

Open Letter on our wind farm experiences

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In 2011, a Senate committee recommended that urgent testing be conducted on industrial wind turbines with respect to their health effects on nearby residents. To date, no such testing by government funded organisations has been carried out.

At around the same time, the NHMRC recommended that a precautionary approach to the positioning and approval of industrial wind turbines be taken. No such precautionary approach has been taken by governments at any level. Not only has there been no precautionary approach, but rather, caution has been thrown to the wind and wind farms are not only being allowed without proper cost-benefit studies but are being actively encouraged.

That industrial wind turbines are even remotely effective in supplying meaningful power or have any significant effect on reducing emissions of carbon dioxide is questionable at best. How do I arrive at that opinion? Simply put, my home is not connected in any way to the national electricity grid. I derive all of my electric power from a small solar array and a 500watt wind generator. Were I to rely solely on the wind generator, I would receive no more than 20% of the generator's capacity output for the whole year, nowhere nearly enough to supply our meagre needs. This is approximately the same percentage of power one can get from an industrial wind turbine because that is the degree to which the wind blows. The wind is both intermittent and highly variable. The bulk of my electricity comes from a small 1kilowatt photo voltaic panel array. Excess power produced is stored in lead-acid batteries which gets me well and truly through the night when there is no sun. If the wind blows strongly during the night, almost all of that power is wasted as the batteries are full. This is just like industrial wind turbines where they produce much of their power at night when it is not needed, but unlike my system, it can not be stored.

Much is being said as to the cost effectiveness of wind farms but that is not the subject of this letter as the price of electricity does not impinge upon my life other than to make commodities I purchase more expensive. I don't receive electricity bills.

My issue is the health of peoples world wide who are being affected to varying degrees by the various frequencies of sound and vibration energy produced by industrial wind turbines, in particular, my health and the health of my wife.

As you are probably aware, there has been relatively little acceptable scientific research conducted in relation to the effect of wind turbine noise on human health and what there has been appears to be frequently overlooked or deliberately ignored. In particular the groundbreaking Kelley NASA research in the 1980's in the US which resulted in a dramatic design change to reduce the infrasound and low frequency noise generated by a single wind turbine, which was found to DIRECTLY cause the symptoms including sleep disturbance has yet again been ignored most recently by the NHMRC.

Does the NHMRC not consider that NASA and the US government research led by Dr Neil Kelley which resulted in wind turbine design changes from downwind to upwind bladed turbines to be credible research? Or perhaps it is because the wind industry and governments since that research have refused to measure the full sound spectrum, thereby refusing to measure the very frequencies established in 1985 to DIRECTLY CAUSE the health problems so many of us are now (predictably) now experiencing.

Why has this NASA research been “buried” by the wind industry and governments including noise pollution regulatory authorities for so long? It was presented at the American Wind Energy Association conference in 1987, so they cannot say they did not know about it.

I signed up with a wind farm developer in 1997 to host wind turbines on my farm. I thought it was good for the planet and as I was getting on a bit in years, it would be a nice supplement to my retirement income. I was so convinced that it was a good idea that I also convinced my neighbours and my brother (who was vehemently against anyone tampering with his land) to sign up to an option to lease to host wind turbines. The option to lease was a binding document that prevented us in any way from backing out of the deal. I had no concerns with the document because I was informed confidently by the developer that I would not hear the turbines above the ambient noise level. That subsequently proved to be very much a lie. Many of the land owners who host the turbines do not live anywhere near the turbines and I am aware of at least one non host land owner who is receiving “good neighbour” money in exchange for their silence. How many others receive what amounts to little more than a bribe? What about those wind turbine hosts with children? There are more and more reports of children being harmed by these machines, and these agreements prohibit their parents from complaining about what amounts to abuse of these children. What about their rights to a good night’s sleep – so essential for their growth and development?

The turbines were installed and commissioned in 2004. Because of the loud audible noise made by the turbines on our farm (each about 750 metres from our house), my wife and I decided to build on a 10acre block of land 2.5 km from the nearest turbines and still only 5 km from our farm so that we could still comfortably run the farm. At the 10 acre block, we could neither see the turbines nor hear them unless the wind was blowing directly from them and then the audible level was generally low enough not to be too annoying. For the next 14 months, my wife and I spent our waking hours building our new home (just the two of us, every brick and stone and the entire fit out) in addition to running our beef cattle farm. Needless to say, we were very tired at the end of each day. At the end of the 14 months, we moved into our new home although it still needed painting and tiling etc.

Almost immediately after we moved in (September 2006), I started to develop problems such as nocturnal panic attacks, loud tinnitus, deep fits of depression, and apparent heart arrhythmia to name the most prominent. I consulted my doctor about my heart appearing to miss beats particularly if I was inside the house. My doctor could not find any problem with my heart. The panic attacks, I put down to living in a new strange house and the depression to working too hard. I wondered if my problems

were pesticide or herbicide related but ceasing their use for a year did not alter the symptoms. I wondered if I was being oxygen deprived by the lounge room slow combustion heater but the symptoms were still there in the summer months. I could not sit in my recliner without feeling as though I had an x-ray blanket pressing me into the chair and I couldn't get up from it. When I went to bed, it felt as though I had just run up a flight of stairs. I gave up and considered that I had built a "sick" house.

In 2010, we were informed (by the same wind farm developer) that they were going to install a new wind farm with turbines 50 metres taller than the existing ones, twice the power and much bigger blades in two rows at between 2 km to 3 km directly in front of our home up wind of the prevailing winds. We were not happy with having to have a "picket fence" of around 23 turbines virtually on our front lawn. We informed the developer at a public information (not consultation) day, that although we supported wind farms generally, we were decidedly unhappy with their choice of locations. At no time did the developer ever consult with us despite claiming at the development assessment panel hearing that his company was consulting with households living out to 5 km from the turbines. We informed our council of our concerns and resolved to get on with our life as there was, it seemed, nothing we could do about it although our very striking panoramic view was to be destroyed along with potential value of the block.

Early in 2012, I was asked to attend a wind energy forum in Mount Gambier. I felt I had no need to attend because having turbines on our farm, I thought I already knew about wind turbines but out of curiosity of Dutch relatives who were staying with us at the time we went anyway. At the forum, a gentleman stood up and described a list of symptoms he had been experiencing since the turbines at Cape Bridgewater were set to work. As he listed his symptoms, I mentally ticked off mine and was astounded that they were virtually identical. I found it hard to believe that the turbines could cause such debilitating physiological conditions. The turbines just sit there rotating casually and some could say, gracefully so how could they affect me. The wind farm developer now likes to tell the world that we only started to complain about the current wind farm after we were informed of the proposed (now approved) new wind farm. That is partly true, but why did we wait for nearly two years before making our complaints? Simply because we had no idea that the noise produced by the turbines could have any effect on us. New wind farm or no new wind farm, I would have complained just as long and loud when I discovered the health issues related to the turbines already adjacent our home.

In order to confirm that it was the turbine noise that was affecting us, the first thing we did was to leave the district for a series of holidays from as little as a weekend up to about 8 weeks. Whilst away from the turbines, neither my wife nor I had any of the symptoms, but they returned within hours of being home.

I examined my pulse whilst "listening" to the pulsing inside my head. They were not the same but appeared to drift in and out of sync. The sensation was one of having two hearts that sometimes worked together and sometimes opposed. I have an exercise bicycle on which I elevated my pulse rate somewhat, and noted that my pulse rate was constant but significantly higher than the quasi

regular pulsing I could sense in my head. It was around four years before my wife began to experience acute vertigo and now she experiences the same noise related symptoms as I do.

By coincidence, today is world sleep day and our second night of respite from the low frequency turbine noise. We are around 70km from the nearest turbine. Last night, our sleep was wonderful. It was as though our heads had been emptied. Tonight is already the same. I don't want to go home to the same incessant pounding we get every day. Yes, even on calm days or days when the turbines are barely turning, the deep resonant pulsing, drumming noise they make is intolerable. When the wind blows from the turbines directly at our house or even days when the wind is diametrically opposite, it is impossible to think clearly and we dread going to bed. Every morning I wake up exhausted. The low frequency pulsing seems not able to be blocked by wearing ear plugs or muffs but gets into the skull and feels like someone is striking the base of my brain with a soft hammer.

Do you believe me? I doubt it, but what I tell you is indeed the case. The turbines may look benign but when you think about it, the blades are shifting a swept area of air about the size of a soccer pitch or bigger every second – which just happens to be around the rate of our heart beat. Have you ever wondered just how much energy a pressure pulse of low frequency sound at around our heart beat rate it takes to confuse our actual heart beat? I doubt it, just as I doubt you have ever conducted any scientific research on the matter.

The term “annoyance” with respect to wind turbine noise is being abused by academics and politicians who should know better, and by wind energy developers alike. In my view, there are two meanings of the term. The version used by wind developers relates to emotions i.e. one can be annoyed for example, by the visual impact of turbines and suffer from stress caused by distress associated with their appearance. The other version is that used by acoustic engineers to describe a physical or physiological response to various noise levels and frequencies. Unfortunately academics who should know better and wind turbine proponents pounce on the term “annoyance” and use it to trivialise the very real physical (and measurable) sensations felt by those affected by the noise, such as my wife and I.

Both my wife and I have visited the farm houses of others who are suffering from the effects of the wind turbine created low frequency noise and we can clearly hear and feel that noise inside their houses. They, as we, are not making this up. We have visited the home of a gentleman who lives in Ravenshoe QLD at Windy Hill. The audible and low frequency noises were intolerable to us. If ever in my opinion there was a case for justifiable homicide, that poor chap has one.

We have stayed overnight at a friend's home in Peshurst Victoria since the MacArthur wind farm was set to work. We expected that we would have our usual peaceful night's sleep. The walls of the house are stone and are 60cm (2 feet) thick. We were horrified to find that we were subjected to the same wind turbine noise that we are exposed to at home. The turbines are approximately 8 to 12 kilometres distant but are twice the size and power of those adjacent our home. The lady of the house now often wakes in the night believing that she has left a fan running.

We have stayed at another friend's farm north of Adelaide SA and couldn't see any turbines on the horizon. We once again expected to have a good night's sleep, but as we laid our head on the pillow, we both, without any prior discussion told the other that we could feel the same turbine related noise as we feel at home. Neither of us had a good sleep and were informed next morning that we were 17km down wind from the Waterloo wind farm.

We were invited by Tas Wind to visit King Island to address the local community regarding our wind turbine experiences as a precursor to installing a very large wind farm on the island. We had no previous knowledge of wind turbines already operational on the island, in fact, we knew nothing of King Island at all. We were taken to our accommodation around midnight after the presentation and question sessions. The night was very dark. After such a long day, we expected and looked forward to having a peaceful sleep. The ocean was relatively quiet and certainly not disturbing. We both had a very poor night's sleep and both experienced the usual wind turbine noise sensations. Next morning on our drive into Currie (the main town) we saw a number of medium to large wind turbines operating at the local power station and at a distance of around 5 km from our accommodation. The second night there was just as bad.

We have had acoustic logging of the inside of our home over a one month period. The data shows a very high level of infra sound at around 4Hz as well as low frequency sounds at around 50Hz. The infra sound detected is consistent with what one would expect from the number and location of the wind turbines adjacent our home.

The 50Hz noise can not be emanating from appliances in our home because our power supply shuts itself down when there is no demand as it does frequently during the night. The 50Hz was omnipresent. It is all becoming rather telling, don't you think. I spent 23 years in the RAN, a good deal of it as an electrical engineering officer. Honesty and integrity were and still are part of my way of life, yet wind energy proponents, various media outlets and people in high office, publicly question the veracity of my statements in places that I do not frequent and therefore have no chance to refute this questioning. At no time do these denigrators ever contact me or visit to find out the truth for themselves. Instead, they hide behind media pseudonyms and I am labelled "high profile, anti wind farm activist".

I am a recently retired farmer and former naval engineer trying to enjoy the rest of what life I have left. I certainly don't want to spend it protecting my health which is being destroyed by totally ruthless wind power developers who have utterly no interest in the environment or the rural communities and whose sole aim is to make as much money from the gullible politicians and general public as they can and seal their deals with lengthy, binding contracts enshrined in law.

There is much misinformation put about that persons such as my wife and I have somehow been put up to claiming that we are affected by wind turbine noise by an organisation called The Waubra Foundation. Nothing could be further from the truth. We have diaries and dated emails which clearly

show that we had sought medical advice with respect to our then mysterious conditions years before learning of the Waubra Foundation. I am sure our medical records will reflect that.

We also had not heard of Doctor Sarah Laurie nor the Waubra Foundation prior to becoming aware that our problems were most likely being caused by the wind turbine noise. Some time after the Mount Gambier forum, in conversation with a friend, I was informed casually that he had heard of a Doctor Laurie in regard to wind turbines. I conducted an internet search and found a link and sent an email to the Doctor Laurie listed. I still have that email and all subsequent emails. I have also since met Dr Laurie and found that she is a warm, caring mother and wife who has over the years, done much good work for the benefit of humanity. You would do well to also meet her. Yet for all the good work she has tirelessly done, to try and alleviate and prevent suffering she is like us, labelled "anti wind activist" by those who should know better and a very powerful and as I said, ruthless, wind industry trying desperately to hang on to its very lucrative income and deny the health problems which it has known about for years.

At least one academic, a professor of sociology, has made a careful study of the way in which the tobacco companies manipulated media with respect to the health effects of smoking tobacco. This gentleman has for some reason armed himself with the lessons learned from the tobacco companies and a personal opinion (nothing more) that if we are told that a certain thing will make us ill, then it probably will. Known as the nocebo effect.

This gentleman has from his high position of public office, splashed his opinion around the world, and backed it up with percentages of the population who for example have poor sleep habits but ignores the facts that their sleep problems and specific symptoms do not occur when they are not exposed to operating wind turbines. At no time has he contacted those of us who are effected by the turbine noise to establish our actual normal state of health. At no time has he conducted any scientific research on the subject at all, because he does not have the professional training in either acoustics or medicine which would allow him to speak with any authority on this subject. He has stated that the levels of infra sound near houses in the vicinity of wind turbines is similar to that found in urban streets. He cleverly omitted the fact that the tonal qualities of the wind turbine noise and characteristics such as the pulse duration, pulse width, pulse rise time and infra sound amplitude modulation are vastly different to infra sounds found in the urban environment, or the beach, or other locations.

Another clever tactic used by this media guru is to produce as many plausible papers and "opinions" as possible and have them published in reputable magazines and print media, each one stating that there is no credible evidence that wind turbine noise is a problem whilst carefully ignoring any evidence to the contrary. Before long, these papers start to cross reference one another and eventually themselves leading the ignorant to believe that all that is produced in these papers is scientific fact. It is no more than media brainwashing, and academics and medical professionals who should know better are being sucked into endorsing this chicanery. Saturation advertising. Just as the Tobacco companies did. He has learnt well from studying their techniques.

Why is it that this taxpayer funded person has carte blanche access to print and radio/TV media without question but those such as we, can almost never get a hearing and then not without serious redacting or misrepresentation? It is almost as though the wind industry and their supporters in public health and medical organisations are fully aware of the noise problems but do not wish to address it because rural residents are to be sacrificed “for the greater good”. They appear determined to remain ignorant and prevent any meaningful investigation and independent research.

Remember, this is also the research that the Australian Federal Senate said was “a priority” nearly three years ago.

As time goes on, the number of people becoming severely affected is going to grow, and those people affected will continue to deteriorate. In short, the effects are cumulative. The consequences of severe chronic sleep deprivation and chronic stress are well known to clinical medicine. Mental and physical health are irreparably damaged. Sleep deprivation is used as a method of torture. Personally, I am getting very tired of being the guineapig and being considered as collateral damage or mere political road kill.

One day, perhaps soon, some one will have had enough and will crack under the pressure, and I am surprised it hasn't happened already given what I know people are enduring and openly describing as torture for them and their families.

I don't want to imagine the consequences.

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