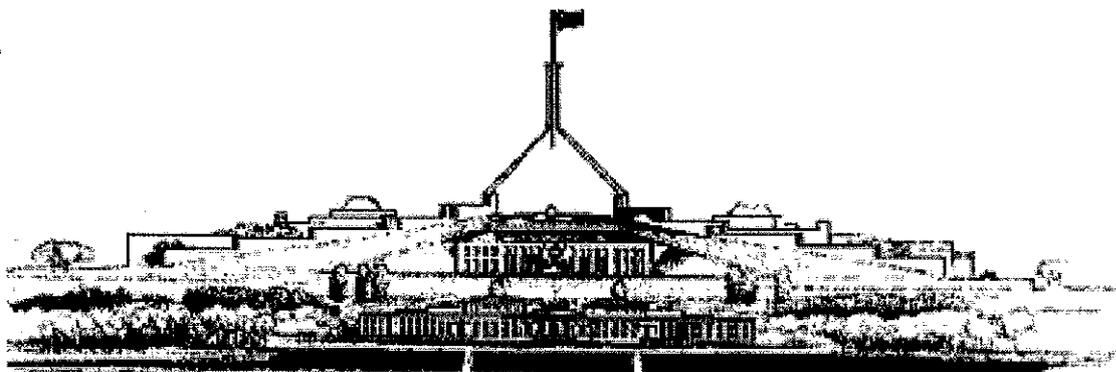




COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

Federation Chamber

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Wind Turbines

PROCEDURAL TEXT

Monday, 19 March 2012

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROCEDURAL TEXT

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Speaker	Question No.

Wind Turbines

Wind Turbines

Debate resumed on the motion by **Mrs Moylan**:

That this House:

- (1) recognises the importance of clean energy generation technologies in Australia's current and future energy mix;
- (2) acknowledges the exponential growth of wind power across Australia;
- (3) appreciates that prudent planning policies are key to ensuring new infrastructure development does not adversely impact upon the social fabric of communities;
- (4) notes that:
 - (a) the Environment Protection and Heritage Council has decided to cease further development of the National Wind Farm Development Guidelines;
 - (b) there is significant anecdotal evidence supporting concern about the health and associated social effects of wind farms which remain unresolved; and
 - (c) the Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee's report, *The Social and Economic Impact of Rural Wind Farms* has, as a matter of priority, called for adequately resourced studies into the possible impact that wind farms have on health;
- (5) recognises that the National Health and Medical Research Council's rapid review into Wind Turbines and Health is only a cursory compilation of literature on the topic and not an in depth study and should not be principally relied upon to inform planning guidelines;
- (6) calls on the Government to urgently commence full in-depth studies into the potential health effects of wind turbines, especially low-frequency infrasound;
- (7) requests that the Government fully investigate international best practice in planning policies regarding wind farms and, in conjunction with State governments, publish comprehensive updated guidelines;
- (8) calls on State, Territory and local government authorities to adopt cautious planning policies for wind farms and in the interim provide adequate buffer zones and not locate wind farms near towns, residential zoned areas, farm buildings and workplaces; and
- (9) calls for approval processes to require wind farm developers to indemnify against potential health issues arising from infrasound before development approval is granted.



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

House of Representatives

Votes and Proceedings

Hansard

MONDAY, 19 MARCH 2012

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Monday, 26 March 2012

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threefold: first, to prevent residents from assisting Australia's enemies; second, to appease public opinion; and, third, to house overseas internees sent to Australia for the duration of the war.

Somehow we as a nation at the time lost sight of the fact that when Australians sailed off to war in November 1940 from Albany four ships sailed: two cruisers and one other ship escorted by a Japanese warship crewed by Japanese sailors. Somehow we forgot that Australians of Chinese descent have served Australians in every war from the Sudan in 1885 through to Iraq in 2005. In fact, the earliest Chinese-Australian serviceman is Sergeant John Joseph Shying who served with the New South Wales contingent in the Anglo-Egyptian War in the Sudan in 1885. Shying's grandfather Mak Sai Pang came to Sydney in 1818. He married Sarah Ferguson in 1823. Sarah was a free settler who had come to Australia with her convict mother. Christopher Shying, another family member, served in the 1st AIF.

Many Chinese men and citizens of other nations stormed the beaches of Gallipoli. It is one of the great enduring factors of us as a nation that we are one of the great multicultural nations on earth. In April 1915, with the Federation just 15 years young, the great thing about Australia's ill-fated assault on the Gallipoli Peninsula is that it was done by Australians, many of whom were not born here. They were Geordies, Italians, Chinese and Japanese—the force that assaulted the peninsula was made up of men from all different nations. That is why it is disappointing that ostensibly through the First and Second World Wars the government of the day, albeit with the best of intentions, fell back on a sense of unease and established a range of internment camps.

These camps were established across the country, from Cowra in New South Wales to Enoggera in Queensland, Harvey in Western Australia, Hay in New South Wales, Holsworthy and Liverpool in New South Wales, Loveday in South Australia, Rottnest Island in Western Australia, and Tatura and Rushworth in Victoria. In World War II, internees were often held in smaller camps before being transferred to larger ones—Bathurst in New South Wales in 1939, Long Bay from 1939 to 1941, Orange in New South Wales in 1940-41, Parkeston in Western Australia and Dhurringile near Murchison in Victoria.

The aim of internment was to identify and intern those who posed a particular threat to the safety or defence of the country, notwithstanding that many of their own countrymen were fighting beside Australians from other lands who had come to call our country home. As the war progressed the policy changed and Japanese residents were interned en masse, again forgetting our history as our soldiers sailed from Albany en route to World War I. Most internees during the First and Second World Wars were nationals of Australia's main enemy during respective conflicts. Their only crime was to have been born in or associated with the country with which we found ourselves in conflict. In the latter years of World War II Germans and Italians were interned on the basis of nationality alone, rather than any particular threat that authorities may have believed had been posed. Over 20 per cent of all Italians residing in Australia during World War II were interned.

That is why I think it is important that the member for Fremantle brings the motion for debate and discussion within the halls of parliament today. It is an important motion. We should not run from our history or hide from it. We should not try to reinvent it or re-interpret it. We should accept it and understand it. If we are wrong we should apologise for it. As a nation we should embrace and move forward together with a shared view of our future.

Debate adjourned.

Wind Turbines

Debate resumed on the motion by **Mrs Moylan**:

That this House:

- (1) recognises the importance of clean energy generation technologies in Australia's current and future energy mix;
- (2) acknowledges the exponential growth of wind power across Australia;
- (3) appreciates that prudent planning policies are key to ensuring new infrastructure development does not adversely impact upon the social fabric of communities;
- (4) notes that:
 - (a) the Environment Protection and Heritage Council has decided to cease further development of the National Wind Farm Development Guidelines;
 - (b) there is significant anecdotal evidence supporting concern about the health and associated social effects of wind farms which remain unresolved; and
 - (c) the Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee's report, *The Social and Economic Impact of Rural Wind Farms* has, as a matter of priority, called for adequately resourced studies into the possible impact that wind farms have on health;

(5) recognises that the National Health and Medical Research Council's rapid review into Wind Turbines and Health is only a cursory compilation of literature on the topic and not an in depth study and should not be principally relied upon to inform planning guidelines;

(6) calls on the Government to urgently commence full in-depth studies into the potential health effects of wind turbines, especially low-frequency infrasound;

(7) requests that the Government fully investigate international best practice in planning policies regarding wind farms and, in conjunction with State governments, publish comprehensive updated guidelines;

(8) calls on State, Territory and local government authorities to adopt cautious planning policies for wind farms and in the interim provide adequate buffer zones and not locate wind farms near towns, residential zoned areas, farm buildings and workplaces; and

(9) calls for approval processes to require wind farm developers to indemnify against potential health issues arising from infrasound before development approval is granted.

Mrs MOYLAN (Pearce) (18:59): Because I am the first speaker to this motion tonight, I take the opportunity to thank my colleagues from both sides of the chamber for making a contribution to this debate. I notice that there has been considerable interest in it. In particular I thank my colleague the member for Hume for co-sponsoring this motion. I know he has long been talking about this issue and the need for it to be satisfactorily resolved. I will speak, of course, to the motion on wind turbine planning policies. I will not read out the motion in full, as time does not permit. But, as a clean and relatively cheap technology, wind power has become one of the fastest growing sources of energy in Australia. The industry has expanded at a rate of 30 per cent annually since 2001 and at least 90 new wind farms are currently proposed across the country, in addition to the 87 now operating. The rapid growth of this industry highlights the significant potential for clean energy in Australia. I am very supportive of a strong renewable program. In fact, a timely piece on Fran Kelly's ABC *Breakfast* program last Thursday reinforced the fact that a renewable energy program can provide greater security of energy supply. German politician Hans-Josef Fell told listeners that France, which derives nearly 75 per cent of its energy from nuclear power today, has recently been unable to meet its energy demands with its bitterly cold winter and poor installation of housing and buildings. France therefore had to look to Germany to import energy. Germany now gains more than 20 per cent of its power from renewable sources, with wind power making up 40 per cent of that renewable energy source.

Renewable energy and particularly wind power are viable sources of energy that have a strong future in Australia. That future can only be strengthened by ensuring that there are robust rules about the location and construction of wind farms. Wind farms are decades old; they are not new. But in modern times the magnitude and the proliferation have grown exponentially. A single wind farm can require tens of thousands of hectares of land, housing hundreds of turbines as tall as the Sydney Harbour Bridge. A single project may amount to a billion-dollar investment. Despite the fact that wind power projects are set to quadruple over the next 30 years under the government's clean energy package, there are no nationally consistent policies or laws governing their development. Planning decisions taken by state governments vary and may involve legislation that uses an arbitrary rule in relation to proximity to dwellings and workplaces. They do not necessarily take into account the geography or the topographical features of a landscape that wind farms will be located in. In Western Australia, for example, there is no legislation enforcing development plans—just guidelines loosely developed with consideration to the rapid review undertaken by the federal government.

In any jurisdiction in the country, stringent planning policies apply to everything from a backyard shed, or indeed a fence, to an airport. Just ask any developer. Yet planning policies for wind farms are approached on an ad hoc basis, informed by cursory investigations into concerns that in some cases are tearing communities apart, particularly rural communities, and causing many people to vacate their homes. The increased size of turbines and the increased amount of land utilised for the farms are growing to mammoth proportions. Therefore, it seems fundamental that we need proper planning procedure to ensure that the community anxiety is addressed and that the best outcome is achieved for all stakeholders.

I think that we should work on the basis that we should do no harm with this policy. Although wind power is a clean technology, that does not mean that it has no environmental impact. A number of people living near to wind farms have reported a myriad of health issues. The low-frequency noise and infrasound produced by wind turbines has been identified as a potential cause of some of these problems. The science behind infrasound is quite detailed and requires a thorough examination. We certainly do not have the capacity in this debate to go into that in any great detail, but it is apparent that not enough investigation has been undertaken by Australian authorities. In evidence to the Senate Community Affairs References Committee, investigating the social and economic impact of rural wind farms, both wind farm operators and state governments continued to cite the Australian National Health and Medical Research Council's rapid review in 2010, which concluded:

There are no direct pathological effects from wind farms...

Yet the review was not a scientific investigation or even an analysis, but simply a compilation of existing literature on the subject of low-frequency noise in wind farms. From reading a number of studies on the topic, it appears that the potential for harm arising from low-frequency noise depends on many factors, including the size of the turbine blades—and, as I said, these are getting larger and larger—the number of turbines, the variation in the topography and the wind speed. An increase in any of these factors may increase the amount of infrasound. There are even suggestions that infrasound travels further diagonally to the wind farm, rather than downwind, where most measurements are taken. But many of these are hypotheses requiring much more study.

• A related question which also needs to be investigated is why this issue is becoming more prominent now. The forerunners to modern wind turbines were created in the 1940s, and commercial sized wind farms have been in existence since the 1970s in the United States and the 1980s in Europe. Many countries such as Denmark and Spain appear to have successfully integrated wind power with little concern, yet the experience in others, such as the UK, has been vastly different. In fact, the United Kingdom House of Commons is currently considering a private member's bill on best practice in buffer zones, from the member for Daventry, Mr Chris Heaton-Harris. We need to investigate why international experiences have been vastly different and use that knowledge to inform best practice in setting Australian guidelines.

With such uncertainty on the subject, and compelling anecdotal evidence of people suffering harm, surely it is prudent that in-depth research is commenced as a matter of urgency and planning policies take a cautious approach in the interim. The Senate committee came to a similar conclusion in June 2011, with all of its recommendations calling for either further research into the area of infrasound as a priority or improved planning policies. But the government has taken little action to take up the recommendations of that committee, and \$3 billion worth of wind power assets have been announced in the meantime across Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland. With even more billions to be invested in wind farms in the future, I am sure business would also prefer certainty, with regulations informed by comprehensive evidence rather than being beholden to the view of the government of the day and increasing community concern.

As I have noted, state regulations vary widely. Most states employ a one- to two-kilometre buffer zone, but whether that is sufficient remains a point to be argued, especially as turbine blades are heading towards over 150 metres in diameter. A buffer zone proportional to the blade diameter is being proposed in the United Kingdom by the member for Daventry and may provide a useful template for Australia, or other solutions may arise through thoughtful study and investigation.

I stress again that, while critics may suggest that this motion is anti-wind or will damage investment in industry, I am not against this technology. I am strongly supportive of wind power, of any renewable power. I think we must do whatever we can do to mitigate the worst effects of dangerous elements within our atmosphere. This motion is about proper risk management and evidence based policy for the sake of all stakeholders. I call on the government to urgently and comprehensively investigate this issue and in the meantime err on the side of caution and adopt national policies that protect the public from potential harm.

Mr ZAPPIA (Makin) (19:09): I take the opportunity to speak to this motion on wind turbine planning policies because I believe it is an important matter, as the member for Pearce has quite rightly pointed out. It is important because it affects the lives of so many of the people living in communities in and around where the wind farms have been established, not just in Australia but right around the world. The member for Pearce quite rightly points out that this is not a new industry. The history goes back to 1941 in the US, where the first wind turbine of substantial capacity was established. Since that time, particularly over the last 30-odd years, wind turbines have been established around the world, starting with a rollout of the wind turbine program in Denmark in 1978 and then spreading right across Europe, the USA and Australia.

In my own home state we have seen a substantial increase in the number of wind turbines that have been constructed. In 2004 wind turbines generated some 34 megawatts of power. Today they generate 1,205 megawatts, which represents about 20 per cent of South Australia's total demand for energy. In fact I understand that 51 per cent of the nation's stored capacity has come from South Australia. I can assure members of the House that I am reasonably familiar with this issue due to what has happened in my own home state.

This matter is currently managed by state governments, which are responsible for the approval process related to the construction of these turbines. I have some understanding of this area, because prior to coming into this place I spent some time in local government, not only dealing with planning matters from that perspective but also spending some time on the state government's Development Assessment Commission, where I was personally involved in one of the wind turbine applications. For all the criticism of that process, certainly in my home state it was fairly thorough, from my recollection. An environmental impact assessment was carried out by the

proponents. The application process itself was far from rushed: there was a substantial opportunity for both supporters and opponents of the application to state their views and to raise objections. I accept that that would have been the process for all the other applications that we dealt with in South Australia over the years. From reading recent reports about other applications I know that there is an ability for the community to comment on them. Having said that, I accept that there is also some criticism of the processes and that ultimately not every party to an application will be happy.

Wind power generators have an impact not only on the environment and the general landscape of an area but also on the health of the people and the bird life living in surrounding communities. A number of reports have alluded to the impact these facilities have on both the people and the birds living near them. What is uncertain, however, is just how those impacts manifest themselves. While I have read reports which suggest there is a real impact on the lives of people in communities within reasonable proximity of wind turbines, I have also read reports which suggest there has been no reliable evidence to confirm that. So I accept that more research has to be carried out.

I am pleased to see that the National Health and Medical Research Council is proposing to put out some further statements on this matter after carrying out scrutiny of some of the research papers that have been produced to date. I understand that those research findings will be available by the end of the year. I think that is important. I also note that the Senate Community Affairs References Committee, which reported in June 2011, has referred to the National Health and Medical Research Council findings, so clearly the work of that council is important in helping us better understand what is at stake here and what needs to be done if we are to overcome the concerns of those who have quite rightly raised health concerns with respect to the wind generators.

This issue has to be considered in context, and by that I mean that whilst there are unquestionably health and environmental issues associated with the construction of wind turbines, so, too, are there such issues with other forms of power. Wind turbines are being established to try to provide us with power—and I will come back to that a bit later in my speech. Currently, the alternative to wind generators is coal or gas. If you look at the health impacts of coal generated power as opposed to wind generated power you have to question whether coal is in fact a better option. In fact, my understanding is—and this comes from some work that was carried out in the USA—that coal fired power plants and coal production generally in the US directly or indirectly contribute to about 50,000 deaths per year. That is a staggering number of people who die from the alternative to these wind generators. Those deaths arise from things such as lung and kidney disease and cardiopulmonary diseases and the like. Again, they may be very hard to absolutely pinpoint and quantify, but those seem to be some of the best estimates made by people who have done some work in that area.

Here in Australia concerns have also been raised with respect to water contamination as a result of coalmining and higher water consumption. We have not even touched on the deaths of miners in the past, arising directly from coalmining activities. As I see it, if we are going to raise concerns about wind generated power it certainly has to be put in context when you compare it with what else is happening.

I do accept that in recent times concerns have been raised throughout the world—in Britain, Canada, Germany, Spain and elsewhere—about the number of wind turbines that have been established there not so much in respect of the numbers but more so with respect to the fact that they have been subsidised by the taxpayers of those countries. I understand that those governments are withdrawing subsidies for the construction of those generators. Ultimately, those subsidies come out of taxpayers' funds and are paid for by the citizens of those cities.

Finally, why have we seen an explosion in the number of wind turbines in this country and across the world? This is a significant issue. We know that we have to stop putting carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Countries around the world are looking for cleaner and greener energy systems and wind has been considered to be one of those cleaner and greener energy systems.

Only last week I attended a luncheon where some of Australia's leading climate scientists came to speak to members of parliament about their concerns of carbon emissions and the continuing rise of carbon emissions in the atmosphere. The member for Pearce might have been at the luncheon. They said that, at the current rate of those emissions, we are very likely to see an increase in temperature of four degrees by 2100. Again, you have to then consider: what will be the impact on mankind of that kind of change in temperature as opposed to some of the impacts that we might be confronted with by looking at some of these cleaner and greener energy systems, including the costs of them?

I suggest to the House that the impact of an increase of four degrees in the temperature by 2100 would be devastating. We will see an increase in the intensity of floods, cyclones, droughts, fires and the like, of the type we are now seeing in Australia. These impacts will not only cost lives but will also cause billions of dollars of damage along the way. It is those kinds of events we are trying to prevent by looking for cleaner and greener

energy systems. I accept there are concerns about wind turbines; I accept that we need to have a closer look at them. I accept that the subsidies in respect of them also need to be more closely monitored. But I put it to the House that they ought not be simply discounted because of the concerns that have been raised to date and that they ought to be considered as part of the mix of the energy supply that this country will be reliant upon in years to come. I commend the motion to the House for consideration.

Mr SCHULTZ (Hume) (19:19): It is a shame that I will not have more time to expose the great fraud on the Australian people that is the wind turbine industry. Communities in proximity to wind turbine complexes are experiencing health and noise impacts that interfere with their lives. They did not experience these issues before the turbines came online. I have received complaints from my constituents that confirm similar experiences at other sites. It appears that noise frequencies occur inside houses, which some people hear and others do not hear. Similarly, it appears from testing that there are low frequencies in houses that are below the threshold of hearing that can generate effects on people, giving rise to headaches and nausea. There is no transparency in relation to noise testing. It is all in-house by the wind operators and nothing is released in the public domain. The wind turbine industry says there are no problems but there are cracks appearing in this position. A number of wind turbine operators are now buying houses when there is proof of a noise issue even when they say there is no problem. There are proposals for hundreds of turbines to be installed and we still do not have the health and noise studies nominated in the Senate inquiry. It is foolish to proceed with more turbines on the problems with the current ones simply have not been resolved.

Rural communities believe they are being discriminated against by the provision of wind farms producing excessive noise. They have every reason to believe this when you investigate the conduct of the New South Wales planning department in their lack of due diligence and accountability in the noise compliance assessment process. That the New South Wales Department of Planning is clearly complicit in also hiding the truth from rural communities can be seen from this noise compliance assessment document of the Capital Wind Farm which has had 80 per cent of the data removed prior to the document being released under a freedom of information request. This wind turbine monitoring data was collected by bi-back acousticians and yes, you guessed it, paid for by the wind farm owner operator Infogen. The document was removed from the New South Wales Department of Planning website by Deputy Director-General Richard Pearson because Infogen insisted that the data was commercial-in-confidence. Did this data conveniently remove from this industry funded report prove beyond reasonable doubt that Capital Wind Farm was indeed operating illegally within the New South Wales planning department's conditions of consent? Why would Infogen and the New South Wales department want to keep this information a secret if it was not going to reveal that this wind farm should never have been signed off on? How can the New South Wales Department of Planning have any credibility with any audit process it undertakes on wind turbine complexes in New South Wales? Interestingly, at a recent community meeting at Yass employees of the Department of Planning New South Wales admitted that no compliance monitoring has ever been carried out by the New South Wales Department of Planning in the state of New South Wales.

In the little time left to me I want a quote from an executive summary of an acoustic group's recent investigation about noise from wind farms on the New South Wales border:

The background noise monitoring survey report is found to have been flawed. The noise impact assessment, chapter 12 environmental assessment and appendix G2 noise impact assessment has been found to be inadequate and likely to be inaccurate. They fail to properly examine the lack of data for the type of turbine assumed and appropriate sound power level for modelling purposes that reflects actual operating turbines.

It goes on and on:

There has been found to be a fundamental inadequacy in the acoustic assessments in that they do not attempt to discuss or examine the actual noise impact for the community. Such an analysis is required by the director-general's requirements and by the principles contained in the South Australian legislative process.

As I said, I could talk about this particular issue for hours on end. The more I dig on it, the more I find what appears to be not only misinformation to the public but also a very interesting indication that there is corruption within the industry between certain government agencies at state and national level and, more importantly, a very concerted effort by the wind turbine developers to shut down anybody who criticises them. The classic example of what I am talking about in closing is the threat of legal action against me by a particular environmental group in Victoria and attempts to discredit my good name on the issue of information I have obtained on the public record and beyond.

Ms SMYTH (La Trobe) (19:24): It is a pleasure to speak on this motion on wind turbine planning. I had hoped that the approach of the mover of the motion, the member for Pearce, would be to have a rational debate about the operation of the wind turbine industry and the unique opportunities it presents to respond to climate change concerns that many of us in this place, and certainly those of us on this side of the House, hold in relation to

ensuring a clean energy future. I think the motion was framed initially in that way but, based on the last contribution, I begin to wonder whether it is a vendetta against the wind turbine industry as a whole rather than an expression of public health concerns. I had the thought that that was the approach being taken in the casting of the motion initially. Those on my side of the House, in government, certainly reflect on the importance of alternative energy sources in our country, and I certainly know in my home state of Victoria many of us reflect regularly on that because some of the planning decisions recently taken by the Baillieu state government in relation to the two-kilometre setback applicable to wind farms have had a significant and many would say a disproportionate and inappropriate impact upon the industry as a whole and upon opportunities for those who invest in the industry to proceed with the development of wind farms in Victoria.

In debating this motion we have to take a very sensible and rational approach to what are and are not realistic medical and health concerns associated with wind farms. I know that a great deal of work has been done on analysing the potential health effects of wind turbines. I know, for instance, that in 2009 the NHMRC conducted a comprehensive review of current scientific literature to determine whether there is a link between turbines and adverse health effects. At that time there was no published scientific evidence to positively link wind turbines with adverse health effects. In July 2010 we know that the NHMRC released a public statement entitled 'Wind turbines and health' and supporting evidence, 'Wind turbines and health: A rapid review of the evidence'. Following on from that, in 2011 we had a Senate inquiry and a scientific forum was held by the NHMRC in June of that year. We know that the NHMRC elected to conduct a further literature review, and that was appropriate to see whether any more scientific evidence had emerged.

It is appropriate that the NHMRC have the opportunity to determine whether any further decisions should be made regarding the updating of its current public statement and whether any further work is required. We know that it is established practice within the scientific community to undertake a literature review prior to deciding to proceed with further research to determine whether there is a case to respond to, to determine whether there is an appropriate reason for undertaking further research. That is exactly what the NHMRC is appropriately doing, and some of the elements of the motion before us are catered to by the work being undertaken by the NHMRC so it is not necessary to undertake the range of measures featured in the motion until such time as the NHMRC has furthered that work. The scientific literature review into wind turbines and health adopts a detailed and systematic approach to ensure that all important work in the area is captured.

It is worth noting that there is a rigorous endeavour by the NHMRC to appropriately analyse any concerns that arise in relation to health issues associated with wind turbines. A number of eminent scholars and academics have provided evidence to the Senate inquiry, and they certainly raise their own concerns about whether the case around the health issues potentially associated with wind turbines is overstated. Indeed, some of them have indicated that that appears to be the case. I certainly refer to the evidence provided in the submission of Professor Peter Seligman, who is from the Melbourne Energy Institute and has done significant work on cochlear implants and the Australian bionic ear.

Mr MATHESON (Macarthur) (19:29): I rise to speak to this important motion by the member for Pearce on the need for further studies in the development of international best practice policies for wind turbine planning. Wind energy is a booming industry in rural and regional Australia, generating a substantial part of our nation's renewable energy needs. Australia, the United States, Canada and Europe have invested heavily in the wind industry, with billions of dollars of taxpayer grants and subsidies being poured into wind energy every year across the globe.

While it is important that we explore and pursue cleaner energy solutions, little research has been conducted into the detrimental health and social effects of wind turbines on nearby populations. People living near wind turbines report a range of symptoms: chronic sleep deprivation, headaches, nausea, increased stress and what Dr Nina Pierpont MB has coined 'wind turbine syndrome'. Wind turbine syndrome is a recently diagnosed illness mainly because wind turbines are a relatively new technology. This syndrome is believed to be caused by ultra-layer frequency noises known as 'infrasound' generated by turbines moving through the air. Many within the wind industry construe wind turbine syndrome as a fabricated illness; however, people living near wind turbines all over the world are reporting a uniform set of symptoms.

As the body of evidence supporting the detrimental health effects of wind turbines is still largely anecdotal, the government must as a matter of urgency commence full in-depth studies into the potential health effects of wind turbines, especially low-frequency infrasound. Additionally, the government must fully investigate international best practice in planning policies regarding wind farms, and publish comprehensive updated guidelines. As a nation we are investing billions of dollars in wind energy, which is expected to continue over the coming decades. It is incredibly important that our planning policies ensure that new developments do not adversely impact on the health of our communities. Many of these health concerns have not been investigated. Nor have there been any in-

depth studies into the potential health effects of wind turbines, especially low-frequency infrasound. It is poor policy to allow wind farms to be constructed without proper planning guidelines to protect our rural and regional populations.

The Senate Community Affairs References Committee report *The Social and Economic Impact of Rural Wind Farms* has called for adequately resourced studies into the possible impact wind farms have on health as a matter of priority. The government has failed to implement any of these recommendations. They have abandoned rural Australia once again. Instead, the National Health and Medical Research Council conducted a rapid review into wind turbines and health. It was only a cursory appraisal of the literature on the topic instead of an in-depth study. There had been no in-depth studies—typical of the government. In fact, the head of the Australian Research Council, Professor Warwick Anderson stated during a Senate hearing that there is simply not enough evidence about the health impacts of wind farms upon communities.

How then can this government be satisfied that this study can be principally relied upon to inform planning guidelines and decisions? This government must commit to funding research to resolve the many unanswered questions surrounding wind farms and health, including the dangers of establishing wind farms in close proximity to residential and future residential communities. Rather than arrogantly pursuing the Green agenda at the expense of hard-working Australian families, the Prime Minister and her government should be listening to the real concerns of people who are being affected by nearby wind farms. The health and well-being of these communities must be given consideration. That is why this motion calls on the government to fully investigate international best practice in planning policy regarding wind farms. These policies should be developed in conjunction with state and territory governments and used to publish comprehensive up-to-date guidelines that take into account much of the new information arising from international experience of wind farms.

This motion also calls on state, territory and local government authorities to adopt cautious planning policies on wind farms, implementing an adequate buffer zone between wind farms and towns and rezoning residential areas, farm buildings and workplaces. As with any large infrastructure project, we must ensure that all levels of government are working for the same standards and guidelines to preserve the health and wellbeing of our current and future communities.

Lastly, this motion calls for planning of approval processes to require wind farm developers to indemnify themselves against any potential health issues arising from infrastructure before development approval is granted. This section of the motion is important as it ensures that when any detrimental health effects are established the developer, not the state or the Commonwealth, would meet the cost of treatment of subsequent healthcare needs.

What a great motion. There is no doubt that renewable energy and green energy has a good future in Australia. However, this does not mean that we throw caution to the wind when developing planning guidelines for the future. It is important that we get the right balance between our renewable energy needs and the wellbeing of our communities, which the coalition has concerns about. More research needs to be undertaken to understand if our communities close to wind farms are suffering, and to ensure that their health is not put at risk. This motion calls for a balanced approach to developing good planning guidelines in order to ensure a positive future for our green energy sector and our rural communities. I urge all members to support the motion from the member for Pearce. It is a well thought out, great motion.

Ms OWENS (Parramatta) (19:34): I thank the member for Pearce for moving this private member's motion. The member for Pearce is known for her balanced consideration of issues and the way she formulates her motions in a non-political way. I really do genuinely thank her for her contribution today. It is a shame in some ways that we do not get this quality of contribution in the general debate in the lower house. I understand there are political reasons for that at the moment, but it would be a fine thing if contributions such as this were woven into the negotiations in both houses. We would probably be a finer parliament for that.

But here we are in the non-controversial chamber, talking about something that is in fact very important, which is the future of part of the renewable energy sector, which will no doubt be with us for a long time. It has already been with us for decades and it will be part of our future clean energy production. The issues raised by the member for Pearce concerning concerns that some in the community have about health and planning are very real ones. On the planning side of things, the regulation and approval of developments, including the matters of noise and land use impacts, are a matter for the relevant state and territory authorities. Once again, we are in the situation as a federal government of working through the complexities of the Australian political system. Again, while I understand her point in the need for that, it is going to be quite a difficult task over quite some time, while states work out exactly how they do that and how they rationalise and develop the guidelines across state borders.

On the issues of the sound itself, it is a very interesting issue for me. I was studying at the conservatorium back in the late 70s and early 80s, when the field of the effect of sound on the body was really in its infancy. It used to

go by the fabulous name of psycho-acoustics. I did a lot of study on it in my composition classes. It was an area of great fascination to me. It is not an unusual idea for me that sound frequencies that you cannot hear can affect the body in various ways, and the mind, for that matter. In fact, people were investigating such sound as weapons at the time. There was quite a bit of research done. Yet I would not go as far as the member for Pearce at this point. I think the 4B which suggests that there is significant anecdotal evidence is perhaps an overstatement at this stage. The experts at the National Health and Medical Research Council advise that, while there is anecdotal evidence of concerns about the health effects, it would be inaccurate to describe it as significant. Nevertheless, the moves to have a very serious literature search undertaken is one of the foundations for research. It is one of the basic principles that the first thing we always do is a serious literature search, which helps identify areas for future research. Again, I think that action by the National Health and Medical Research Council to undertake that in-depth study of the literature is a very good first step.

I would also like to point out some words by a man called Professor Peter Seligman of the Melbourne Energy Institute, who has spent most of his working life working on cochlear implants. He has a PhD in electronic engineering and understands infrasound perhaps better than most, because it has been his area of expertise. His statement is that the level of infrasound at the beach is far higher than that from wind farms, that beyond 360 metres the level of infrasound emitted from a wind farm, typically between one and 20 cycles per second, is below the ambient levels near a beach and below that in the central business district of any city. On the other hand, we are all subjected to far higher internally self-generated natural infrasound levels, which clearly are not a problem. So there are competing views out there. I also have read the emails that come into my office from various people who believe that wind farms do create a physical damage. Even though there does not appear to be evidence of that at the moment, we do need to make sure that as we move forward in this incredibly important form of clean energy, we do manage to satisfy the community that there is not an issue in this. The research being undertaken now is a very fine step along that path. But I really do thank the member for Pearce for what is a well-considered motion.

Mr CRAIG KELLY (Hughes) (19:39): I rise to support the motion moved by the member for Pearce and congratulate her on bringing this issue before the parliament as there is significant evidence of the adverse health effects associated with wind farms. Whenever human health is concerned, we should always be adopting the precautionary principle. Therefore, unless the foreign multinational firms that are seeking to erect these giant industrial wind turbines near Australian family homes can indemnify the local residents against any future adverse health effects created by their wind turbines, they should be, quite simply, prohibited from building them. Unfortunately, in the past this debate has been frustrated through an ingenious marketing campaign under the guise of taking action on climate change and anyone that has even dared to question the groupthink wisdom of covering our countryside with these giant steel structures has been labelled a denier. Now it is possible to support the continued rollout of wind turbines across our country but only if you are prepared to ignore the terrible damage they wreak on the environment. Only if you can close your eyes to the fact that wind turbines kill and maim hundreds of thousands of birds annually who either are sliced in half or have their bodies smashed by turbine blades and are left to die a slow and painful death. Only if you can turn your back on the fact that wind turbines kill millions of native bats because the moving blades cause a drop in pressure that makes the delicate lungs of the bats actually explode. Or only if you can bury your head in the sand to the ecological catastrophe arising from the extraction and refining of neodymium, a tonne of which is needed to make the magnets in every wind turbine, which has resulted in the creation of toxic and radioactive tailings lakes. It is also possible to support the rollout of wind turbines across Australia if you are prepared to ignore their cost in terms of human health. Wind turbines emit pollution, not only from audible sound but also from infrasound and low-frequency sound, all of which cause serious illness. Dr Sarah Laurie, in a recent letter to our Prime Minister dated 21 February 2012, stated there is a:

... growing number of "wind farm refugees" in Australia, who are abandoning their homes ... There is also a growing number of sick, vulnerable Australians who are unable to leave their homes near wind—

farm—

developments, and who are trapped in homes which are making them seriously ill.

It is also possible to continue to support the rollout of wind farms if you are prepared to overlook the damage they do to our economy by driving up the price of electricity and driving families into poverty. Simply put, wind turbines are a hopelessly inefficient way to generate electricity. If it were not for government subsidies, wind power would not even be entertained as a cost-effective way of generating electricity. The punitive economic cost of wind turbines was recently highlighted in a report by Professor Hughes of Edinburgh University. He has calculated that in the UK the bill for wind energy by 2020 will cost British consumers a staggering £120 billion yet generating the same amount of electricity from gas fired power stations would cost only £13 billion. No doubt

a like study in Australia would reveal similar numbers. So by subsidising inefficient wind turbines we reduce our economic prosperity and when we reduce our economic prosperity we cause hardship, pain and suffering to the citizens of our community.

So devotees of wind turbines may be prepared to sacrifice human health and they may be prepared to reduce our economic prosperity and they may be prepared to destroy the environment because they believe they are saving it, all in the name of saving the planet from climate change by reducing carbon dioxide emissions. But recently study after study has shown that once an allowance is made for CO2 emissions involved in the construction of the turbines and the efficient deployment of conventional backup electricity generation, subsidising wind turbines is actually likely to increase CO2 emissions. So if we were seeking to reduce CO2 emissions, it would be more effective to place a ban on the sale of sparkling mineral water than it would be to build wind turbines. In the future this irresponsible use of our limited resources of subsidising wind turbines will become obvious as they are an obsolete and inefficient means of energy production and also as a way to reduce CO2 emissions. Common sense and reason will eventually triumph over ideological dogma. The only question is how much damage the promoters of wind turbines will do and inflict on our environment, our wildlife, our economy and human health. When this finally occurs, we will be left with the broken and rusting carcasses of giant industrial wind turbines desecrating our countryside. Rather than take to these with angle grinders to remove their blight from our landscape, we should seek to save many of these rusting carcasses by listing them with the National Trust to protect them for future generations as monuments to a time when society took leave of its sense of reason.

Mr HUSIC (Chifley—Government Whip) (19:44): Let me to say to the member for Pearce that when I first saw this motion I had to confess to feeling a degree of surprise. I did not necessarily expect it, but as with most things the member for Pearce does she applies a great deal of thought and consideration to the framing of these motion, and I certainly welcome the chance to speak. But I do not welcome the opportunity of listening to some of the hysterical rants that we heard a few moments ago that suggest that, because wind turbines may affect wildlife, we should stop wind turbines from being built. By that logic the member for Hughes should not be driving down the Hume Highway and going past carcasses of wombats and kangaroos that are equally affected, probably on a daily basis, by the types of accidents that occur. Whenever you endeavour to do something to meet human needs you expect that there will be things that need to be done to minimise the impact. We need to find new ways in which to operate in terms of production and in terms of the energy used in that production. The type of logic that was argued a few moments ago does this chamber no credit, but I understand that the climate change sceptics, who are very forceful within the coalition, use these types of debates to promote a view that would, in effect, have us continue to use resources in the way that we do and continue to have the impact on climate that they do.

In making my comments, I totally respect the fact that local communities should have a good say in what happens in their local area. I understand there are communities, particularly in the member for Hume's patch, that have concerns. I respect that entirely. I sit on the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Communication. We have just dealt with a proposal by the member for Denison to change the consultation provisions that exist around the establishment of mobile phone transmitters, not the full towers but low-impact transmitters. The industry, way back, received stacks of complaints. The former government had to respond to that, as did the former Labor government that preceded it, as concern was rife about where these facilities were being put up. It is eminently sensible for communities to have input into what is happening with the placement of certain infrastructure, and I certainly appreciate that. But, at the same time, to ramp up the sort of rhetoric we have heard does not necessarily allow us to get to a point where we can calmly determine the best way of balancing the two things. One is a concern about how to use our resources—which I do not look at as just a Greens issue; I look at it as more of an economic way to use our resources—

Mr Schultz: Spoken like a true urban based member.

Mr HUSIC: and at the same time ensure that communities have an input into the way things are done.

Mr Schultz: Rural communities, mate.

Mr HUSIC: I understand that, member for Hume; I appreciate that. I understand that this debate would take a different dimension—and I think you and I would agree on this—if we were setting up wind turbines in an urban environment. That is why I say that I respect the concerns that exist. At the same time, while there is anecdotal evidence about the health effects of wind farms, I think it would be a bit over the top to describe it as significant. Certainly the National Health and Medical Research Council conducted a rather rapid but comprehensive review of scientific literature to determine whether there was a link between wind turbines and adverse health effects, and at the time of writing there was no published scientific evidence to positively link wind turbines with adverse health effects.

In July 2010, again, the council released the public statements entitled 'Wind turbines and health' and 'Wind turbines and health: A rapid review of the evidence' and, following a Senate inquiry and scientific forum, they have conducted further literature reviews to see if there is any more scientific evidence. The results will inform future decisions about any work required. At the same time, I think it is important that we calmly deal with the facts and ensure the community has a say.

Debate adjourned.

World Tuberculosis Day

Debate resumed on motion by Mr Danby:

That this House:

(1) recognises that 24 March is World Tuberculosis Day, in observance of a preventable and treatable disease that still claims the lives of up to 1.5 million people every year, mostly in developing countries, and that:

(a) overall, one third of the world's population is currently infected with the Tuberculosis bacillus;

(b) the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that the largest number of new Tuberculosis cases in 2008 occurred in the South-East Asia Region, which accounted for 35 per cent of incident cases globally; and

(c) the number of new cases of Tuberculosis arising each year is still increasing in Africa, the Eastern Mediterranean and South-East Asia;

(2) acknowledges that Tuberculosis is responsible for one in four AIDS related deaths, making it the leading killer of people living with HIV and that:

(a) less than seven per cent of people living with HIV are screened for Tuberculosis;

(b) people living with both HIV and Tuberculosis infection are much more likely to develop Tuberculosis; and

(c) the WHO estimates that by scaling up services and providing integrated HIV and Tuberculosis care, it is possible to save the lives of up to one million people living with HIV by 2015;

(3) notes that:

(a) currently more than two thirds of international financing for Tuberculosis services is provided by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria;

(b) the Global Fund is a key international body which provides critical basic services to support many developing countries in the fight against Tuberculosis; and

(c) Australia strongly supports the Global Fund; and

(4) encourages Australia to continue to work bilaterally and with other international donors to address Tuberculosis, including through the Global Fund.

Mr DANBY (Melbourne Ports) (19:50): As stated in the motion, tuberculosis is a disease that is treatable and preventable yet it still claims 1.5 million lives a year. It is unacceptable, I believe, that in the 21st century so many people suffer from such a preventable disease. It is a disease that destroys generations of people, mostly from developing countries in Africa, South-East Asia and the eastern Mediterranean. Recently a group of people from Burma came to my office and told me about the very deep and terrible effects of the mixture of tuberculosis and HIV. Last year, US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, stated that tuberculosis is the 'disease of poverty'. She said:

It keeps people from working, stifles economic opportunity and tears at the fabric of societies.

It is a disease that does not distinguish between the young and the old. It destroys families and nations.

In 2009, almost 10 million children were orphaned as a result of parental deaths caused by TB. It is a disease that can be passed on as a result of close contact. Imagine being unable to hug or kiss your children or your loved one for fear of infecting them. Imagine living day to day in the fear that you may infect those around you. Imagine the stigma that comes with being infected with TB/HIV. And imagine being unable to access basic medicine and drugs that could prevent this disease.

In our neighbourhood of the world alone we share half of the global tuberculosis burden. While the majority of TB cases are treated successfully, drug-resistant TB and its co-infection with HIV have created a lethal combination in our area of the world, particularly in developing countries. It preys on weakened immune systems, and, according to Bekele Geleta, Secretary General of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, it kills 15 people every hour.

Australia is doing its best in the region to prevent and treat tuberculosis. In Papua New Guinea, we are providing \$8 million over four years in support of the health authorities in western province to improve service delivery and treatment to TB patients. As part of this assistance, we are funding World Vision's 'Stop TB in the Western Province' project, raising awareness, training and facilitating TB treatment. We are assisting in Burma, where AusAID co-funds the Three Diseases Fund, which has supported HIV and TB initiatives since 2007. Over this period Australia's assistance has contributed to the registration for treatment of 60,000 new TB patients. In