

My name is Kathryn Bugeja

12 Dollar Road,

I live on a 5 acre block with northerly views of rolling green hills and Mt Erica. My partner, Craig Falconer, and I were both office clerks in our previous lives so we surprised all of our friends and family when we decided to build our own home. We did everything, and after a lot of hard work we are very proud of the job we have done. Friends and family who have watched this process are also very proud of our achievement. You gain a special appreciation for your home after putting so much work into it. Living in Melbourne I hardly new what the scenery was like beyond the paling fence, but here it is the extensive view that is the most redeeming feature.

The Dollar/Foster North Hills is a **rural site** containing mainly grazing pastures with large pockets of vegetation. The area was originally heavily treed with healthy creeks and an abundance of native wildlife. Clearing of the hills started in the 1880's when the first settlers pegged their claim and lodged formal applications to the Lands Department. Successful applicants were granted a licence on condition that within 6 years at least one acre in ten was cultivated and most of the block fenced. It was a government condition that this land be cleared if the settler was to retain ownership. In a cruel manipulation of that requirement, this government has argued that this proposal does not warrant an **EES** because of the trees being cleared making the land man modified.

The Ministers decision that an EES was not required, her April fools announcement of 2004, was not passed on to Ms Sharon Miles, Acting Chief Executive of Sustainable Energy Authority Victoria. Ms Miles responded to my concerns on behalf of the Premier in August 2004 and assured me that a visual impact assessment would be undertaken as part of an EES. The **Guidelines** state that SEAV objective is to "bring together the best available knowledge and expertise to support communities.."

Ms Miles and Mr Bracks have not cross checked information to support this Guideline claim.

The most important reason the Dollar Wind Farm development should not be approved is because of the **inadequacies of wind power** in a grid system. I do not think that any Victorian should have to bear the cost of this inefficient and unreliable power source, there is enough evidence from overseas and local sources that proves that wind energy does not and will not adequately supply constant and growing electricity demands and therefore can not reduce our reliance on current major power sources. Coal is the major power supplier in Victoria and can not adjust its output to accommodate changes in wind conditions as it takes about 8 hours to fire up or close down a coal power station.

Every bit of power produced by the wind turbines may have to be purchased by the grid suppliers but that does not mean it is replacing the equivalent of coal consumed. The perception that wind energy is clean and green is based on the promotions of the wind industry and supporting government propaganda that coal is killing the planet and wind energy will supply electricity to thousands and thousands of homes and replace coal power plants. I am not going to defend coal, but I have to point out again that Victoria relies on coal to provide 87% of our current power needs.

Overseas experience, recent DSE reports and information revealed during this panel process has concluded that wind turbines, even in great numbers, can not lower our demand on coal power plants.

Renewable energy is a powerful marketing tool for both industry and politics and both are exploiting the issue with scare monger tactics and misinformation provided to the masses. Victoria has focussed on wind energy, much to the delight of the Danes who are relying solely on an export market for the survival of their wind turbine manufacturing industry, which is a major contributor to the economics of Denmark. Germany has almost 16,000 turbines and their coal consumption has increase as have their co2 emissions. For the past 2 decades many communities have gone through the same political nightmare that we are facing today only to realise from twenty years of experience and statistics that wind turbines don't work.

The State Government, with its focus on wind, is ignoring other viable renewable energy sources that could provide reliable and sustainable energy to a growing population. Tidal power is a viable and abundant power source well into the development stage. A project in WA claims to be able to consistently supply electricity demands. Solar, photovoltaic and other renewable energy projects get limited media coverage and no government promotion. We know wind is not the answer, yet it is the most supported energy supply source of this Government.

The Policy and Planning Guidelines for Development of Wind Energy Facilities in Victoria gives reference to **Visual Amenity** on page 22 of the document. It clearly states that a matter for consideration is the visual impact of a wind energy facility on the landscape and on the skyline. Mr Bracks is obviously aware of this part of the guidelines as he graciously acknowledged to the people of Pipers Creek and Clarkes Hill that the proposed developments of those areas had been withdrawn because of "vista, amenity and proximity to location". The people of Dollar/Foster North have tirelessly voiced this argument. The views overlooking rolling green pastures and further to Tarwin Valley and the coast line increases the value of many properties, especially smaller lifestyle blocks. It is the vista and amenity of this site that attracts buyers and increases the value of properties. The comments by Mr Bracks of vista and amenity in reference to wef guidelines and procedures needs to be considered by the members of this panel. Proximity to location is interesting, if Mr Bracks was referring to a marginal labor seat, we are not, as many other seats in Victoria will prove to be at the next election, however as the State government, it's departments and panels are to represent all Victorians equally, providing fair and natural justice, I should think that this electorate's political influence should not affect the decision making process. These comments are as equally relevant to this proposal as Pipers Creek and Clarkes Hill. The vista and amenity is too valuable to be altered by a wef.

The introduction of 48 structures standing at 110m in height, access tracks, substation and viewing sites will significantly

change this landscape and skyline. The site is mainly steep, cleared land with dense vegetation in many of the gullies within the site and a substantial area on the boundary, particularly on the east side. The 2 wind monitoring towers are the highest structures with nothing else coming close to the size of the 50m high masts. Although the monitoring towers are only quite small in diameter, about 6 inches, and do not move they are easily spotted from many different positions outside the wind farm boundary including the site on my property where I proposed to build a house. This landscape can not absorb the visual pollution of these turbines.

If this proposal is approved I will not build. Many locals would have received financial gain from me building a house. Building supply merchants, builders, plumber, electrician, gravel suppliers and drivers, concreters, painters and others would have been contracted or utilised to build the home. The shire would have increased the rates because of the improved capital value. All of the above would have stood to gain from the business generated from building, but instead they will suffer **economic loss** from my decision not to build near a wind farm site.

I bought the property because of its location, size and views. The 80 acres comfortably runs over 70 head of cattle and each year provides about 80 round bales of hay. It is a good little farm that was well maintained by the Jones family who were one the original settlers in the area. It has plenty of water and there are many trees providing protection for the cattle from the weather and supporting the fragile soil structure. The original house and dairy was subdivided off before I bought the property, but there is the perfect house site on the level area of the tank paddock which has panoramic views of Baw Baw, Tarwin Valley and Andersons inlet. Over 16 months ago we bought a shed and water tank to start our building project. After a lot of research we settled on house plans and were preparing to start our next project. Everything was perfect until March 2004 when I first received notification of the proposed wind energy facility and we have put everything on hold to try to make sense of this mess. The proponents application indicates that the first news letter was issued in October, I did not receive that letter. The news letter received in March clearly states Meridian Energy had

"written to or spoken with all landowners whose land adjoins the proposed sites". This is not true. My 80 acres was included in the self imposed wind farm site and my house bordered the north boundary. No one had made any attempt to contact Craig or myself. Simply putting that information in glossy print does not fulfill the requirement of the Planning Minister for proper and thorough consultation.

WORK

I have worked at the local Murray Goulburn Trading store for almost 5 years. It is a good job and very close to home. I have contact with most farmers from the Dumbalk, Meeniyah and Stony Creek areas. Many regularly talk turbines, asking for information and updates. They oppose the project on various grounds, but they are not absorbed by the issue and go about their daily business as usual. Some, but only a few, openly admit that they would be tempted by the money offered for hosting turbines.

I am constantly surprised at how many people, not affected by the proposal, know about the inefficiencies of wind turbines. Many locals of this area have worked at the coal power stations as the Valley has provided a living to many from this area. There is a lot of knowledge on how the power station works and most understand that it has operate 24/7 to provide the State's electricity needs. They know that production can not change because the wind is blowing at Dollar.

I have to endure the arrogance of some of the stakeholders with them bragging that the "opinions of locals didn't matter because the Government wants wind farms, so why shouldn't I make the money from them." Unbacked claims on efficiency and effectiveness and even the "I'm saving the planet" card is being played.

One stakeholder, Ed Ruby, approached staff at the store explaining that he had reported an alleged threat to the police and directed suspicion towards Craig and myself. The staff member warned Ed not to approach me at work and asked him to leave. I was completely outraged. The accusation was

unfounded and was a deliberate attempt to slander my reputation and create sympathy for himself and provide something for his business partners to submit in this application. Neither Ed nor the police ever contacted myself or anyone else, to my knowledge, on this matter.

A conversation with another local dairy farmer deeply concerned me. He stated that he hoped that the development would go ahead so he "could afford to buy the cheap land that will be available". He was not joking or trying to upset me, this was his genuine opinion.

I have to do the daily banking at the branch where one of the stakeholders works, Faye Harris. Her submission included statements that the land at Dollar Hills was worthless and therefore adequate for such a development. This has hit a raw nerve with me, as I own land adjacent to the development in the Dollar Hills for which I paid good money. I have a Mortgage for much of the value of that property which I got from that very branch. I have made my opinion on this issue very clear to the stakeholder who denied writing such a submission. My conclusion to this is that she was lying or had someone else prepare her submission for the development from which she stands to receive substantial financial gain.

In conclusion, I no longer enjoy working at this place that I used to like. I am constantly avoiding the few stakeholders who spend very little in the store. Office work is hard to find in this area, especially in Dumbalk. I am looking for other work as I am also looking to move away from the region, as others have or intend to do. It is wrong that such a proposed development should be driving people from their homes and workplaces. I have a lot of feelings about that. I am sad, confused, angry and disgusted and these feelings are shared by most who know my story.

I do not understand what the Bracks government is trying to achieve with this unrelenting push for 1000mw of wind energy. There will be **no benefits** to the environment, energy supplies or energy consumers of Victoria:

This will not reduce coal consumption and co2 emissions. DSE, Diesendorf and G White admit it. Even 20,000 turbines will not impact on coal consumption was stated by Mr White from Garrad Hassan during this panel process.

The removal of native and introduced vegetation from the roadside and the site is of no benefit to the environment. Established trees, shrubs and grasses provide valuable habitat for the native fauna of the area. Simply planting tube stock will not provide adequate shelter and feed for animals who already have limited feeding areas.

The introduction of wind turbines will restrict any further Landcare projects and hinder the expansion of the Hills to Ocean scheme.

The site is recognised by the Shire erosion overlay ESO5. Increased earthworks will only add to the already fragile status of the cleared hills, and the restriction of tree planting will deny the area of rehabilitation attempts.

The introduction of 48 slabs of 600-1000 tonnes of concrete, 48 steel towers 30km of gravel tracks, the underground cable that will lose electricity from heat transfer, substation and bitumen car park of the viewing area is of no benefit to the environment. It is a waste of material and resources that will produce very little power that can not reduce coal consumption.

This project will not supply the growing energy needs of Victoria demanding consistent power at affordable rates.

The cumulative affect of wind farms will increase the cost of electricity for all consumers, excluding the likes of Alcoa already costing the consumer \$500 million a year.

Reasons **this site is inadequate**. I hate this argument, I think it is irrelevant because of the convincing arguments on the technical inefficiencies of wind turbines. WEFs, anywhere, are inefficient providing only intermittent and unpredictable power at an unlikely estimated 30% rate. Overseas experience has proven even less efficiency with only 11% Eon Netz Germany.

This is valuable agricultural land enjoying high rainfall and drought free seasons. While other areas are constantly struggling with drought, this area must maximise its agricultural capacity to supply milk, livestock and dry feed.

9 dairies are near the site and are a valuable contributor to the local economy. Little research has been done into the affects on cattle even though local and overseas farmers have reported negative impacts directly related to nearby wind turbines. Should these farms suffer from the development and this area was to loose even a small proportion of their business, the economic loss would have a damaging effect.

Energy sources must be protected from all threats. It is irresponsible to place a power station on 2 of the most active fault lines in southern Australia.

48 turbines over a 2300 hectare sight is inefficient land use. The infrastructure involved in this project requires 2300 hectares because of the distance between ridgelines. The same sized site on flat land would accommodate more turbines and therefor be a more efficient business plan. Needless to say 48 turbines on a flat site would take far less area and therefore affect less neighbours.

Too many people live near this site. Many bought here because of the views, amenity, peacefulness, wildlife and omission of structures as high as 33 storey buildings.

The Shire will suffer **economic loss** due to the devaluation of properties. The cumulative affect from Toora, Bald Hills and Dollar, with consideration to Welshpool and Korumburra proposals, will have a severe impact on the Shire income that will have to be absorbed by the remaining ratepayers.

The South Gippsland Shire encourages subdivision in this area. A 20 acre realignment and subdivision bordering my property was

approved by the Shire and later VCAT. The Shire will lose income from future subdivisions in these hills as the incentive for lifestyle properties will have been removed, the vista and amenity.

The wind farm will deter any future developments near the site. Any other development would be charged the full applicable rate, unlike the 90% discount granted to wefs to further improve economic viability for the industry and its investors.

The Shire has already spent over \$5000 on Toora and \$15000 on Dollar. Donations have been granted to opposition groups to support the majority of the affected ratepayers. This added expenditure is a great burden on a Shire with limited funds.

The \$5 million donation from the State Government to fund infrastructure improvements to allow wefs to be placed away from the grid discounts the point in the Guidelines of proximity to the grid.

This Shire is already doing its bit for the Bracks government wind rush. Toora is operating and combined with the already approved Bald Hills development will provide over 100mw of renewable energy.

This site is already heavily cleared and any further clearing will only further burden the lack of habitat for native fauna.

Local Landcare groups are very active in this area. Stony Creek, Foster North and Jindinook regularly receive funding to re-vegetate gullies and ridgelines to provide native corridors. Planting out ridgelines will reduce erosion and landslip, especially beneficial in this area under **ES05**.

With the loss of Landcare projects on or around this site, local traders will **loose financially**. Landcare projects provide welcome income to merchants selling fencing material. Currently Jindinook Lancare group has a contract with MG Dumbalk to provide \$10,000 worth of fencing materials and herbicide. Each year Stony Creek and Jindinook landcare has provided MG Dumbalk with tens of thousands of dollars worth of business.

Trees, shrubs and grasses are all grown locally and provide many businesses with a valuable and reliable income stream.

To place an energy plant so far away from the major consumers is inefficient. Placing these facilities closer to cities and large industrial consumers will reduce the unavoidable transmission loss of electricity from lines and therefore improve efficiency. They will also blend in more easily with a landscape of tall buildings, concrete and industry than our cleared green hills.

BIRDS

I love birds and I do my best to protect their environment and wellbeing.

There are 2 pairs of wedge tailed eagles with offspring that fly over the site. The birds in the video shown where originally spotted near the Cicero's home, from where they flew directly through the site and beyond to rest in the trees near my home. The eaglet was in training, the smaller adult female kept close and seemed to squawk instructions while the larger male kept his distance surveying the surrounding area with a watchful eye on his family. The young bird fumbled its way on the tree limbs but was quite accomplished in the air.

The eagles are currently co-existing with the human residents of the area, including farmers. There have been no complaints of stock loss from sheep producers and the birds seem to have few threats except for cars, although I have never seen a dead eagle on the roadside in this area. The open paddocks provide ample hunting grounds with an abundance of prey.

These eagles will be **killed** by the turbines rotating blades, that is inevitable. Grant Flynn explained that eagles were intelligent birds that could learn to avoid turbines, land near them, walk beneath the blades (to retrieve bird kill I assume) and then fly away unharmed. It was this comment from the consultant employed by Meridian that unveiled the game the proponent was playing.

The Yellow Tailed Cockatoos visit in large numbers and travel vast distances. They feed mainly on the non native pine trees that are not protected by this development. The introduced trees provide valuable shelter and/or feed to many other birds also, including Gang Gang Cockatoos, Galahs, Magpies, and owls. Many pine will be cleared for this development which will result in loss of habitat and feed for many birds further threatening the existence of bird communities in this area.

The bird studies carried out in the planning application are inadequate. Not enough time has been dedicated to the issue and not enough seasons have been studied to identify changes. Auswea and Meridian do promote that birds may be killed by turbines (except for the very bright eagle), but as far more birds are being slain by cars, they claim the argument is irrelevant. I do not accept this industry comment as the birds of this site are currently not threatened by cars and the introduced threat of bird mincers will only add a danger that was not previously there. The **cumulative** of Toora, Bald Hills and Wonthaggi wefs combined with the existing threats, cars, power lines etc..., will decimate vulnerable species and may bring common species into a vulnerable state. Adding 48 turbines at Dollar will compound this threat to bird communities in South Gippsland.

Mitigation should this ridiculous project be approved

I expect my properties to be purchased by the proponent per an independent valuation

All turbines on or near the fault lines must be removed
The turbines near Grassy Spur, a popular local recreational area, must be removed. The monitoring tower must not be placed near this site.

No turbine should be placed within 1000m from a boundary not belonging to the stakeholders. The proponents have acknowledged anything less than 1000m would be affected by shadow flicker. Turbines should not restrict any future building projects currently available to the neighbouring land owners nor should they hinder any agricultural activities.

No turbines should be placed within 1000m of any public road. The distraction from the moving structures could cause accidents that may be avoided if the turbines were a suitable distance away.

The proponent must provide affected property owners with shelter and screening from the development (eg Freeways). I expect the ridgeline of my 80 acre property to be fenced and treed with mature plants. Ongoing maintenance of this screen will be required to assure the growth of the plants and development of this screen to shelter the property.

The proponent must provide screening on the roadside to reduce driver distraction. Ongoing maintenance of the screen is required to ensure the growth and establishment of plants.

Other points

March 2004 – first open day in Foster. I could not attend but Craig did and received conflicting information to that received by my neighbours.

May 2004 – second open day 2004. I attended in the evening when I questioned a consultant, Jay, on the inadequacies of wind power in reducing coal consumption in Victoria. Her lengthy response without answers was stopped due to a blackout that ended the session.

May 2004 – Meeting at council chambers after Dumbalk open day, a resolution was passed that the Council would support the communities opposing wef developments.

May 2004 – Dumbalk Meeting, 400 attendants passed a resolution, with only one exemption, that wind farms not be allowed at Dollar.

November 2004 – Foster meeting with Bellamy. 1000 attendants with majority opposing development. Two of the industries mouthpieces received a lot of media coverage for their unfounded support of the industry.

60 minutes report including Bellamy footage at Bald Hills, Toora and Foster. Prof James Lovelock, an experienced and respected expert in the field, told of his doubts that wind power could reduce co2 emissions.

Peter Ryan's visit to New Zealand – This project would not be allowed in NZ due to number of dwellings.

Conclusion

I am strongly opposed to the approval of this development. The proponent has acted in a less than professional manner, the "consultation" process was not thorough nor proper and much of what they have reported is fabricated. The information provided in the Preliminary landscape report, that concluded an EES was not required, was inaccurate and or misleading and failed to address key issues. The planning application has many errors discovered by local lay people. Reports that had been checked and authorised by Auswea were found to contain statistical mistakes that were attributed to a "cut & paste" error. Many other errors have been pointed out during this process, my

question is how many more are there and who is responsible for ensuring that the application submitted is accurate and true. In the limited time we have had to prepare for this panel hearing, that was not a reality until January 2005, simple people of this community have found the application to be riddled with mistakes, misinformation and blatant lies.

Wind turbines do not work, they will not reduce coal consumption and they will not reduce co2 emissions. This development will not benefit this community as the negative impacts on social, economic and environment will severely affect much of the Shire.

Wind power can not provide '**secure, reliable and affordable** energy for current and future generations in a way that reduces greenhouse gas emissions', page 4 Guidelines, and should therefore not be forced upon this unwelcoming community of Dollar and Foster North.

Regards
Kathryn Bugeja





