

Inquiry into the development of Australia's non-fossil fuel energy industry: Case study into selected renewable energy sectors

We would like to add comment to the above enquiry

Ian and I along with our two boys lived at Welshpool on the Prom Coast in Victoria. I lived in Welshpool for 17 years, Ian was born there and his family have been farmers at Welshpool for over 100 years.

Welshpool was one coastal area targeted for wind energy development over 7 years ago. Our property is smack bang in the middle of an area that was identified by Meridian Energy for a wind farm. We would like to tell, briefly, what happens to a family and a community when they have these developments thrust upon them.

Prior to us learning of the proposed wind farm we had a very positive and friendly relationship with our neighbours. I was very active in the community as a volunteer on numerous committees. I was instrumental in returning banking services to Welshpool via a Commonwealth Government Rural Transaction Centre program. Everything was looking very positive for our community, we were really getting things going, until one day we discovered our neighbours, who we regarded as our friends, had signed up to have wind turbines on their property. We were horrified to discover that the plans were well advanced and that we weren't actually meant to find out about it until much later on. It was only by chance our neighbours let 'slip' what was going on.

From there on our lives descended into a 6 year spiral of upheaval, desperation, depression, anger and considerable financial cost. People in our community also started to get angry when they realised the Bracks government was bringing in guidelines and changing planning laws to ensure these wind farms would go ahead and local communities would not get a say in where they go. We had to raise money in our community to take the fight to hearing and tribunals. This is money and time that should have been going to schools and kindergartens. Tens of thousands of dollars and hundreds of volunteer hours have been spent fighting them. These installations were being thrust upon communities with no consultation and no compensation. The Bracks governments attitude and arrogance can be summed up by one Labor MP's quote in Parliament when questioned about the effect windfarms were having on rural communities he said "You can't make an omelette without breaking eggs".

I won't outline our whole story in this submission as it would take a book to tell of the deceit, dirty tricks, lies and downright arrogance from the wind energy companies. But suffice to tell you that this experience has left us gutted. I guess a lot of it can be summed up a comment from one of the companies project manager when questioned on why they wouldn't listen to the communities and why they weren't doing complete and proper studies she said "look, it is not up to us to do all of that. Our job is to get the project through. We will only do what we have to do to get it up and running, no more".

I suppose in one way she was right, however what was missing was a government who took their role as being the keeper of the community and environment seriously. Due diligence

went out the window with the Bracks Governments Wind Energy planning Guidelines. In this destructive little book all roads in the Planning Process lead to approval.

The Australian movie 'The Castle' is not a piece of fiction for us but a documentary.

We left Welshpool nearly 3 years ago after the abuse and aggression of the pro-wind people started to take a toll on our health and our sons well being. However we still have our property there and visit often. We still retain a strong interest in the areas welfare and future.

I guess we want through our experience to let people know that the wind energy companies are not green conservationists, they are hard nosed industrialists who are hiding behind a green cloak. In our opinion these people would eat their own young to get a wind farm built!

The wind energy industry in Australia (and I believe world wide) has shown it is not a good corporate citizen and as such is not deserving of being included in any government program that rewards renewable energy industries by way of subsidies or credits.

Australia is rich in abundant sunshine, I believe more energy shines down on our country in one day than we use as electricity in one year. Also we now have discovered a treasure trove of geothermal energy that can be used to generate base load power.

WE DON'T NEED WIND ENERGY.

Push these giant dinosaurs of renewable energy back to Europe. Save our landscape. Save our bird life. Save our rural communities.

Yours sincerely

Ian & Trixy Allott

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