

TURBULENT TIMES

Newsletter of the Molonglo Landscape Guardians Inc

April 2005

From the President

Welcome to the latest edition of the Turbulent Times.

We have had a number significant wins in the past couple of months with the latest being support from Queanbeyan City Council with their motion to oppose wind-farms on prominent ridgelines around Queanbeyan visible from urban or rural residential areas. It is pleasing to note that their motion was passed unopposed.

Wind-farm proponents, EHN, are now saying that the Environmental Impact Statement on the proposed Molonglo wind-plant is likely to be out in April/ May 2005. We must not become complacent while we wait for this to occur. We must continue to write to our State and Federal members reminding them why this wind-plant should not happen. They need to be continually reminded that we will not forget and should not be made to pay the price.

Margaret Ritchie

Wind-farm reports raise wider concerns

Most people like the idea of renewable energy. Local opposition to the proposed Molonglo power-farm stems mainly from inappropriate siting and the unacceptable cost to our lifestyles, rather than objections to the technology itself.

However, there have been a number of recent media reports that raise wider issues and which suggest that the community-at-large will also pay the cost of wind-power, not directly through living with the turbines on a daily basis, but through the costs of inefficiencies.

A report from a recent scientific study of wind-power commissioned by the German Federal Government concluded that:

- The quantity of climate-damaging CO2 gas that would be saved by wind power could be achieved more cheaply with other measures;
- The costs that the consumers would have to pay for green electricity are considerably higher than previously assumed.

"The statements made in the study are a blow to the wind power sector in a situation that was already critical. Throughout the country, the resistance of the affected population against the increasing

"Verspargelung" of the landscape (turning the German countryside into asparagus fields) is growing".

Windy Calculations. Frank Dohmen and Michael Sauga. Der Spiegel, Jan 2005

In a recent paper, independent energy consultant Rob Booth says wind farms in Australia generate only about 32 per cent of their potential – if they were operated around the clock. The real cost of electricity from a wind farm is very high – around \$70 a megawatt hour, against \$30-\$35/MWh for a coal-fired plant and around \$40-\$42/MWh for a modern gas-fired plant.

"It is only the availability of MRET [Mandatory Renewable Energy Target] credits worth approximately \$40/MWh that makes wind power economic," Booth says. Wind is not controllable and fluctuates randomly, providing variations in output over 15-minute to one-hour periods, he says.

"These can be as much as 70 per cent of the rating of a wind farm and that can cause real problems to the power system as it scrambles to cope with the highly variable output. It is the difficulty and cost of coping with these effects that is starting to cause concern in Australia."

Debate generates a good deal of hot air.
The Australian, 10 March 2005

What has the MLG been up to?

Activities

Contrary to some reports, we have not been holding 'protests' in the Tin Hut Car Park! We did, however, hold a very enjoyable sausage sizzle and information meeting for members and visitors on the Burra side of the Molonglo Range.

We also held another information meeting in Carwoola, and have been very active throughout the last couple of months, talking to community groups, writing letters, meeting politicians and government officials, and giving presentations and media interviews.

We've also produced and delivered the Turbulent Times to about 1000 homes around the Molonglo Ranges.

Membership

We understand that not everyone, even those who have signed the petition, wants to become a member of the MLG. However, if you do, you will be one of almost 100 folk who have already joined.

Being an association gives us standing which helps us get your views across to those who matter. Joining is another way you can make your protest against the wind-plant. There is no membership fee. If you'd like to join contact Margaret Ritchie or Wendy Bell (contact details overleaf).

Next Meeting

Tuesday 3rd May 2005 at 7.00 pm in the Uniting Church, Cnr Rutledge St and Crawford St Queanbeyan. If you are thinking about joining, but aren't quite sure what we're all about, please feel free to come along and see.

Ros Bush
MLG Secretary

Labels

Most of us feel proud that we are trying to look after our backyard as well as our family's welfare. The NIMBY term has a fairly negative connotation and is being used by some to trivialise or diminish the legitimacy of any protest. What then, of those people who have heard our arguments and agree, but don't live close by? Well they can quickly be dismissed as "Rent a Crowd". These two little labels can be used very easily to dismiss our situation. Of course our argument all along has been that these structures should not be near *anybody's* house, not just ours.

One pro-wind industry American article seems to understand the issues better than most, in its "Design as if People Matter" paper. It notes "Opinion surveys show that wind has high public support, but a worrisome NIMBY factor. This support erodes once specific projects are proposed. Because support is fragile and can be squandered by ill-conceived projects..." The article goes on to say that the Wind Industry must do all it can to become a good neighbour but it is interesting to note that it later recommends "Designers must limit the height of wind turbines and should avoid sites near airports where aviation regulations require obstruction marking". It is refreshing to see someone in the wind industry who is able to see a bit of a broader picture.

Bruce Cotton
Carwoola

Dick Smith voices concern

Dick Smith appeared recently on ABC radio's 'Australia All Over' with Ian McNamara voicing his strong concerns over wind power and the ugliness of the wind turbines on the landscape he had seen overseas. He was strongly of the view that Australia needed to carefully think-out its approach to green energy and in particular wind power and setting up wind farms that were an ugly eye sore.

MLG Contacts

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Steve Whan opposes windfarm on Molonglo Ridge

I have always been a supporter of renewable sources of energy. At the beginning of a century where we may see oil supplies dry up and damage to our environment begin to seriously impact on the way we live, it is my belief that political leaders and the community at large have an obligation to seriously consider renewable sources of energy. Those sources should be clean, cheap and appropriate to their local environment. That is why I have previously supported wind farming at the Woodlawn Bioreactor site.

In January of this year I went on public record as saying I opposed the Molonglo Ridge Wind Farm. There is a right and wrong place for wind farms and an area with a dense population, where turbines will be visible to thousands is the wrong place. In my view Molonglo ridge is too visible to too many people and the proposed towers are too close to neighbours. I have spoken to many local residents, studied the maps and viewed for myself that the top of the hills proposed for towers are clearly visible from Queanbeyan and Canberra as well as from the surrounding rural residential areas; the turbines could, for example, be seen from Federal Parliament House.

As I have said on a number of occasions in the media, we live in an area where development controls have quite properly stopped people from building single storey houses on ridges – it would be totally out of character for the area to have 80 metre wind farms on the ridges instead.

I have written to the Hon. Craig Knowles, Minister for Planning on this matter and forwarded him copies of letters written to me by local residents. So far the Minister's response has been to declare all wind farm proposals with more than 30 turbines State Significant Developments. As such, approval will lie with the Department of Infrastructure and Planning and the Minister, not with local Councils. I'm pleased to say both Councils have also formally opposed the development, I congratulate Queanbeyan City Councillor Tom Mavec for initiating this in his own Council.

At this point, a development application is still to be lodged with the Department and we await the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

It is important that concerned residents take the time to review the (EIS) when it is ready and make formal submissions in response to this proposal. I say this is important because the views expressed in submissions are subsequently examined when the proposal is assessed by the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources and of course by the Minister. The Minister has assured me (in a letter dated February 2005) that as this proposal is a State Significant development, "*your views and those made in any submission to the EIS will be carefully considered by the Department's assessment and by me in making the determination.*"

I will ensure local voices are heard on this issue.

Steve Whan, MP
Member for Monaro

Who pays the price?

- One landholder gets 100's of 1,000's of \$ every year
- The developer get millions of \$ every year
- The neighbours live with the impacts every day
- There is real issue of fairness as to who gets the benefits and who pays the price