

Jon Strachan
(...)

8th February 2011

Submission to the Senate Committee Enquiry on **The Social and Economic Impact of Rural Windfarms**

Introduction

I welcome this opportunity to make a submission on this important issue. For brevity that you request this is restricted to two pages, which has required limiting supporting information and referencing.

Should the Committee require further supporting information feel free to contact me.

I believe I am qualified to comment with a Post Grad Dip in Sustainability (Curtin University) working towards Masters. I have governance experience as a Councillor for the Fremantle Local Government (LG), as a member of the "Experts Forum on Constitutional Recognition for LG" and the statutory "WAPC Metropolitan District Planning Committee." I respond to the Terms of Reference chronologically. For this submission I consider commercial scale windfarms with an individual turbine capacity of >400kw.

(A) Adverse health effects for people living in close proximity to wind farms

The significant concept here is 'close proximity' with actual physical risk limited to very close proximity; consequently locating windfarms closer than 100 metres to homes should be avoided. Each turbine design having a different risk profile it is essential such risk profiles be included in any development application for turbines.

Issues of *Infrasound* are more difficult to pin down. Prof Simon Chapman from the University of Sydney School of Public Health is sceptical, stating "*So far I believe there has never been anywhere in the world a reported case of somebody who complains that their health is being affected by one of these turbines if they actually have one of those turbines on their own property.*" The National Health and Medical Research Council review concludes there is no evidence infrasound can make people sick.

Psychological effects and anxiety can occur and may increase in communities with opposition to windfarms. Whilst psychological effects and anxiety are real, these may also be stimulated by a range of infrastructure projects such as roads, airports or even conventional power stations.

(B) Concerns over the excessive noise and vibrations emitted by wind farms, which are in close proximity to people's homes

Windfarms do not generate excessive noise or vibration being statically balanced. They should be considered no differently from any other application for commercial development. The time is appropriate to consider States implementing consistent noise regulation.

(C) The impact of rural wind farms on property values, employment opportunities and farm income

Placement of a windfarm on property guarantees income and can be seen as a positive in terms of productive land use. Installation and maintenance of windfarms have the potential to generate employment in rural areas. Commercial windfarm operators and landowners would negotiate location of a windfarm on their property. Should a rural landowner not be satisfied with the commercial arrangements they can opt out. Rural landowners currently have no such choice regarding location of open cut coalmines to feed coal fired power stations.

(D) The interface between Commonwealth, state and local planning laws as they pertain to windfarms

As with most states the WA Government, through Planning WA and the WAPC control planning. Control is delegated to Local Government in all instances except reserved land. While the system is not perfect it offers balance between individual property rights and community greater good. The inclusion of Federal Government in planning issues is not supported for a host of reasons too numerous to elaborate here.

(E) Any other relevant matters

Proposals for windfarms should be seen in perspective being similarly regulated as other commercial developments. Alternatives to windfarms in Australia are coal fired power stations. Open cut coal mines present statistically greater social and environmental impact than windfarms.

Australia currently lags behind in exploiting our renewable energy resources. Micromanaging the installation of windfarms while the impacts of Global Warming are exacerbating destructive weather and fire events is not good leadership.

Jon Strachan

8-02-2011