

Senate Community Affairs Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2014-2015, 25 February 2015

Ref No: SQ15-000068

OUTCOME: 1 - Population Health

Topic: Wind farms and human health

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Di Natale, Richard

Question:

The NHMRC media release stated that: “high quality research into possible health effects of wind farms, particularly within 1500 metres, is warranted.” Can the NHMRC indicate the evidence or data contained in their Report that supports the statement in the media release that impacts within 1500 metres warrant further study?

Answer:

The conclusions in the Information Paper reflect the entire body of evidence, drawing on studies which directly assessed wind farm emissions and health effects, as well as background, parallel and mechanistic evidence.

The conclusions state that:

- “NHMRC found consistent but poor quality direct evidence that wind farm noise is associated with annoyance. While the parallel evidence suggests that prolonged noise-related annoyance may result in stress, which may be a risk factor for cardiovascular disease, annoyance was not consistently defined in the studies and a range of other factors may have contributed to its reported association with wind farm noise” (page 23).
- “The direct evidence of an association between wind farms and sleep disturbance is less consistent and also of poor quality. While chronic sleep disturbance is known to affect health, it was not objectively measured in the wind farm studies and may not have been sufficient to affect health. Parallel evidence suggests that sleep disturbance is unlikely at distances of more than 1,500 m from wind farms” (page 24).

The *Areas for further research* identified by the Reference Group (presented in Chapter 7 of the Information Paper) state that, “further evidence is needed to explore the relationships between noise at varying distances from wind farms and effects such as annoyance, sleep and quality of life. Research is also required to investigate the broader social and environmental circumstances that may influence the reporting of health effects in people living near wind farms” (page 25).