



February 10, 2011.

**Submission to the Federal Senate's Committee on Community Affairs**

**Inquiry into the "Social and Economic Impact of Rural Wind Farms."**

Ararat Greenhouse Action Group (AGAG) is a local climate action group representing the concerned residents of this area.

The Challicum Hills Wind Farm near Ararat in Victoria was one of the first wind farms in the State. It was constructed by Pacific Hydro with the planning process managed by Ararat Rural City Council. Pacific Hydro undertook a significant public engagement program and the development did not receive one objection during the planning permit process. The 35 turbines are easily visible from Ararat and only a few kilometres from the township of Buangor. During construction significant amounts of money flowing into the local economy and the ongoing benefits still support the area. The wind farm turned what was marginal farm land into valuable real estate and even those landowners who did not benefit directly from the development have still supported the project. The wind farm is still supported by the township of Buangor and AGAG members are not aware of any ill effects being reported by nearby residents.

The following comments are directly from residents who live between 1 and 2 km from the Challicum Hills wind farm turbines, and relate directly to the terms of this inquiry:

- (a) There have been no adverse health effects reported as a result of the turbines operations.
- (b) Any noise is minimal, equivalent to background traffic levels, and usually muffled by the wind, a regular feature of a wind farm site! Turbine noise is never heard inside their houses.
- (c) There have been significant positive impacts from having turbines on their land by way of lease income, improved access roads with better fire access, and tourism potential. There is also ongoing employment of local residents in the maintenance once the construction phase is complete.
- (d) The only negative comment relates to the way in which the construction sites are remediated for the residents, in that there could be more attention to detail and could be assisted by better communication in the design stage.

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Much of north west Victoria has suffered significant hardship due to recent climate related impacts and renewable energy is seen by its residents as a way of minimising these impacts. It is now accepted that anthropogenic Climate Change is beginning to impact on Australia, and everything possible must be done to reduce Greenhouse Gas emissions from all sources. **Replacing fossil fuelled power stations with renewable energy sources such as wind power is essential and urgently needed.**

The people of Ararat have seen only benefits from wind farms and continue to support them. We urge the Australian Senate to do likewise and push for further development of wind farms. They are the most cost effective renewable energy presently available and further development is being limited by State and Federal Government policy.

The privatisation of the electricity distribution network has resulted in insufficient investment in network capacity which is also limiting wind farm development. We urge the Federal Government to invest in distribution capacity which would facilitate further development in distributed energy (including wind power). This would not only make our electricity system more reliable it would reduce our dependence on fossil fuel and reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.

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