

14th 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
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Submission No: 79

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

Dear Sirs,

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 Australia and finalising 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 seeking to place large industrial developments in small rural communities.

We already own land & built our dream home near the proposed Lal Lal & Elaine Wind Farm sites at Elaine, Victoria. Since this proposal was announced in March this year, the lives of our family has already changed due to the uncertainty and personal stress this proposal has placed upon us.

This Lal Lal & Elaine Wind Farm proposal has already affected us in the following ways:

- We are now already avoid socialising with people and local businesses which support the wind farm proposal; including the land owners who have already been bought out by the Wind Companies in our community.
- We are dismayed by the lack of support from the local representatives at Council. We do not have any confidence in the local or state government to fully understand the community tension and personal stress this proposal has imposed upon us.
- The proposal has torn the community into two. Whether or not the proposal proceeds, we doubt if this community cohesion in our area will ever heal;
- We are upset that the Wind companies have offered "community money" to our town because it has now compromised people's ability to think free, independently and rationally about whether the proposal is in the best interests of our area;
- We are concerned that if this proposal goes ahead, the equity in our properties will drop due to the value of land decreasing near the proposed site.

We strongly urge your Standing Committee to give appropriate consideration to the social impacts of wind farm proposals. The social cost of wind farm developments has been disregarded in this State and local regulations.

One's quality of life should be given utmost priority in considering the development of renewable energy & preserving Victoria's natural rural landscapes.

Yours faithfully,

Marcus & Shelley O'Brien

20 June 2007

John Taylor

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

Dear Sirs,

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

Re: Finalisation of the National Code for Wind Farms – A Discussion Paper (May 2006)

I am writing this letter to outline some major concerns I have regarding the social implications that have arisen since the proposal by WestWind Energy for a 79 turbine windfarm on two sites in my area.

The Lal Lal – Elaine Windfarm is proposed for an area where we have in excess of 800 homes and properties within a 5km radius of the proposed sites. The attraction for the windfarm company to this area is that the infrastructure in terms of roads and power grids are already established, thus lessening the costs in setting up. Of course, the reason that the infrastructure is there, is because people and communities are already there. Herein lies the problem.

I have a concern that we are on the road to having a divided and stressed community. The windfarm company has already made a commitment to support the Dunnstown Football Club financially. I don't know how much money is involved, but I am told it is considerable, and presumably is dependent on the windfarm going ahead.

By making a deal with the Football Club, immediately they have put a wedge in the community. No one denies the relevance of country football, but by accepting the bribe, the Football Club has, by implication, said to its members that the windfarm is good for football. Therefore, it will not be opposed. Also by implication, if one was to oppose the windfarm, one is against the Football Club.

What about the football supporters who have concerns? They have been silenced. What about the affected house and landholders who have no football involvement?

They now know that there is a group of people in the community who will be pushing for the windfarm to go ahead for the benefit of the Football Club. How divisive is that! There are so many things ethically wrong with deals like this. I see it as a cynical attempt by WestWind to divide and conquer. Quash the opportunity for rational debate by causing social mayhem in a community that is already shaky through the stress of prolonged drought.

I see the government has a window of opportunity to embrace alternative energy in a serious way by the fact that, unlike many parts of the world, we have the space to put windfarms where communities would not be affected, and where farmers would be recipients of substantial income to their benefit; not seen as the cause of division and the object of either envy or derision by the opponents of inappropriate placement of windfarms.

I therefore strongly urge your Standing Committee to give appropriate consideration to the social impacts of windfarm proposals.

Yours faithfully

John Taylor

June 12th, 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

Dear Sirs,

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

We are writing to you in regard to the *National Code for Wind Farms – A Discussion Paper* (May 2006).

We believe that there is a great need for more stringent rules to be put in place regarding where windfarms can be built. As the laws exist, only small windfarms need any approval from local councils. The larger windfarms are approved with little, if any, say by the people who will be the most affected by them – the local residents.

We live about three kilometres from one of the sites of the proposed Lal Lal Windfarm. There are 50 turbines proposed for this site, each about 150 metres high. Whether we are working around the farm or washing the dishes, all 50 turbines would be a constant and major presence in our lives. Even at night the flashing lights would be readily seen from our kitchen.

It would be nice to be able to say that we are the only people affected by the proposed Lal Lal Windfarm. However, there are approximately 720 houses within five kilometres of the sites. Surely there has to be laws put in place to prevent these industrial structures being built in such densely populated areas.

The impact of this windfarm proposal on our community has been enormous. Already, neighbours who were friends for years, if not generations, are now no longer talking to each other. We feel that the impact of this will last for a long time, regardless of whether the turbines are built or not.

The proposal has caused an upheaval in our lives. Almost all our spare time, on weekends and after work, is spent trying to prevent the windfarm being built. This is normally our family time. We have two school aged children who resent this intrusion onto our family time as much as we do.

The prospect that this windfarm could eventuate is causing great anxiety in our family. We have suddenly been faced with life-changing decisions. Should we move if the windfarm is built? As our property currently has spectacular rural views which would become industrial views if the project went ahead, we believe the property would devalue significantly. If we sold, would we get enough money to buy something similar elsewhere? We would not want to leave the Ballarat area but windfarms are being proposed for many areas around the region. How could we buy elsewhere and be sure this won't happen again?

There have been many studies done on the effect of droughts, floods and bushfires on farming families. Surely, building an industrial factory near people who specifically live in a location for its rural advantages would create similar problems. To hit farmers, who are already struggling with the drought, with more problems that will affect their farms seems to go against what most of us would consider to be fair and reasonable. It is already emotionally devastating to many people in our community.

We hope your committee can see that the social implications of windfarms in rural areas are enormous. To be driven off your land is a hard thing for anyone, yet already there are people in our area putting their properties up for sale for the sole reason of escaping the proposed windfarm. This cannot be good for any community.

Yours sincerely,

Heather and John McMahon

13/6/07

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

Dear Sirs,

RE: Development of non-fossil fuel energy industry in Australia.
National code required for imposition of more stringent
standards on wind farm industrial developments in small rural
communities.

We are writing to express our concerns about the lack
of guidelines pertaining to the density of populations
affected by windfarm proposals & in particular the
lal hal / Elaine proposal.

We own land near the proposed lal hal / Elaine windfarm
site. We purchased our property because it offered
what we believe is an ideal lifestyle. It is a beautiful
scenic property surrounded by other lifestyle properties.
We have made a huge emotional & financial investment
in this property & believe that we stand to lose a
great deal if this windfarm proposal goes ahead.
The area in which we live is very picturesque &
peaceful. Neighbouring wind turbines would have
a negative impact in terms of noise & visual aspects.

We have observed the impact of other windfarm
proposals & have seen communities divided, creating
unnecessary disharmony within communities. This
disharmony was evident even in areas that are less
populated than the lal hal / Elaine windfarm proposal.

The uncertainty of this proposal is creating a great
deal of anxiety & stress within our family.

Q are not against renewable energy, however we believe that the guidelines for the location of wind turbines need to identify & acknowledge population density & the impact of the wind turbines on affected residents.

Sincerely

Meegan & Craig Jenkins.