

SUBMISSION TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE – WINDFARMS

I am Randall Bell and I am a former Chairman of the National Trust of Victoria, currently President of the Victorian Landscape Guardians Inc. (formed in 2004) and the more recently formed Australian Landscape Guardians Inc.

I welcome this Inquiry particularly on behalf of the thousands of people nationally and internationally adversely impacted by windfarms.

There are now some 70 or so (I have lost count) independent Landscape Guardian groups and affiliates across Australia and I am in constant touch with them, particularly when new groups are forming.

Personally, the windfarm issue first became apparent to me in 2000 when as Chairman of the Victorian National Trust a prominent Australian implored me to ‘do something to stop these things (windfarms) destroying the coast’. Given the respect I had for this individual I undertook to learn as much as possible about windfarms of which, in my ignorance at the time, I wholeheartedly approved. My initial concern was focused on the threat or industrialization windfarms might have on the landscape particularly to the Trust’s classified landscapes.

In 2001 the Trust co-sponsored the Wind Power Forum held in Geelong. That day and its preparation process revealed so much that to me and many others my focus changed dramatically. In a nutshell ‘wind didn’t and could never live up to its claims of being clean and green’ so why sacrifice the landscape and those who live in for something that doesn’t work?

I am sure that members of this Committee are well informed and know that wind power suffers from a fatal disease, which I will call ‘intermittancy’, meaning it needs to be constantly supported by GHG emitting coal and gas fired generators. Its fundamental claim to produce electricity without causing the emission of GHG is therefore a fraudulent one.

Given that 10 years ago there was ample evidence to support the anti-windfarm argument one would have thought that wind power’s days were over. Not so.

Australian state governments introduced Guidelines rigged in a way which effectively meant that any windfarm application would be approved. People, the environment, the landscape and economy consequences were deliberately left out of the equation. As history has proved many times, truth will always win, and it was I believe on that hopeful basis affected people took action to defend themselves and backyards. There was no alternative and so the landscape guardian movement gather momentum.

I think it relevant to say a little more about the Landscape Guardians because it and individuals have been maligned by the wind industry.

Our philosophy is simple:

‘Our landscape is a non-renewable resource – we cannot create more of it. It is the background to our lives, and helps to define and identify us as individuals, communities and as a Nation. The Australian landscape is a resource which we hold in trust for future generations. As present custodians we have a responsibility to conserve and manage it wisely, protecting it from inappropriate development, so that it will enrich the lives of our children and successive generations.’

By 'landscape' we mean, 'that which is seen between the horizon and us, even if the horizon is imagined'.

By 'inappropriate development' we mean, 'any change by the act, omission or neglect by individuals, corporations and organisations, which threatens the values of landscape to others in the community'.

Our purpose is to promote the protection of our natural and cultural landscapes, both by our own action and through co-operation with State and Local Government, other organisations and the Community. The aim is to safeguard this precious resource, ensuring that it is managed sustainably, and conserved for the benefit and enjoyment of all present and future generations.

Politicians know that policy not based on empirical evidence but politics is bad policy and is usually doomed and this coupled with repeating themes that expose the fraud of wind have been my daily experience and fuelled opposition.

What has undermined the fundamental assumption of global warming or climate change as it has been re-named is the uncertainty of the 'settled science' of anthropogenic global warming with catastrophic consequences. It appears to be anything but 'settled' unless dozens of computer models can be called 'science' and the various 'gates'; climate, polar bear, Amazon rain forest, ice core samples, melting Arctic ice, manipulation of temperature data, glacier retreats etc. only add to the loss of credibility.

The economic cost of wind is all too apparent and will have been addressed better by others. At 3 times the cost of coal it does not stack up. Add to that the billions which will have to be spent on transmission infrastructure to support the intermittency problems. Grant King, the CEO of Origin has publicly stated that in the next 10 years electricity prices will increase by 300%. What will the cost of renewables do to our cost of production, our competitiveness, employment and its social implications.

'Consultation' became a euphemism for the wind industry peddling misleading and misinformation. If there was an application for a piggery, broiler or egg farm, rubbish dump, toxic waste facility, electricity sub-station near where you live it would be incumbent on the local or state government, to properly inform those likely to be impacted, as well as itself, of the effects. When it came to wind that obligation received scant attention in the rush to 'ensure the rapid up take of wind power', the claimed policy objective. Or was it vote-catching for the politicians and the drinking the elixir of taxpayer funded subsidies for the wind industry. What a cocktail.

Government information through agencies like Sustainability Victoria was nothing more than non-evidence based recycled wind industry propaganda. It did not take long before very qualified professionals were demolishing its claims.

Government did not carry out its first duty: to protect the health of its constituents and undertake a health study. How could this happen when it has a constitutional duty to do so and it is locked up in many pieces of legislation.

Is it any wonder that the opposition to wind has hardened, and it will not go away.

So after 10 years we get to this point where 'renewables' like wind have been found out to be nothing but a fraud, or as Professor Lovelock the founder of 'Gaia' has admitted 'wind is a an expensive folly'.

Randall J. Bell LLB