms are not new. The vocal minority views are consistent with the implementation of any unfamiliar technology.

Community wind farms are common in Europe — Denmark has more than 2,100. These projects empower local communities to constructively engage in the transition to a future without pollution.

Australian states already have a well-developed wind farm planning controls that are among the most onerous in the world. Any changes to these controls should be equitably and consistently applied across other industries and be informed by science.

The Senate Committee should not propose provisions that would unnecessarily make the development of the Australia wind industry more difficult or onerous.