

The Committee Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Industry and Resources
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

29 June 2007

Dear Sir/Madam,

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

Terms of reference

"The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Industry and Resources shall inquire into and report on the development of the non-fossil fuel energy industry in Australia.

The Committee shall undertake a comparative study of the following renewable energy sectors: solar, wave, tidal, geothermal, wind, bioenergy and hydrogen. The case study will examine the relative state of development of these sectors and their prospects for economically viable electricity generation, storage and transmission."

Submission

My submission to this Inquiry is to request that the Committee address the role of the so-called 'greater good' justification that has crept into planning approvals for wind generation plants and to factor in this concept against emerging evidence of overstated performance projections and subsequent poor 'bang for buck' outcomes of these installations.

As an example, I refer to a recent Appeal in the Land & Environment Court of NSW:
CITATION: Taralga Landscape Guardians vs Minister for Planning & RES Southern Cross Pty. Ltd. (*Attachment 1*).

Although many of the issues raised by the Taralga Landscape Guardians (TLG) in the above mentioned case were upheld by the Court and the Environmental Impact assessment was shown to be flawed and deficient, the wind generation plant was given approval to proceed by Justice Brian Preston.

His justification was that the development is in "The Broader Public Good" (Clauses 3, 146 & 352 of the Judgement). But in Clause 79 of the Judgement document Chief Judge Preston states "Wind energy has emerged as a potential source of renewable energy that **may** [emphasis added] assist in lowering the amount of greenhouse gases emitted in Australia each year." May?

At what point does this committee feel that the "greater good" justification of denying justice to an individual is given weight? If it is on the claims of a Developer whose data has not been peer or independently reviewed for truth and accuracy, should not the Court or other Approval Body seek to undertake such a review before the Developer's claims are used unequivocally to override the right to Natural Justice of the individual? Is there a magic number of tonnes of CO2 saved or the number of potential houses allegedly supplied by wind power that sways the adjudicator? If

so, how are these numbers which are supplied by the vested-interest developer checked for accuracy?

In the case of the Taralga Determination, I absolutely refute the claims of greenhouse gas abatement (GGA) supplied by the Developer, as being grossly exaggerated and can supply material supporting this should it be requested.

The Committee should use this example to make sure that a Developer's claims are not swallowed by eager planners and adjudicators whose aspirations to arrive at 'Green Energy' solutions riding a white charger don't find themselves riding a white elephant instead.

Having obtained his Approval in this way, i.e. with none of his numbers peer or independently reviewed, our Developer has now gone on the public record as saying that the wind resource at Taralga is 'relatively low' (*attachments 2 & 3*) as a justification for now seeking a wind turbine height increase from the approved height of 110 metres up to 127.5 metres.

But the Taralga Judgement (clauses 82 - 93) are based on the premise that the wind farm site has a viable wind resource. For example, Clause 89: "*With respect to several other potential high value wind resource locations in the region ...*" and Clause 90: "*Although there were other areas with lesser but still apparently satisfactory wind resource available ...*"

If this is not in fact the case, then the Court action and subsequent approval have been based on claims that are either not supportable or are deliberately misleading. So, the Wind Developer has his approval but the real benefit of Greenhouse Gas Abatement is yet to be proven. Meanwhile the residents of the Taralga District have their amenity destroyed. The committee's charter should be to make sure that all renewable energy projects are supported by proposals that are based on fact and not the emotive nonsense of vested-interest groups.

The rural areas of NSW are littered with the sacrificed amenity of its citizens and the Wind Industry is picking over the carcasses.

Conclusion

The Wind Industry is being assisted by Government Policy to develop wind farm proposals without any scrutiny of their claims [as to expected GHG abatement]. Planning and even Court Approvals are based on the "Greater Good" mantra, which sacrifices the landscape and the individual's rights along the way without the 'greater good' or 'do nothing' principles being based on real outcomes of Greenhouse Gas Abatement.

What can this Inquiry do to make all involved more accountable?

Yours sincerely
Glenda Miskelly
Member
Taralga Landscape Guardians Inc