

## Opening Statement to the Australian Federal Senate Inquiry into the Excessive Noise from Wind Farms Bill (Proposed Amendment to the Renewable Energy Act)

Thank you for the opportunity to give evidence.

The Waubra Foundation strongly supports any proposal, which will help protect the health of any people currently being harmed by “excessive noise”, whether they are residents or workers, **regardless of the source of that noise.**

We therefore strongly support this Bill. It is our understanding that the Bill will have no effect on wind developments where there are not excessive noise problems.

The Waubra Foundation was established initially to advocate for research into the health problems being reported by people living and working near industrial wind turbines. Sleep disturbance correlating with exposure to operating wind turbines is one of the most common problems reported.

As a result of sick people approaching us for help, our work has expanded over the last 18 months to include helping residents adversely impacted by excessive noise from sources and activities including

1. Coal Seam Gas compressors (Qld and the USA)
2. Coal mining in the Upper Hunter region
3. Gas fired power stations (Uranquinty in NSW, Pt Campbell in Victoria)

There is an excellent description of what can happen to people impacted by noise in quiet rural areas in Chapter 5 of Sharyn Munro’s book, Rich Land, Wasteland. The Chapter is called “clearing the Country”, and this is precisely what happens. Sharyn also describes the use of confidentiality agreements to silence sick people.

This use of confidentiality agreements to silence sick people is part of the wind industry too, for both wind turbine hosts, as well as non participating neighbours, as Senator Back revealed in his speech in the Senate on 30<sup>th</sup> October.

I believe the only reason for these agreements used by noise polluters is to keep this growing public health problem from the gaze of the public, and the public health authorities.

The mere existence of these confidentiality clauses suggests the noise polluters and the professionals assisting them are well aware of the problems.

Most doctors remain ignorant of the connections between sound frequencies in the lower part of the sound spectrum and health problems, however acousticians have known of the connections for some years. This ignorance amongst doctors has been compounded by the omission of a crucial document from the NHMRC’s Rapid Review of 2010 into the adverse health effects of wind turbines, detailing what was known about the effects of low frequency noise.

This is despite the lead author of that crucial document, Professor Geoffrey Leventhall, being one of the peer reviewers of that NHMRC document.

**The 2010 NHMRC document omitting this vital knowledge about the known adverse health impacts of low frequency noise is still being used widely by wind developers and government departments, to assert that there are no known health problems with wind turbines.**

Sleep disturbance is by far the commonest problem reported by residents living near wind developments, which they consistently document correlates with their exposure to operating wind turbines. They sleep well when the turbines are off, or when they are away from the turbines. They report repetitively disturbed sleep when the turbines are operating, and this effect has been reported out to 10km away from 3MW wind turbines at Waterloo in South Australia, and 7.5km away from 2MW wind turbines at Cullerin in NSW in two recent community noise impact surveys. The size of the turbines matters.

The connections between chronic sleep disturbance and consequent serious adverse health effects are very well known to clinical medicine.

In conclusion, we strongly support all the provisions of this Bill, and also hope that the much needed multidisciplinary research recommended by the Senate in June 2011 after the first senate inquiry is also conducted as soon as possible.

Dr Sarah Laurie, CEO Waubra Foundation

Wednesday, 14<sup>th</sup> November, 2012