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Subject: House Standing Committee on Industry And Resources - Non fossil fuel inquiry

House Standing Committee on Industry and Resources

Inquiry into the development of Australia's non-fossil fuel industry

I wish to submit some comments to the House Committee in relation to my experience with wind energy facilities.

I, as most ill-informed Australians, originally thought that wind power generation had to be good. When I became embroiled in a community battle to oppose the Bald Hills wind farm, concepts began to emerge that changed totally my opinion on the economic, environmental and social value of wind farms.

1. The Process - It beggars belief that everything the proponent proposed to the panel considering the E.E.S was accepted as gospel, while every opposing fact raised and substantiated by the community was discounted.
2. The Cost to the Community - I chair the local landcare branch, and it is debilitating to feel the palpable tension in the room, when a property owner who has elected to have turbines attends. The branch is no longer the cohesive group it was, This no doubt applies to many community groups. Additionally, unknown to me at the time, no doubt because of the secrecy surrounding the proposal, I inadvertently invited one of the landholders, who is also a veterinarian, to join my veterinary practice as a principal. We have not spoken to each other since I became aware of his involvement with the wind farm, creating huge tensions within the practice.
3. Claims by Wind Energy Proponents - Wind energy facilities simply do not achieve the 30 odd% of capacity production targets that all the hype surrounding them portrays. Germany who has more turbines than anywhere else, budgets on an 8% of capacity production target. Germany is reverting to clean coal technology. The community is also unaware that turbines often draw power FROM the grid. At times it is politically expedient for the companies to have the turbines turning whether they are generating power or not.
4. Carbon Neutral at Best - Wind power production is so intermittent and unpredictable that NEMCO switch off either hydro (zero emission) or gas (low emission) when wind is available. Wind energy has no affect on the coal industry (high emission) whose furnaces cannot be quickly shut down or ramped up.
5. Negative Environmental Impacts - There is irrefutable evidence that turbines attract raptors and result in significant deaths in species of birds that often have a low fecundity and are normally long lived. The Woolnorth Bluff wind power station has already killed significant numbers of the endangered Tasmanian Wedge-tail Eagle.
6. Negative Human Health Impacts. - French Medical experts now believe that turbines should be at least 1km from any dwelling. There is no doubt the low pitched noise of turbines can cause sleep deprivation in some people, and isn't sleep deprivation one form of torture that is used by various agencies around the world.

Thankyou for the opportunity to make these brief comments. If there is a role for wind turbines, it would be to augment supply in towns that are huge distances from the grid, or alternatively as very small turbines, such as the one demonstrated on ABC television "New Inventors" last year, which are no bigger than your average letter box and sit on top of houses, and like solar panels, trickle power into the grid.

yours faithfully

Murray Hooper BVSc

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