From:
To: Committee, EC (SEN); Senator Madigan (Private)
Subject: sub78 Newman SUBMISSION to Federal Senate Inquiry into Excessive Noise from Windfarms
Date: Wednesday, 31 October 2012 6:32:07 PM

Importance: High

I support the proposed amendments to the Renewable Energy Act.

I live in the Crookwell area where two new wind farm developments are imminent. We already have one small active wind farm in Crookwell where neighbours complain about health effects.

I have had my concerns heightened recently since attending two meetings where representatives of wind farm developers gave presentations, one to the local community, the other to the local council. I have been in business at the highest level for a long time and have never experienced such obfuscation and secrecy, nor such disregard for the interests of the parties they were addressing. It was as though their presence at these meetings was simply a tick the box formality.

When it came to answering questions on health risks, the spokesmen were totally dismissive and refused to acknowledge the existence of credible peer reviewed research which raised serious questions about the siting of industrial wind turbines (IWT) too close to dwellings.

Perhaps their nonchalance on the health issues relates to the inadequacy of various state noise guidelines which have been designed to encourage development of renewable energy with little consideration for neighbouring residents.

It has become apparent for many residents with whom I have met and who have suffered and continue to suffer negative health effects from IWT noise, that there is little recourse, because the wind industry is basically unregulated. Some existing wind farms are supervised by consent authorities who have neither the technical expertise or the resources to perform the role, but, even where the resources are available, the noise guidelines are so nominal that there is unlikely to be any prospect of a meaningful remedy. Indeed the law provides little in the way of deterrents even assuming proper monitoring is possible.

Notwithstanding the predisposition of governments to renewable energy, it surely cannot have been intended that wind farms should operate in an environment which allows them to emit offensive noise with impunity. Yet, that is the practical outcome of state legislation as it stands. There is little or no protection for those who have IWTs situated too close to their dwellings. Audible noise is but one of the health issues posed. There are still no laws to limit the more serious threats to human health of low frequency noise and infrasound.
I might add that the performance of the health authorities in this area is shameful. One can be forgiven for thinking that some academic advisers and bureaucrats are really advocates for the wind industry rather than gatekeepers for public health.

In conclusion, anything which recognises the plight of residents through greater transparency and therefore accountability is to be applauded. However, it is incontestable that the wind industry will still basically operate in an unregulated environment. The laws which do exist are

inadequate and apply largely to now discredited and unacceptable noise guidelines. Monitoring is extremely limited and is of a standard that would not be tolerated in any other industry which is subject to noise restrictions.

Until there is a national enforceable standard with a properly resourced governance structure, innocent citizens who, through circumstance are compelled to live with IWTs, will continue to suffer health consequences.

In the meantime, the proposed amendments are a step in the right direction.

Maurice L Newman AC

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