

Submission No: 61

Paul & Jenny O'Sullivan

15 June 2007.

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

Dear Sir/Madam,

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

Having had the experience of the Bald Hills Windfarm development process we would like to make a number of points to the Committee. Our submission concerns the impact such developments have on the surrounding communities.

The current Victorian guidelines and process for wind farm development approval brings with them great social cost, expressed in a number of ways. (1) There is an actual financial cost of fighting such developments to be borne by the community – legal fees, valuation fees, panel submission costs, public meeting costs, opportunity cost of wages not earned due to time taken fighting the development. (2) Loss of social capital and trust caused by divisions within small rural communities – people not willing to work with others on community projects due to fighting and tension caused by windfarm developments, and general breakdown in social cohesion. The secrecy and stealth with which these developments are initiated are the basis for much of the distrust felt by many in the community

Long term damage of the surrounding landscape. Just as indigenous Australians have an affinity for their country, so too do we who have farmed the land for many years. We love and care for the land, and across the district much work has been achieved through the local Landcare group in revegetation and fencing off remnant bush, running farms under environmental best practice, documented by Environmental Management Systems. Industrialisation of the rural landscape by the wind turbines is counterproductive to all the good work that has occurred.

Much has been recorded about the potential for the wind turbines to kill and maim birds, and the placement of any such turbines should be such that this potential cannot be realised.

For those landowners neighbouring the wind turbines there is potential for large scale loss of capital value. In areas where land prices are driven by non-production issues such as sea views, proximity to major centres, these turbines will have a detrimental effect on land values. However there is no opportunity for those who have suffered losses to gain retribution. Where else is it possible for developers to damage another's wealth without having to take responsibility for their actions?

We ask the Committee to consider the above factors when considering the economic prospects for wind energy generation. For the communities that have these developments thrust upon them there is enormous costs, and for what? A power generation system that cannot be relied upon without back up of our existing coal powered generators.

The wind farms at Toora and Wonthaggi have delivered considerable less than expected. It is important that accurate information is provided about energy production and the true merits in reducing greenhouse gasses.

If wind energy is to remain part of the sustainable energy solution it is important that it planning is improved to protect neighbours, facilities are not built where the majority of the community is against them and that wildlife are truly protected.

It is our belief that a key step for our society is to think, plan and act to **reduce** our power consumption – look at our new house designs and planning requirements, city office heating and lighting etc. However we realise this is beyond the scope of your Committee.

Sincerely,