

Rikki Nicholson, Senate submission

I am writing as a **Pacific Hydro wind factory refugee** from Cape Bridgewater, whose family has endured six years of horrendous impacts including sleep deprivation, severe headaches, severe nausea, inability to concentrate and carry out basic activities of daily living, from the effects of the wind turbines near our family home.

Chronic sleep deprivation causes many other serious health problems. These impacts can only be described as **torture and abuse, for which all responsible authorities refuse to acknowledge, or act to prevent. As a result, we have been forced to leave our home.** We are not alone. There are many others around Australia just like us.

Australia is a signatory to seven international Covenants and Conventions. Six of these have a clause which states that people have

“The right to enjoy the highest standard of physical and mental health”

<https://www.humanrights.gov.au/chart-related-rights-and-articles-human-rights-instruments-human-rights-your-fingertips-human-rights>

The other international Convention is the Convention against Torture and Cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. The UN Committee against Torture has stated that Sleep Deprivation is a method of torture. They went on to say that:

“The Committee against Torture (CAT) has noted that sleep deprivation used for prolonged periods constitutes a breach of the CAT, and is primarily used to break down the will of the detainee. Sleep deprivation can cause impaired memory and cognitive functioning, decreased short term memory, speech impairment, hallucinations, psychosis, lowered immunity, headaches, high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, stress, anxiety and depression.”

Almost all of these symptoms and health problems listed above have been experienced by my family, since the turbines started operating. Before that we were well. My wife's symptoms started when the project became operational. I could hear the turbine noise, but my sleep deprivation and other symptoms started later. Ear plugs did not stop the noise when I was trying to sleep, so I was always tired.

Sleep deprivation as torture has been deemed unacceptable for prisoners at Guantanamo Bay, and it is most definitely unacceptable in rural Australia. Yet severe sleep deprivation and other serious health problems directly caused by the turbines has, now made our home unliveable.

After sending the first official written complaint (following multiple earlier phone calls) in November 2008 only weeks after start up we were systematically

lied to, ignored and made to feel like trouble makers, by Pacific Hydro employees.

“You are the only ones complaining”, “they need to bed in”, “it’s the caves under your home”, are some of the **lies** we were told.

Our neighbours were also told that no one else had complained. The lingering promise of noise and vibration testing led my family and I to stay in our own home, suffering from sleep deprivation and other symptoms, sensations and health problems. These only occurred when we were home, but improved or went completely away when we were away from our home. The turbines were clearly causing the **noise nuisance** symptoms and sensations we were experiencing which engineers and acousticians call “annoyance”.

This was, and is, abuse.

Eventually Steven Cooper, who we trusted, was commissioned by Pacific Hydro to do what turned out to be a ground breaking study as it identified a specific wind turbine signature which includes peaks of infrasound, which was not present when the turbines were off. He was able to determine the operating conditions which correlated with the times when our symptoms were the worst, ie when we felt so terrible we felt we had to get out immediately.

Imagine my disgust to find that 30 years ago NASA conducted 10 years of research into the health effects caused by infrasound from wind turbines which directly caused identical symptoms and sensations as those we experienced at our home.

The wind industry has peddled a **lie** for those 30 years when they say that there are no adverse health effects from wind turbines. They have known for years what the cause is, and made sure the government wind turbine noise pollution regulations excluded infrasound and low frequency noise, and did not measure inside homes.

<http://stopthesethings.com/2015/02/22/three-decades-of-wind-industry-deception-a-chronology-of-a-global-conspiracy-of-silence-and-subterfuge/>

<http://cdn.knightlab.com/libs/timeline/latest/embed/index.html?source=0Ak2bgr7C0nhPdGR3S1IEekU3T3p4ZDhUNDdRV2Y2ZkE&font=Bevan-PotanoSans&maptype=toner&lang=en&height=650>

We agreed to participate in Steven Cooper’s detailed acoustic investigation as we were led to believe by Pacific Hydro that they were genuine in wanting to address our major health concerns.

Andrew Richards said at a community meeting on 3rd April 2014, *“it is our goal to improve your quality of life or at least restore it to what it was before the wind farm was there.”*

Instead, Pacific Hydro management have walked away from the problems they have created, and which their own research conducted by Steven Cooper, with our assistance, has identified.

Steven Cooper's research has since been endorsed by senior and experienced acoustic colleagues from around the world, who have said a cause and effect relationship has clearly been established. Pacific Hydro Board's response, no doubt ordered by its owner IFM (Industry Funds Management), has been to walk away from the problems their noise polluting development has directly caused.

History at our home 1996 until abandonment Sept 2014.

In 1996 we moved from Geelong to beautiful Cape Bridgewater leaving family, friends and employment opportunities.

I welcomed the wind industry as I was well intentioned and gullible, a trait this industry thrives on.

We attended a Proposed Wind farm Display, (Energy Equity), at council offices and were convinced by well rehearsed lies and misinformation. I even later convinced my wife they were good, despite her misgivings.

False and misleading statements by the proponents at the time were, "*...this project will create 2000 jobs*", "*they're no louder than the wind in the trees*", "*they're extremely efficient machines so therefor vibration and stray voltages and EMR's are not an issue*", "*they move so slowly that birds can avoid them*" and "*people love them so much they attract higher resale figures as a result*" and "*tourism figures will increase.*" We did not realise these were lies until much later.

When asked where we live and we pointed on the map, the comment was made, "*...we did not know there was a house there.*" Later I was offered work, training overseas and an interest free loan to set up a business to maintain the farm. I believe this was to ensure I did not make trouble, as they knew there would probably be problems later because our home was so close.

Later a caveat was placed on our home," by mistake" by Blue Energy, (a Pacific Hydro subsidiary). I found out about the caveat because I wanted access to equity in the home. It took 8 weeks of constant phone calls for me to get the caveat removed.

That problem was resolved comparatively quickly compared with what was to come.

Hundreds of phone calls, letters, emails, official complaint forms, office visits (Melbourne and Portland), and conversations in the street with Pacific Hydro staff outlining the ongoing **noise nuisance** problems and requesting action to investigate and deal with the **noise nuisance** have been ignored dismissed or ridiculed.

Similarly Glenelg Council, Victorian EPA, Victorian Planning Department, most politicians both federal and state do not take the **noise nuisance** issue seriously and try to pass the buck between each other.

For two years we endured and explained away our some of our suffering and deteriorating health as just “getting older” although we knew we felt much better when we were away from our home.

In August 2010 we went on holiday for a month. Only after three to four weeks away did we start to really feel back to our “normal” selves as we were before the turbines moved in as neighbours.

When we returned home, we noticed the adverse health impacts and what we now recognise as “**noise nuisance**” symptoms immediately.

Our symptoms at that time had been going on for almost two years. We had not heard of “wind turbine syndrome” and nor had we heard of the Waubra Foundation, or of Dr Sarah Laurie.

I find it obscene that a so called Professor of Public Health who has no training or expertise in diagnosing illnesses or acoustical training or experience should be publicly diagnosing members of my family with a nocebo effect, and ridiculing and sneering and people like me who tell the truth about what is occurring.

My wife has repeatedly been told by her treating medical practitioners to leave our home at Cape Bridgewater in order to regain her health. Who is Simon Chapman (a sociologist) with no training in clinical medicine to question my wife’s medical practitioners’ diagnoses or suggested treatment – which is to remove herself from our home.

Instead, Chapman using the wind industry’s propaganda vehicle (the taxpayer funded ABC) called Steven Cooper’s findings an “atrocious piece of research” during prime time viewing on Media Watch, the same night Steven Cooper was presenting his report’s findings to the community in Portland.

Chapman also accused the study participants, of collusion. This is an appalling statement and is defamatory of myself, my wife, and the four other participants in the study. It is also a lie.

Lane Crockett also lied to the Australian Senate inquiry in 2011 when he stated that there were no problems until a “certain doctor” started talking publicly in the Portland region. He was referring to Dr Sarah Laurie, which was clear from his previous comments, and yet Pacific Hydro knew about our complaints from 2008, some two years before Dr Laurie first visited Portland in late 2010/early 2011.

<http://en.friends-against-wind.org/health/it-has-never-been-about-money-it-is-about-being-able-to-live-in-our-home>

I have learnt that the Victorian Union movement moved to help protect the Metroll workers who were experiencing the same symptoms that we get during the day time at their factory next to the Laverton gas fired turbine owned by Snowy Hydro. The case went to VCAT and was won by Metroll, forcing the responsible authority (the local council) to acknowledge the problems and prevent the harm.

<http://www.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/sinodisp/au/cases/vic/VCAT/2007/748.html?stem=0&synonyms=0&query=Metroll>

The union movement in that case helped advocate for those workers, to help prevent further harm to their health.

I am a proud, 30 year member of the Victorian Electrical Trade Union. Unions are about jobs for members and the protection, health, and safety of its members.

If the union movement was aware of the facts regarding this industry, I believe they would advocate wind turbines were sited at safe distances from all Australians and their families, so they may get a peaceful nights sleep in their own beds.

Wind turbine construction and maintenance is an important source of employment for many, and I have friends and colleagues who work in the industry. I don't want their jobs threatened.

I also worked on the construction of wind turbines in Keppel Prince's Portland factory for a short time.

Any industrial development needs to be sited safely, and operated in a manner that does not cause **noise nuisance** for the neighbours.

It was predictable that Pacific Hydro would walk away from their legal, moral and ethical responsibilities to fix and prevent further **noise nuisance** to my family and all the other families who are adversely impacted at Cape Bridgewater, based on their track record in my dealings with them.

The Portland stage 4 Pacific Hydro wind development is already causing health problems for some people in the town. There is a special school on the south side of town where my wife briefly worked as a volunteer while seeking employment. Those children are known to be very noise sensitive. Heaven help them, and any others who are affected, because no public servant working for any government authority at local, state or federal government seems capable of acting with integrity, professionalism, and honesty to protect people from industrial harm.

Glenelg Council CEO Mr Greg Burgoyne recently said to my wife, '*...what do you expect me to do? They are a public listed company on the stock exchange*'

Who will have the courage to call this for the clear abuse of human rights that it is, and help put a stop to it?

My family's health has suffered terribly, and I feel bad as a husband and a father that I cannot protect them. This sometimes results in angry outbursts, which makes me feel even worse.

All this is largely because none of us has a good nights sleep if we are home and the turbines are operating, which they mostly do, at night.

This final quote says it all. It comes from the Australian Public Service Code of Conduct.

"The principles of good public administration, embodied in the APS Values and Employment Principles, lie at the heart of the democratic process and the confidence the public has in the way public servants exercise authority when meeting government objectives. Good public administration is a protection not only against inefficiency and poor performance, but also against fraud, corruption, inequity, inability to conduct business confidently and infringement of human rights."

<http://www.apsc.gov.au/aps-employment-policy-and-advice/aps-values-and-code-of-conduct>

What we have now is a fraudulent, corrupt, and inequitable system, where our human rights are being trashed.

Please, Senators, make sure that this situation does not continue to harm Australian families like mine.

The false and misleading statements made by wind developers, the refusal of any responsible government officials and Ministers to do anything to stop the harm, and the deception of the wind industry and its acousticians with respect to noise standards (ie failing to take notice of the NASA / Kelley research from thirty years ago) requires a Royal Commission.

I welcome the opportunity to speak directly to the Senators at the inquiry, and extend an invitation to all the Senators to visit our home at Cape Bridgewater.

Regards Rikki Nicholson

22nd March, 2015