

12th June, 2007

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

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

Dear Sirs,

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

Emotions are rising in the Victorian rural community of Glenthompson due to plans to erect 45 wind turbines on several adjoining farm properties. The wind farm named "Oaklands Hill Wind Farm" will surround the famous "Robson's Hill Lookout" and be built across the "Major Mitchell Trail" an area of historical significance. There are also many wildlife issues including impacts on the rare southern broilga, which migrates across the area.

Signs erected by members of the "Landscape Guardians", as a peaceful protest, have been torn down in an attempt to silence the right of freedom of speech and expression.

The sadness coming out of this issue is the division the wind farm is causing in the Glenthompson community. This community has been recently fighting the adverse impacts of drought, while last year it fought the Grampians bush-fire. Even two businesses in town had their premises burned to the ground in unrelated incidences. Over many years it has also been withstanding the continual decline in its township population.

Like many rural communities, the school has just survived (to date), shops have closed, Government services have been reduced, councils have been amalgamated and railway services closed. This has led populations dwindling giving new businesses little incentive to set up and those who have given it a go have failed.

Policies of various Governments have been pushing small communities to the brink of extinction. The lack of investment by the Government has contributed to businesses, retailers, banks and service providers moving out. Rural communities are now being placed under further pressure by the current thrust of Victoria's renewable energy policy, which supports the development of wind turbine habitats, even in areas where they won't function efficiently.

Most people see renewable energy as a vital and desirable goal. Facts from overseas developments show that while wind turbines will generate clean electricity, they won't generate much of it and they need to use standard electricity to point and start the turbines. Their biggest weakness is that their peak operating period is at

night when households and industry are asleep or are winding down. This is well known in countries such as Denmark, where they are trying to dump cheap power into the EU grid at night in exchange for expensive (non-wind generated) power during the day when it is most needed for industry and households.

Whether wind power reduces carbon is not clear as it cannot substitute for coal fired power generation. Coal power operates at high capacity when it is most needed (during the day) and is topped up from hydro, gas, etc as required, however, at night when wind power is at its highest, coal fired power is being reduced to a lower capacity and other clean forms of power generation are also turned off when not required. This process requires complex management and is a large topic in itself. The main point is that coal fired power cannot be quickly reduced to accept wind power when it starts-up. Carbon savings are debatable and figures quoted are misleading.

It would be reasonable to expect that the Victorian Government would have several comprehensive reports that detail the efficiency and capacity issues of wind power generation and its contribution to the grid. To date, the Government has chosen not to make any such reports public and on the contrary, it is continuing to develop wind farms throughout Victoria as a sign of being progressive and green. If the Government has such factual reports, it is a shame these have not been released to bring a greater level of transparency and honesty into the debate.

The Victorian Government's story is not a good one and its portrayal of managing carbon emissions is warped. They portray that green power is the equivalent of taking cars off the road, however, the roads are more congested than ever and even if the Government can generate green power, it still leaves all of the cars on the road. Their story attempts to cloud their lack of infrastructure development and spending.

During this drought when many farms have been struggling to survive, the Government has provided only minimal assistance. It has bankrolled investment banks with Government subsidies to develop wind farms. Many farmers who have agreed to allow wind turbines on their farms do not have the funding or resources to conduct proper independent due diligence. Instead they have (probably naively) relied on loosely or undocumented information provided by the Promoters. However, there have been no facts, figures or validated data provided on issues such as power generation, health impacts or impacts on property values. Importantly, little consideration was paid to any identical impacts on their neighbours. In recent times, neighbours are becoming more vocal and are forming into groups, seeking legal advice and beginning to protest more assertively. They are also serving notices on proposed neighbouring wind farms, advising that they may be forced to look at a legal remedy in the future for damages or health issues. Is it any wonder that relationships are strained and emotions are running hot.

Why is the Federal Government allowing the continuation of this loose policy in Victoria just as overseas countries are scaling back wind power development and other Australian States are either in limbo or not convinced. Neither Government has regulated the industry let alone provide a health code, a code of practice or a remedy process for those negatively affected.

The Internet and its search engines (like Google and Yahoo) are wonderful tools as they give access to factual global data on overseas economies and do show the health impacts and pitfalls of wind power. Yes, wind power does sound good, but where is the hard facts? I'll bet that no one has seen any. Have you? All we have is a plethora of sales pitches and self-promotion by the wind farm Promoters and several reports written by departments of the Brack's Government that are contradictory to overseas data. Where are the audited reports on current Victorian wind farms, their capacity, efficiency and contribution to the grid. Where are they?

Many health issues are just coming to light. The following are just 3 examples:

- Last month, a family in Lincolnshire have abandoned their home because of noise from turbines.
- People who were talked into developing wind turbines on their property have written to the Planning Panel Victoria objecting to future wind farms.
- Dr Amanda Harry M.B.Ch.B.P.G.Dip.E.N.T. has published a comprehensive and independent report dated February 2007 titled "Wind Turbines, Noise and Health".

I can provide documented copies of the above. There are many other reports available on the Internet and on web sites of groups that have formed themselves into Landscape Guardians or wind turbine objectors.

I am a strong proponent of giving strong consideration to the negative impacts that the wind farm industry is having on life, relationships and health in rural communities. At a minimal it is creating enormous stress and destroying goodwill built up over decades. These factors have been totally disregarded and the deep divisions it is causing will last for at least a generation.

Yours faithfully,

Peter Prasser