Submission to Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications

by

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Re:
Renewable Energy (Electricity) Amendment (Excessive Noise from Wind Farms) Bill 2012

29 October 2012

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra, ACT 2600

Dear Committees

R: Renewable Energy (Electricity) Amendment (Excessive Noise from Wind Farms) Bill 2012

We support the Bill and would like to thank the Standing Committees on Environment and Communications for their interest in, and consideration of, the health and well being of the neighbours of wind farms.

We own and live on a 600 acre property at Kialla, near Crookwell NSW. Humphrey bought this property in 1971. Shortly, we are to become neighbours of the 74 turbine Gullen Range Windfarm.

The Gullen Range turbine installation is about 20 to 25 km long. The original proposal involved 84 turbines, but 11 of these have been removed from the project for the sake of the Crookwell airstrip. (GRWFMPA, 2009; NSWLEC 1444 [2009]; NSWLEC 1102 [2010]) However, we have heard recently that the developer, Goldwind Australia Pty Ltd, wishes to try to re-instate these 11 turbines.

As shown in the project's Environmental Assessment, the Gullen Range Wind Farm has:
32 non-involved residences within 1.5 km of turbines
about 60 non-involved residences within 2 km
118 non-involved residences within 3 km.

Most of these residences are downwind of the wind farm in prevailing wind conditions. (GRWFEA, 2008)

In our case, there will be 2 turbines within 1.5kms of our house and 13 turbines (each 132 – 135 metres tall) within 2 kms of our house. Some are less than a few hundred metres from our boundaries.
The 2 closest turbines will be constructed on a significantly elevated site to the west of our house. The noise emanating from these 2 turbines will be significant – the cumulative noise effect from the other ridge sited turbines in close proximity to our dwelling may render our house uninhabitable.

On our property, night-time temperature inversions are common in autumn and winter, and spring.

Temperature inversion will amplify noise created by turbines. This has been the experience of neighbours of the Crookwell I, Capital and Cullerin windfarms in our area as well as the neighbours of other windfarms in Australia and New Zealand. Noise amplification in relation to temperature inversion and adverse noise effects of wind turbines are confirmed by the studies of independent noise researchers and experts. (Please see list of relevant studies at the conclusion of this submission) Such noise, both audible and subsonic, is having a profound effect on the health of residents living up to 3 kms away from turbine developments. It is going to have an enormous effect on a large number of people living along the Gullen Range.

We are aware of the detrimental effects that turbine developments have caused residents in our own area who live further away from turbines than we will to those which will be built close to our northwest, west, southwest and southern boundaries.

Based on the experience of others and the significant research that has been conducted , I expect that my family will suffer significant "annoyance", i.e. stress-related symptoms, and sleep disturbance. The latter is inevitable, given the frequency of temperature inversions in our valley.

Presently, if it is believed by those living near a wind farm, that the allowable noise limits are being exceeded, residents must privately pay for their own noise assessment as wind turbine companies are not required to divulge their noise monitoring results. This can cause economic hardship to rural residents as such noise assessments can cost thousands or tens of thousands of dollars. Therefore it is imperative for neighbouring residents that wind farm proponents MUST publish their, verifiable, noise studies.

Our son grew up on our farm and he had hoped that his 14 month old son would enjoy the same upbringing and attachment to the family farm BUT our son and daughter-in-law's home and property will even more adversely effected by Gullen Range Windfarm noise than our own. This may result in them having to leave their house and farm. This has been the experience of other Australian rural residents who live in close proximity to wind turbines.

Our daughter is 17 years old and has intended to take over the family rural enterprise. With significant health implications of living near wind turbines, this now seems unlikely. We are fearful that our family will become separated as has happened in other areas across Australia. Imagine the impact on family relations when children and grandchildren do not want to visit you because being on the farm makes them feel ill.

We have had numerous meetings with wind farm developers who ALL have shown a disinterest in the concerns of those who will live in proximity to wind turbines. One director of a wind turbine company said to us that he didn't care what we or our community felt about turbines being built close to neighbours, he was going to build them anyway. When we mentioned our concerns about noise and asked him if he would like to live next to turbines his response was "Of course not!"

All of the Environment Assessment documents for windfarms that we have seen indicate the disingenuous nature of wind turbine companies The purpose of an Environmental Assessment document is to provide information concerning the windfarm development - to those who might be impacted by the development . The information these Assessments contain is very often incorrect or misleading and the documents are designed to be bloated with jargon and figures which are incomprehensible to the very people who need to understand what impact this development might cause.

The impacts of wind turbine audible and subsonic noise (infrasound) will have a devastating effect on the population of Australian rural areas and some small towns cannot endure the economic consequences of reduced population. It is imperative that our Federal Government recognise the negative impact of noise suffered by those who live near wind turbine installations and legislate to ensure that wind turbine companies are economically disadvantaged if such noise suffering occurs.

We therefore commend the Committee for its consideration of the health and well being of those Australian rural residents who are forced to live near wind turbines.

We have both been involved with wind turbine development in this area and have been in regular contact with others across Australia who have been impacted by wind turbine installations for over 11 years. Indeed, we regularly get phone calls or emails from distressed rural residents from across NSW and other states of Australia who are suffering from adverse noise impacts of wind turbines and those who learn they are to have turbines constructed near their homes.

We would be happy to give evidence in regard to the issues raised in this submission.

Humphrey and Jennifer Price-Jones

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