

Submission No: 27

14th June 2007

The House of Representatives Standing
Committee on Industry and Resources
The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

By Email: ir.reps@aph.gov.au

Dear Committee Members,

Inquiry into the development of the non-fossil fuel energy industry in Australia.

I understand your Standing Committee is investigating the merits of renewable energy in Australian and finalizing the National Code for Wind Farms – A Discussion Paper (May 2006). A national code is urgently required to impose more stringent standards on wind farm operators seek to place large industrial development in small rural communities.

I own land near the proposed Oaklands Hill Wind Farm at Glenthompson, Victoria, since the proposal was announced in March this year my life and the lives of neighbours to the proposed wind farm, have all changed due to the uncertainty and personal stress the proposal has placed on us.

The Oaklands Hill Wind Farm proposal has affected me in the following ways:
Due to the secrecy and total lack of consultation with me about the proposal I was devastated to think this could happen especially with the planning and negotiation occurring for nearly two years without my knowledge. I no longer trust my neighbours who have signed agreements with the proponents to put turbines on their land. Friendships with those who support the proposal are strained or have vanished. Having grown up in the area, I now work the farm as my father did and between us we have farmed here for over 60-70 years I find this proposal totally soul destroying and upsetting.

I now avoid socialising and dealing with people and local businesses which support the wind farm proposal. If the proposal goes ahead I will be living and working near an industrial wind development and this will cause me much personal stress and anxiety. I find even writing this letter is causing me much anxiety and depression.

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It is totally dividing the community. I am so hesitant to voice my disapproval as I find it difficult to cope with the confrontation and negative views towards me. I dare not say or do too much eg signs etc for fear of nasty repercussions or actions towards me or my property. I was even unable to meet with Hugh Delahunty to discuss my concerns when he recently visited Glenthompson due to possible intimidation and reprisal.

When my partner retires we planned to build a new home on my farm with magnificent views of the Grampians. These plans are now on hold due to the close proximity of the proposed wind farm and confirmation we have received that my property would be devalued by up to 40%, totally destroying the value of our planned home.

I feel cheated and betrayed to first find out about the proposal the way I did. A package in the mail finally found me as initially it was sent to an address I lived at 20-30 years ago. I have now become more informed about wind farms and I am aware of their inefficiency and their associated problems eg noise, shadow, visual impact etc.

My efforts in objecting to the proposal has cost me considerable time and expense taking me away from the running of my farm (business) not to mention the toll it has taken on my health both mentally and physically. My health is not the same as it was before the proposal was announced due to the personal stress and anxiety the proposal continues to cause me. After having battled and struggled to survive the drought and it has been tough, when things should be much better, to have this thrust upon me on top of the drought is almost too much.

I feel powerless because I am just an individual opposing the development and do not have the financial resources of the proponent. I am concerned that my voice is not being heard and that nobody cares about my quality of life.

I am upset that the proponent has offered a 'community fund' to my town because it has compromised peoples ability to think free, independently and rationally about whether the proposal is in the best interests of our area. Why I ask, was the town offered \$50,000? Particularly **before** the proposal is approved. People appear to be so influenced by this offer that they don't want to hear the facts about wind farms eg:

- (1) how inefficient they are;
- (2) all associated problems (noise, loss of value of property, affect on wildlife etc.); and
- (3) how close the wind farm is to the town.

I am suffering much personal stress and worry, if the proposal goes ahead the equity in my property will drop due to the value of my land decreasing because of its proximity to the proposed site. I have invested so much of my heart and soul – not to mention the time and money into improving my farm. I have done a great deal of landcare work with tree plantations to help combat salinity and also providing wildlife corridors and protection and also improved the productivity of the land, now I find the value of my property could be reduced up to 40%. It is soul destroying.

At present I employ people on my farm, I may not be able to do so should the proposal go ahead due to the loss of equity. Employment my neighbours and I offer is more than the wind farm will provide.

Health effects have not been properly investigated they will impact on me directly with the towers being in such close proximity. The **noise**, shadow flicker, sun glint and road safety is an issue. I move sheep from one property to another along the Caramut Road and travel the road regularly. It is already a very dangerous road to travel with dips obscuring the view of drivers.

Further I find I am already worrying about the threat of fire and lightening strikes from the wind farm should the proposal go ahead. Fire risk is a real issue in our area being close to the Grampians.

The visual impact on the magnificent rolling hills of Glenthompson will be a desecration of the landscape and so close to the Grampians. They will be "in my face" day and night (seen and heard – visible and audible).

The proposal has torn the community apart, whether or not the proposal proceeds I doubt these differences will ever heal.

The community tension and personal stress the proposal has imposed on myself and others like me is an issue requiring understanding and action.

I strongly urge your Standing Committee to give appropriate consideration to the social impacts of wind farm proposals. The social cost of wind farm developments have been disregarded in State and local regulations. One's quality of life should be given utmost priority in considering the development of renewable energy.

Yours faithfully,

**cc. The Hon. Steve Bracks, Premier of Victoria
Ted Ballieu MLA, Leader of the Victorian Opposition**

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