

Submission:

Senate Select Committee Into Wind Turbines

Introduction.

My wife (Alida) and I have hosted and resided in close proximity to industrial scale wind power turbines on our farm from late 2004 until we sold the farm October 2014. We continue to reside in the same proximity to the same turbines.

Our main reason for making this submission is to bring to the Senate's attention the adverse health effects we suffer as a direct result of being continually subjected to Infra and Low Frequency noise (ILFN) produced by the turbines.

We are happy to give evidence in person at the Senate Enquiry

Response to Terms Of Reference.

(a) the effect on household power prices, particularly households which receive no benefit from rooftop solar panels, and the merits of consumer subsidies for operators;

We are not in a position to give opinion on this matter as we live "off grid" with a daily power consumption of 1.5KWHr which is less than 1/10th of the average household use. Our electricity supply comes from a small 1KW solar array coupled with storage batteries and a 2Kw 240Vac inverter..

(b) how effective the Clean Energy Regulator is in performing its legislative responsibilities and whether there is a need to broaden those responsibilities;

There are many reports of wind farms in Australia not complying with the noise emission restraints. To date and to our knowledge, no disciplinary action has ever been taken against the offending wind farms. It is our belief that there are wind farms operating in Australia which have never been "signed off" as complying with noise standards.

(c) the role and capacity of the National Health and Medical Research Council in providing guidance to state and territory authorities

The actions of this organisation are questionable. It is clear that they have never conducted any scientific research into health matters related to wind turbines and very carefully “cherry pick” reports that bolster their opinions and ignore relevant peer reviewed science that does not fit their opinions.

(d) the implementation of planning processes in relation to wind farms, including the level of information available to prospective wind farm hosts;

As a recent turbine host, we have first hand experience of the way in which wind farm developers work in securing willing turbine hosts and creating compliant governments at all levels.

Once a wind farm developer has chosen a suitable area of land, he begins to infiltrate the community and win the hearts and minds of the locals with promises of community funding, and endearing themselves with the prospective hosts with one on one sessions around the kitchen table with strong requests not to discuss matters with neighbours or any others. These days, it is common in the up front “option to lease” document to include a confidentiality or gag clause preventing any such communication.

Once the turbine hosts have been bribed sufficiently (including neighbouring ‘non-hosts’) all the developer has to do is ‘tick the planning boxes’, tell enough blatant lies to the planning committees and because the EPA and government planning guidelines are so pathetically weak, the project wins approval.

Noise production guidelines are a joke and only cover audible noise which is easily attenuated over distances as little as a few kilometres. Infra sound and low frequency noise (ILFN) is never tested and travels at least double the distance for the same degree of attenuation as the higher, audible frequencies.

(e) the adequacy of monitoring and compliance governance of wind farms;

There is no such thing as wind farm compliance. The wind farm operators know full well that compliance can not be measured and even if there is a suggestion of for example, noise levels outside state guidelines, it is a simple matter for the wind farm operator to reduce the operation of the turbines sufficiently to bring the plant back into temporary compliance whilst compliance testing is being conducted. This testing is usually conducted by the wind farm operator or retained acoustician. Hardly transparent testing.

(f) the application and integrity of national wind farm guidelines

What national wind farm guidelines? Wind farm planning is the responsibility of the various state governments and as such, planning guidelines vary from state to state. If a wind farm developer receives a non approval from a state planning committee, either the state planning minister overrides the non approval or the developer takes the matter to court which then overturns the non approval because all the legal boxes have been ticked. Wind farm planning is an international joke with a world wide cult following because the gullible masses, and that includes politicians at all levels, want to believe and can not bring themselves to think that their pathetically ineffectual wind farms might be, just that, pathetic and ineffectual and definitely not fit for purpose..

(g) the effect that wind towers have on fauna and aerial operations around turbines, including fire fighting and crop management;

Farmers do not make a habit of scouring the land around wind turbines for fauna that may have been killed by the turbine blades and towers. In addition, I never once witnessed a wind farm employee on our property looking for fauna killed by turbine blade strike. During the night, there are often many foxes active and also birds such as owls searching for fresh kill so it is little wonder that there is little evidence of fauna kill due to turbine strikes.

I am concerned at the growing trend world wide of the numbers of turbines snapping off at the towers, throwing massive blades to the ground or catching fire. To date fortunately, no one in Australia has been killed but the odds are increasing. If workers are in the nacelle when the turbine catches fire, there is no way out, particularly through the hollow of the tower with burning molten plastics falling on the unfortunate worker.

(h) the energy and emission input and output equations from whole-of-life operation of wind turbines

Wind farm developers loudly proclaim that their wind farm is capable of powering many thousands of homes. A perusal of the Australian Energy Marketing Operator (AEMO) data shows that on average, all wind farms NEVER produce at more than 30% of their rated capacity. In fact, across the board, 25% is closer to reality.

So much is hidden, such as the huge amounts of carbon dioxide produced in the manufacture of the hundreds of tonnes of concrete required for the pads each the size of an Olympic swimming pool, manufacture of the massive steel towers and smelting of the huge quantities of copper that goes into the generator, transformer and power distribution cables.

No one mentions the lakes of low grade radioactive sludge from the manufacture of the super magnets in the generator that is poisoning the farm lands and farmers of places like China. It is not happening in our country, so that is ok??

Wind turbine hosts are being signed up to contracts that effectively allow the wind farm operator to walk away when the wind farm expires at the lease term of 25 years – if they last that long. No one is looking to the future when wind farms have run their useful (dubious) life. The salvage value for a wind turbine is around \$75,000 in scrap. The cost to dismantle and scrap is around \$200,000.

The tower must be cut into pieces for re-smelting with no piece allowed to be bigger than 1200mm on any side. The towers are tapered and therefore useless as piping. Often the tower is zinc plated which reduces the scrap value further as it can not be used in prime quality steel.

The hollow fibreglass blades are non recyclable and produce toxic gasses when burnt. Even then, the glass fibre substrate remains after the resin has been burnt out. Every turbine has three such blades, each approximately 50 metres long. That is a lot of toxic material to dispose of.

Research has shown that electricity production and turbine manufacture in Asian countries produces around 30% more carbon dioxide than the equivalent work having been performed in Australia, USA or Europe.

(i) any related matter

This section, in my opinion, is one of if not, the most important aspects of the enquiry into Industrial Wind Farms, namely matters relating to the health of humans (and also likely, animals) who live in proximity to the turbines.

Before elaborating here, I feel I must point out the recent statement of the NHMRC in which it has set aside \$500,000 to study the health matters living in the proximity of wind turbines. Two matters are glaringly obvious.

1. \$500,000 is not nearly enough to do the study justice. For a start, a single one month acoustic monitoring of an affected residence costs in the vicinity of \$10,000, and that
2. Wind farm health studies should be limited to those residents living less than 1,500 metres from the turbines.

Item 1 presumes that wind farm operators and wind farm hosts will willingly cooperate. This has been shown time and time again not to be the case, therefore, those conducting the studies will have to create their own wind farms, erect houses strategically around the turbine/s and find people to live in these houses for a number of years whilst the studies are being conducted. A single wind turbine costs in the order of three to five million dollars not to mention the financial aspect of paying the guinea pigs to live in these houses. Then there is the ethical issue of subjecting the guinea pigs to potentially damaging sonic torture. A Pacific Hydro senior executive was asked if his company intended to conduct research into the health matters of residents impacted by the Cape Bridgewater wind farm since the findings of the Steven Cooper study. His reply was a firm “no, it would cost millions of dollars.” The wind industry obviously understands the costs.

Item 2 suggests that the NHMRC, in limiting testing to 1,500 metres from wind turbines is expert enough to make such a statement, when in reality, the stated distance is no more than an opinion. If the NHMRC members were indeed, expert, then there would be no need for such a study to be

conducted at all. From my own personal experience of living for ten years as both a wind turbine host and in close proximity to wind turbines, I can state categorically that the NHMRC are talking out of their necks and are in reality mischief making. 1,500 metres set back distance is pathetically inadequate. Our sleep is disturbed by wind turbine ILFN at distances of 35km or more from the turbines. It sounds like fiction, but remember that the truth is often stranger than fiction.

We signed up for the Lake Bonney wind farm in 1997 after being seduced by the wind farm promoter in 1996. We believed the lies the promoter told us relating to the likely noise levels. We would not hear the turbines over the noise of the wind in the trees. In fact, the resulting blade noise was quite disturbin but we were so convinced that we were “doing our bit” for the ecology as well as securing our retirement funding that we convinced our immediate neighbours to also sign up.

We all signed an “option to lease” document in 1997 which we understood only prevented any other person from taking a wind farm lease on our property. The actual wind farm was not constructed until 2004.

With the benefit of looking back in time, I began almost immediately the turbines became operational to suffer symptoms now defined as “Wind Turbine Syndrome”. At this time, my wife and I were living in our farm house at a distance of around 550 metres from the nearest turbine and up to 2,500 metres from ten others.

Because of the loud and irritating blade noise at the farm house , we built a new home 5 km further from the farm house where we could neither see nor (usually) hear the turbines. At 5km, we could still effectively run the farm. We moved into the new home in 2006. The tiredness and bouts of depression I had begun to feel, I put down to stress from working too hard on the farm whilst at the same time, doing all the construction work on our new home. When the Wind Turbine Syndrome symptoms (particularly the sensations of heart palpitations) did not abate when we moved into our new home, I consulted my local GP. Neither examination by my GP nor ECG tests showed any problem with my heart.

The nocturnal panic attacks, apparent heart palpitations, bouts of depression, sharp ear and head pains, sensations of anxiety, loud tinnitus, spontaneous nose bleeds, angina like chest pains to name a few continued with no apparent cause. Four years after the wind farm became operational, my wife began to experience severe dizziness and once again, consulting with a local GP and CT scan of the head, showed no clinical cause.

There are those in the NHMRC who suggest that our problems are as a direct result of the NOCEBO effect i.e. if we are told we will experience an ailment then the chances are, we will. Unfortunately for those espousing the NOCEBO theory, we suffered from the conditions before we knew that wind turbines could produce infra and low frequencies, and that these frequencies although inaudible, can induce physiological symptoms and sensations in humans.

We did not discover that industrial scale wind turbines can produce the wind turbine syndrome symptoms and sensations until early 2012 and even then, the discovery was by chance. We had attended a public forum as pro-wind (we had turbines on our farm and we were paid handsomely for the pleasure) and wondered why the public was “up in arms” against wind turbines. At the forum, a gentleman from Cape Bridgewater (Victoria) made the statement that since the turbines

(Pacific Hydro) adjacent his dwelling were commissioned, he had been suffering a list of physiological conditions and sensations. The term "Wind Turbine Syndrome" was not mentioned. As he listed the symptoms, I was alarmed to note that his list of symptoms and sensations matched what I had been experiencing almost exactly. I found it hard to believe that turbines 2 km distant could adversely impact us from a health point of view.

We had not had a holiday in years so we left the district for a weekend and noticed that we suffered none of the usual symptoms and sensations. When we returned, home, so did the symptoms. We repeated this course of action a number of times for absences of up to 2 months and each time, we experienced none of the symptoms and sensations.

The apparent heart palpitations which I felt as quasi regular pulsations in my head and chest were compared to my wrist pulse rate. Whilst the pulse at my wrist appeared firm and steady, the pulsing sensation inside my skull and torso did not match my heart beat. How can this be?. In addition, I accelerated my heart rate on an exercycle and noted that my wrist pulse was still steady albeit faster, the pulsing sensation in my head and torso remained at the lower quasi regular rate. So, what is the cause?

The severity of the symptoms and sensations appear to be gradually worsening to the extent that we now have to leave the district at least once per fortnight to be at least 35km from wind turbines in order to have a decent night sleep. On such occasions, on going to bed (in our camper), the silence inside our heads is profound and could be described as delicious. It has to be experienced to be appreciated.

We can sleep by a busy highway or by the ocean with all its noise but the intra cranial pulsing and turmoil we feel at home is simply not there!

Where do we turn? Politicians don't want to know, councils don't want to know, the wind farm operators definitely don't want to know and our GPs won't take the matter beyond the current consultation. Even then we feel as though they think we are ratbags. One has to wonder just how many councils, schools, sporting groups, the media etc there are that receive funding from local rural wind farms as part of "buying" wind farm acceptance?

We are not ratbags nor are we nimbys, climate change deniers or liars. The condition of Wind Turbine Syndrome for us is very real is real but like tobacco and asbestos where the truth was buried and the problems denied for decades, the reality of Wind Turbine Syndrome will soon surface and many will be held to account.

Unlike the world wide wind industry, we small land owners don't have the millions of dollars to hire tame acousticians, doctors and fancy lawyers etc to have the general public believe that we are little more than Nimbys. The general public are like followers of a religious cult. They never question but instead, follow because they WANT to believe.

David and Alida Mortimer