

# Owain Rowland - Jones

## Pyramul NSW 2850

31<sup>st</sup> October 2012

I submit the following information to the Senate Inquiry in support of the Renewable Energy (Electricity) Amendment (Excessive Noise from Wind Farms) Bill 2012. I would request the Committee give full consideration to my submission.

I am a sheep/cattle farmer, aged 69 years, residing at Pyramul, NSW, halfway between Bathurst and Mudgee. My neighbours and I are currently subject to a proposed wind farm (up to 106 turbines, 180m plus in height) along the surrounding Crudine Ridge. The proponent, Wind Prospect, currently has its EA before the NSW DoPI for review. A total of six wind farms (numbering possibly in excess of 1000 turbines) are proposed for the surrounding Mudgee region, with at least three of the possible wind farms to be developed by Wind Prospect. Surrounding the Crudine Ridge proposed wind farm (0-5km) there are approximately 70 residences (not all occupied), with some to be 'sandwiched' between the Crudine Ridge project and a proposed Triamble wind farm, projected to have about 330 turbines. The majority of resident farmers are in a 60-70 year plus age bracket, many with no next generation to assist. For our isolated location there are no services (medical, dental, emergency, trades, food, fuel) within 60-70km (Mudgee, Bathurst). Almost all surrounding roads are unsealed.

Since becoming aware of the Crudine Ridge wind farm proposal I have conducted extensive reading in an attempt to determine the impact of a wind farm on my wife and myself, and our local community. Although not yet impacted, that reading gives me grave concerns for potential health problems (physical and mental) as a consequence of noise from the turbines (audible, low frequency and infrasound). There is a mounting body of evidence (researchers, physicians, acousticians) that wind turbine noise can impact upon residents living in proximity (out to 10km) of wind turbines. The nature of the terrain can cause variability in different locations. In our situation we would be down wind of the ridge line (roughly along a SW to NE axis) on which the turbines are to be located, with no physical barriers (ground, timber belts) intervening.

NSW Health has indicated that on their evidence there is no adverse health effect on the community's health as a result of noise from wind farms, yet ironically a branch of NSW Health (NSW Population Health) has real concerns with regard to noise from a proposed expansion of a mining operation affecting the village of Cullen Bullen (in NSW). Please refer to attached letter from NSW Health (Population Health). Noise effects are noise effects – there can be no 'dirty' noise (from mining) and 'clean' noise (from wind energy). The letter from NSW Health (Population Health) provides additional references supporting possible adverse health effects from industrial noise. A

wind farm in a rural location is an industrial project. I have attached Ms Hyman's (NSW Health Population Health) letter and the report from EnHealth that she references.

I have also sent an email to the Minister of NSW Health (*attached*) expressing my concerns with noise and potential health effects, asking for consideration and support. At the time of lodging my submission to this Inquiry I have received no response.

A further aspect often overlooked in the effect of noise on the general wellbeing of a community is the non-turbine noise during and after construction. Mid-Western Regional Council has estimated that during the construction stage of the Crudine Ridge project, 68,000 vehicle movements to the site will occur over an 18 month period. Many will be heavy and oversized vehicles and a high proportion of these will pass our residence (150m) from the proposed roads to be used. Added to this is the noise of heavy vehicles, earthmoving equipment, a rock crushing plant for internal road base, cement batching plant for the concrete turbine footings and blasting (explosive, for the turbine footings) along the 17km of ridge line. The noise from all of this may potentially range from annoyance to frustration, leading some to a sense of powerlessness and depression, particularly with the aging population in this location. During its operational phase an electrical substation for the project will be located approximately 2.5 – 3km from eight residences and will be ongoing for the term of the project (25 years plus), Reports to hand indicate that the constant substation noise can be worse than that of the turbines, leading to the same symptoms listed above.

The aspects of mental health must rate equally as important as physical health. To my knowledge no wind farm in Australia is currently subjected to an as isolated location as this would be, with no nearby services. Most wind farm projects seem to be built within 5km – 20km from regional centres. Communities such as ours are mainstream farming communities who are part of the aging (and diminishing) food and fibre producer group and who help feed and clothe the bulk of Australia's population now living in coastal cities. Adverse health impacts (physical and mental), resulting from wind generated noise (audible, low frequency and infrasound) can potentially impact on future food and fibre production.

'Experts' such as Professor Simon Chapman constantly denigrate people complaining of health effects and who reside in proximity of wind farms. He is quoted as saying that it is only annoyance on their part. The WHO lists 'annoyance' as one of the criteria for general wellbeing resulting from inappropriate industrial noise levels. Sleep is an essential part of healthy life and recognized as a fundamental right by WHO under the European Convention on Human Rights (European Court of Human Rights 2003) (2).

As indicated earlier, annoyance for some people can progress long term from frustration to depression and leading to mental stress. A precautionary approach or sufficiently determined set back distance is essential until all thorough scientific research is undertaken to determine without doubt the true effect of wind turbine noise and its effect on community health.

I and others of a similar age and situation ponder our future. The following scenario is already causing degrees of angst and stress.

Time for us is shortening to physically maintain our properties which will eventually need to be sold to fund many such farmers into retirement and/or nursing homes, particularly those with no next

generation to continue to run the property and assist with home-care. A local workforce for these tasks is virtually non-existent. Whilst ever there is a perception in the community that wind farm generated noise might cause health problems, properties and residences near to wind farms will encounter difficulty in selling, if indeed they can be sold.

This would effectively 'lock down' the present older owners who eventually would not be able to physically work their property, derive an income from it and have difficulty maintaining their own daily lives. Not to mention they would be unable to receive a pension because of property size, regardless of the inability to earn an income and the situation of an unsaleable property forces them to live in poverty. In an isolated community such as ours the possibility of losing one's driving licence (through age, infirmity, sight) puts forward a frightening view of the future. How does one exist in these circumstances with no facilities and support that most citizens have access to and take for granted? Already I am aware of others feeling concerned for their future based on this aspect alone.

All relevant authorities (Federal, State, Local) who "sign off" on wind farm approvals, as well as wind energy developers, must be held accountable to ensure that there is no possibility of noise effects on the community's health, both physical and mental. Many seem to be relying on out dated and insufficient information to make approval decisions, others may be in denial or 'agenda driven', believing the benefits from alternative energy sources outweigh any negative health effects which might be imposed on a small number of citizens who may be affected. Alternative energy sources are suitable provided it is responsibly located to have nil effect, not just minimal effect.

I have raised numerous concerns with the project manager, \_\_\_\_\_ of Wind Prospect, amongst them noise and wellbeing (health). He has maintained that there is no adverse effect at all. \_\_\_\_\_ has refused to remove three turbines from their intended placement and which are 150m from a neighbour's boundary. The neighbour has expressed concerns over safety issues (possible blade throw) and noise effects as a result of his working in that region of his property.

I have requested from \_\_\_\_\_ in writing, a guarantee that the proposed Crudine Ridge wind farm will cause no effect on health (by noise or any other cause). *Please see attached correspondence.* To date I have received no definite answer.

If one is so certain that their industrial wind project will cause no harm it should not be difficult to offer up such a guarantee.

Is it possible for developers such as Wind Prospect's \_\_\_\_\_ to be questioned, either in person or in writing, by the Committee on what grounds he bases his assertion of no ill effects on health resulting from wind farm noise and his intentions should it be demonstrated that he is in error?

I am prepared to appear before any Inquiry if it thought to be of assistance in determining any aspect of the Inquiry, particularly mental health concerns, of those about to be impacted by the proximity of wind farm generated noise.

I thank all members of the Inquiry in noting my submission.

O.Rowland-Jones