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31st July, 2014

Mr Kane Thornton
Acting CEO
Clean Energy Council
(Formerly AWEA
Australian Wind Energy Association)

Cc Mr Leon Delaney, 2SM

Open Letter

Dear Mr Thornton,

Re: Contentious statements during a recent radio interview with 2SM's Leon Delaney

Your response to Mr Leon Delaney's question about adverse health effects from operating wind turbines during the radio interview during clean energy week¹ contains a number of unsupported statements.

As acting CEO of the Clean Energy Council (CEC), formed by the merger of the Australian Wind Energy Association (AWEA) and other renewable energy industry groups, you are no doubt very concerned about ensuring the wind industry continues to enjoy a "social licence to operate" in Australia. However such a licence can only be earned and, more importantly sustained, by presenting thoroughly researched facts and closely reasoned conclusions therefrom. Your statements during the 2SM interview were not of a quality needed to support a social licence. The general public is getting the message that the wind industry creates more problems than solutions and it might just be time for the CEC and the wind industry to focus on solving rather than denying its problems if it wishes to find a permanent and respected place in the energy industry.

To refresh your memory, below is a transcript of what the interviewer Mr Delaney said, and your response, which I transcribed.

Leon Delaney: (at 6.10 minutes into the interview)

"And a lot of people still hold concerns that the noise generated by windfarms, not so much the absolute volume of the noise but more the frequency of it. People are concerned that there are infra frequencies, subaudible frequencies, that have some sort of impact on their health or on the environment around them. Again there might be some confusion or uncertainty about that, but is there any research being done into those questions or has that question been settled?"

¹ <http://2smsupernetwork.com/energy-minister-nsw-aims-to-be-australias-answer-to-california/>

Kane Thornton: (at 6.43 minutes into the interview)

“Yes, look certainly in our opinion this issue has been settled. We need to remember there’s over 200,000 wind turbines installed right around the globe. In many places they have been in place for ten or twenty years and so this isn’t a new issue, its been explored significantly, it feels as if it has been researched by credible independent bodies; everyone from national government health institutions through to the medical bodies in each state around Australia, and the conclusion each time is the same which is there is no link, there is no hidden health issue from wind turbines”.

Below is an analysis of your comments during the interview.

Your first sentence – **“Yes, look certainly in our opinion this issue has been settled”**. I note the use of the word “opinion”. How do you reconcile your current “opinion” that **“this issue has been settled”** with the previous CEC opinion expressed to Windpower Monthly on 24th June, 2011 immediately after the first Federal Senate Inquiry recommendations for research were announced, which is reproduced below. ²

“Industry body the Clean Energy Council welcomed the report’s recommendations and said it supported further work on the health impacts of turbines.”

As the current acting CEO could you please inform me whether the CEC and its members still support further work on the health impacts of turbines, as specifically recommended by the first Australian Federal Senate inquiry in 2011? ³

The Senate Inquiry recommendations included the direct measurement of the acoustic emissions including infrasound, low frequency noise and vibration which people reporting characteristic health problems are exposed to inside their homes, and their physiological responses to those frequencies. That is precisely the multidisciplinary research the Waubra Foundation has been advocating for over three years, and is the research the current Australian Federal Government has repeatedly committed to funding.

Please do not bother to repeat the assertions repeated ad nauseum by the wind industry and passionate renewable energy advocates in politics and public health (who have never provided clinical care to an affected person) that a “nocebo effect” explains the symptoms. ⁴ As US Medical Practitioner Dr Michael Nissenbaum pointed out, **for a medical practitioner to diagnose a nocebo effect, in the absence of thorough investigation to exclude all other possibilities first, would be risking an action for professional negligence.** ⁵

The recently released draft of the National Health and Medical Research Council commissioned Systematic Literature Review, 2014 (**NHMRC 2014 SLR**) found there was **no research evidence to support a nocebo effect in the residents living near industrial wind turbines.** ⁶

Your next statement **“We need to remember there’s over 200,000 wind turbines installed right around the globe. In many places they have been in place for ten or twenty years and so this isn’t a new issue ”**

² <http://waubrafoundation.org.au/2011/australia-recommends-wind-farm-noise-study/>

³ <http://waubrafoundation.org.au/resources/australian-federal-senate-inquiry-into-wind-farms-health-report/>

⁴ For those interested, the “nocebo effect” research together with detailed critiques by a range of experts in acoustics, medicine, audiology and the law with a direct knowledge of the health and acoustic problems reported by residents can be found here: <http://waubrafoundation.org.au/resources/crichtonf-et-al-can-expectations-produce-symptoms-infrasound-and-wind-turbines/> here: <http://waubrafoundation.org.au/resources/chapmans-et-al-evidence-for-psychogenic-communicated-disease-hypothesis/> and here: <http://waubrafoundation.org.au/resources/critical-analysis-accuracy-complaints-data-from-chapman-et-al-nocebo-research/>

⁵ <http://waubrafoundation.org.au/resources/dr-michael-nissenbaum-annoyance-nocebo-effect-sleep-deprivation/>

⁶ p 164, document accessible via <http://waubrafoundation.org.au/resources/responses-nhmrc-draft-information-paper-systematic-literature-review/> where the history of the NHMRC’s involvement is documented.

unfortunately omits to also mention that **wind turbine size and power generating capacity has greatly increased particularly over the last ten years, and this predictably leads to increased generation of low frequency noise, and likely “annoyance” symptoms for neighbours.**⁷

You also neglected to mention that the **early wind turbines (especially in Australia) were not only very small, they were sited well away from populated rural areas**, for example at Codrington in Victoria, and Cathedral Rocks in South Australia.

It IS a new issue to have much larger industrial wind turbines located close to more densely populated rural areas, and just as Danish Acousticians Professors Moller and Pedersen predicted, the consequences for the neighbours are evident in the increasing numbers of people publicly reporting NEW sleep and health problems,⁸ symptoms which are well known to acoustic engineers and called “annoyance”.

Finally, you state ***“its been explored significantly, it feels as if it has been researched by credible independent bodies; everyone from national government health institutions through to the medical bodies in each state around Australia, and the conclusion each time is the same which is there is no link, there is no hidden health issue from wind turbines”***.

Firstly, the NHMRC yet again explicitly noted the lack of good quality scientific evidence in this area in its recent draft statement, and **NHMRC 2014 SLR**. The issue has clearly NOT been ***“explored significantly”***. However the **NHMRC 2014 SLR** did find that there was evidence of an association with sleep deprivation, “annoyance” symptoms and impaired quality of life, despite also ignoring and misclassifying important research studies.⁹

Secondly, your statement that ***“it feels as if it has been thoroughly researched”*** cannot add value to your argument. Either “it has been thoroughly researched”, or it has not – this is nothing to do with your “feelings”. **Except perhaps the feelings of panic the wind industry has about the truth of the serious damage to people’s health now re-emerging from current research, some thirty years after the rediscovery of the NASA / US Department of Energy funded research which established a direct causal link between impulsive infrasound and low frequency noise from wind turbines and health damaging repetitive sleep disturbance, body vibrations, and other “annoyance” symptoms.**¹⁰

I note that British Wind Industry acoustician Dr Geoffrey Leventhall has conceded “annoyance” symptoms are identical to “wind turbine syndrome” symptoms, and have been known to him for years to result from exposure to environmental noise.¹¹ Mr Russell Marsh (also from the CEC, and observer on the NHMRC Literature Review Panel) was present in the NHMRC workshop in Canberra, in June 2011 when Dr Leventhall made this remark, along with many other wind industry representatives.

The current NHMRC CEO, Professor Warwick Anderson has stated in his oral evidence to the Federal Senate inquiry in 2011, (***“we are very aware that high-quality scientific literature in this area is very thin”***¹²); the NHMRC has not commissioned any research since, and the Federal Senate Inquiry Report of 2011 has recommended research ***“as a priority”*** (which has not yet occurred), so asserting that the science is “settled” is not supported by Australia’s peak medical research body, and in particular its CEO.

⁷ see the accepted, peer reviewed published research by Danish Acousticians Moller & Pedersen

<http://waubrafoundation.org.au/resources/moller-pedersen-low-frequency-noise-from-large-wind-turbines/>

⁸ see for example the 2012 population survey by Morris at Waterloo, the only Australian research included in the NHMRC 2014 SLR, together with others by Wang, Schneider and Schafer

<http://waubrafoundation.org.au/library/community-noise-impact-surveys/>

⁹ <http://waubrafoundation.org.au/resources/waubra-foundation-open-letter-nhmrc-re-systematic-literature-review/>

¹⁰ see <http://waubrafoundation.org.au/resources/kelley-et-al-methodology-for-assessment-wind-turbine-noise-generation-1982/> and <http://waubrafoundation.org.au/2013/explicit-warning-notice/>

¹¹ <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/media/events/2011/wind-farms-and-human-health-scientific-forum-7-june-2011>

¹² <http://waubrafoundation.org.au/resources/social-and-economic-impact-rural-wind-farms-prof-warwick-anderson-nhmrc/>

Loose comments like these inevitably damage the image of the wind industry and its social licence to operate.

Finally, I would like to bring your attention to the acoustic research, commissioned by CEC member Pacific Hydro, to directly investigate the reported health and sleep problems of three households at Cape Bridgewater. None of the families can live in their homes full time without experiencing debilitating symptoms and severe sleep disturbance, and have reported their symptoms for many years to various responsible authorities as well as the wind developer. It is to Pacific Hydro's credit that they have taken this significant step, in collaboration with the residents.

Whilst the final results and report are not yet available, the preliminary results were reported to the local community on 7th July, 2014, in the presence of the Pacific Hydro CEO, Mr Lane Crockett, and have now been posted on the Pacific Hydro website¹³ and have been reported on in the local media.¹⁴

A final comment about your statement during the radio interview referring to **"the medical bodies in each state around Australia"** by which I assume you are referring to the Federal Australian Medical Association, (AMA) which recently put out a position statement which was unreferenced, unnamed, and remains so. This statement provoked an immediate strong international reaction.¹⁵

I note that my questions¹⁶ to the Federal AMA leadership about the statement's authorship, reference material used and other matters remain unanswered, some months later, as do those of my colleagues, affected residents and acousticians. As with the CEC, the AMA has brought itself considerable public and political damage to its credibility on this particular issue, which it is yet to repair.¹⁷

Just as medical practitioners, and arguably medical associations such as the AMA, have a responsibility to "first do no harm", product manufacturers including wind turbine manufacturers have a legal responsibility to ensure their products do not cause harm. It is clear from a powerpoint presentation given by then senior VESTAS engineer Erik Sloth to the 2004 Australian Wind Energy Association (AWEA) conference that indeed VESTAS (and the AWEA/CEC) were well aware ten years ago that their products could cause the health problems known as "annoyance" to engineers, that research and safe buffer distances were required.¹⁸

Further evidence that VESTAS senior management know the potential damage to health their products can cause can be found from a letter written by then CEO Ditlev Engel, to the then Danish Minister for the Environment, in order to lobby for reduced low frequency noise standards to "protect Danish jobs", clearly at the expense of the health of Danish citizens (as well as citizens around the world).¹⁹ VESTAS were well aware that the Danish low frequency noise guidelines might be copied elsewhere. Indeed, a VESTAS senior employee in Australia, Ken McAlpine, subsequently lobbied the NSW Government not to measure low frequency noise at all.²⁰

¹³ <http://www.pacifichydro.com.au/english/our-communities/communities/cape-bridgewater-acoustic-testing-presentation/?language=en> Further background information can be found at the following weblink:

¹⁴ <http://waubrafoundation.org.au/2014/pacific-hydro-commended-initiating-wind-turbine-noise-acoustic-survey/>

¹⁵ <http://www.standard.net.au/story/2453860/report-links-cape-bridgewater-wind-turbines-to-noise-sensation-levels/>

¹⁶ <http://waubrafoundation.org.au/resources/ama-statement-responses-concerned-professionals-citizens-impacted-residents/>

¹⁷ <http://waubrafoundation.org.au/resources/open-letter-ama-their-position-statement-wind-farms-health-2014/>

¹⁸ <http://waubrafoundation.org.au/resources/senator-chris-back-questions-evidence-from-vested-interests-at-planning-review-hearings/>

¹⁹ <http://waubrafoundation.org.au/resources/what-vestas-and-wind-industry-knew-about-inadequate-noise-prediction-models-auswea-2004/>

²⁰ <http://waubrafoundation.org.au/resources/vestas-lobbies-danish-environment-minister-not-tighten-noise-regulations/>

²⁰ <http://www.windturbinesyndrome.com/2012/vestas-objects-to-wind-turbine-infrasound-low-frequency-noise-requirements-australia/>

The conduct of wind turbine manufacturer VESTAS in subsequently launching a global denial of adverse health effects in Australia last year, on 18th June, 2013 called "ACT on FACTS" may be seen as part of a global product protection strategy.

Those attending the VESTAS launch and listed as speakers at the event included yourself as the Chair or Moderator, and Professor Simon Chapman, a Public Health Professor from Sydney University, Simon Holmes a Court from Embark and Chairman of Hepburn Wind, Climate and Health Alliance spokesperson Fiona Armstrong, and others including Infigen Energy's Managing Director Miles George.²¹

The time for denials of adverse health effects from wind turbines is well and truly over. Continuing the denials will not serve the local, or global wind industry's longer term interests.

Yours sincerely,



Sarah Laurie,
CEO Waubra Foundation

Attachments:

1. Explicit Warning Notice, 22nd November, 2013 <http://waubrafoundation.org.au/2013/explicit-warning-notice/>
2. Explicit Cautionary Notice, 29th June, 2011 <http://waubrafoundation.org.au/about/explicit-cautionary-notice/>
3. Open Letter to the NHMRC concerning the Systematic Literature Review, 2014 <http://waubrafoundation.org.au/resources/waubra-foundation-open-letter-nhmrc-re-systematic-literature-review/>
4. Letter to the AMA concerning their position statement from the Waubra Foundation <http://waubrafoundation.org.au/resources/open-letter-ama-their-position-statement-wind-farms-health-2014/>
5. Letter to the AMA from Emeritus Professor Alun Evans, Ireland <http://waubrafoundation.org.au/resources/evans-prof-emeritus-alun-dismiss-any-adverse-effects-absurd-view-mounting-evidence/>
6. Letter to the AMA from Dr Hakan Enbom, Sweden <http://waubrafoundation.org.au/resources/enbom-h-infrasound-from-wind-turbines-can-trigger-migraine-and-related-symptoms/>
7. Letter to the AMA from Dr Gary Hopkins, Australia <http://waubrafoundation.org.au/resources/dr-gary-d-hopkins-letter-re-amas-wind-farms-health-statement/>
8. Letter to the AMA from Professor Robert McMurtry, Canada <http://waubrafoundation.org.au/resources/prof-robert-mcmurtry-former-dean-medicine-writes-ama/>
9. Letter to the AMA from Dr Bruce Rapley, New Zealand <http://waubrafoundation.org.au/resources/rapley-b-letter-ama-audibility-and-effects-infrasound/>
10. Letter to the AMA from Dr Sandy Reider, USA <http://waubrafoundation.org.au/resources/reider-dr-sandy-md-rural-primary-care-physician-questions-ama-statement/>
11. Letter to the AMA from Dr Jay Tibbetts, USA <http://waubrafoundation.org.au/resources/tibbetts-dr-jay-j-md-appalled-at-ama-statement/>

²¹ <http://www.einpresswire.com/article/154797388/vestas-launches-act-on-facts-campaign-in-battle-against-anti-wind-movement-says-don-t-let-myths-dictate-our-future>