

## Submission to Renewable Energy Inquiry

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on wind farms as a source of renewable energy. The proposed Bald Hills wind farm has caused untold damage to the very fabric of our community, that is, trust and unity. Our community, myself included, has been fighting this wind farm for 5 years and will continue to do so. The developer, Wind Power Pty Ltd, negotiated with 7 local farmers for at least two years prior to the community being aware of the proposal. Wind Power Pty Ltd entered into a confidentiality agreement with the 7 farmers to prevent local farming families and conservation groups finding out about their plan. The point at which the proposal was finally publicised is the point at which trust and unity broke down in our community.

The very process of picking off farmers with the promise of easy money without regard for the opinions of the rest of the community, has caused division that will never be repaired. Farmers, conservationists, conservation groups, towns people and people from Melbourne with holiday houses and lifestyle farms have all united to protect our area from one of the most inappropriately sited wind farms in Australia.

This area, on the coast of South Gippsland, Victoria, has some of the best habitat for native birds and migratory birds that fly in from Mongolia, Siberia and other areas in the Northern Hemisphere. The coast from Westernport Bay through to Corner Inlet provides recognised and confirmed habitat for the White Bellied Sea Eagle, Egrets, Latham Snipe, Waders, White Throated Needle Tails, Swift and Orange Bellied Parrots. The proposed wind farm sits at a right angle to the coast, on a 10km long site across the flight path of these birds. It is well documented that wind farms cause bird kill. It has been confirmed that at the Woolnorth wind farm in Tasmania, 9 Tasmanian Wedge-tailed Eagles (an endangered species) have been killed. With stage 2 of the Woolnorth wind farm just completed, many more endangered Wedge-tailed Eagles will be killed.

Senator Ian Campbell got it right the first time, in April 2006, when he stopped the Bald Hills wind farm proposal. For whatever reason, this decision was reversed in December 2006 and construction of the wind farm was approved. This wind farm should never have got through the planning process in Victoria in the first place. There needs to be stringent planning guidelines, so that inappropriately sited wind farms do not proceed beyond the proposal stage.

The Bald Hills 100mw wind farm will only ever average 20mw, not the estimated 30-35% of installed capacity that production estimates were based on. Let me explain further;

Currently there are two wind farms in South Gippsland, one at Toora (12 turbines) and one at Wonthaggi (6 turbines). The Wonthaggi wind farm, owned by Vision Super and the ANZ bank has production figures of 19% of installed capacity (their own figure). One turbine has been out of production for months, bringing the production down to 16%, a far cry from the 30-35%. The Toora wind farm has had 5 turbines out since late 2006, cutting production by almost 1/3. The Bald Hills site sits between these two ineffective wind farms. This would suggest that the production at the Bald Hills site will average around 20mw, ie 20% of the 100mw installed capacity.

The capacity of wind farms to produce meaningful quantities of power must be questioned by all levels of Government. Mr Beattie, Premier of Queensland, has announced that he intends to sell Queensland owned wind farms and put the money into solar power. The Toora wind farm is owned by Stanwell, a Queensland Government company.

To conclude, it is my opinion that there is no place for wind farms in our quest for alternative energy. Intermittent, unpredictable power production, the destruction of endangered and migratory birds and the division and social disruption of our communities should spell the end of wind farms. Governments should consider other sources of renewable energy (for example, solar, geothermal and tidal) and invest money in more reliable and appropriate sources of power.

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