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Wind Turbine Time-Out: WHO's Health Hazard Warning Prompts Demand for Immediate Wind Farm Moratorium

November 1, 2018 by [stopthesethings](#) 16 Comments



Connie Bonaros: fighting for South Australian lives and livelihoods.

The wind industry is what it is thanks to naïve, gullible and pliant politicians. But not every MP drank the Kool-Aid. One who didn't is SA Best Member of the Legislative Council, Connie Bonaros.

South Australia is the place that set and met its very own ludicrous 50% Renewable Energy Target. For that it suffers the highest retail power prices in the world, mass load shedding and blackouts. This summer guarantees repeat performances of both, every time the sun sets and/or calm weather sets in. Portable generators will be the must have item come December.

Then there's the destruction wreaked in South Australia's rural communities, at places like Waterloo, Mt Bryan, Hallett and Jamestown.

Clearly concerned about her constituents, Connie use the World Health Organization's new noise Guidelines (which declare wind turbine noise a serious health risk) as a pretty solid platform to call for a total moratorium on new wind farms.

Wind farm moratorium
SA Parliament

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Connie Bonaros
24 October 2018

Mr President, I rise to speak to the motion in my name on the matter of a moratorium on wind farm developments in South Australia.

When the world's pre-eminent health authority – the World Health Organisation – airs a warning, the world should rightly heed that advice.

The renowned Geneva-based organisation has recently released a report that found wind power turbines have the potential to cause serious health problems – including hearing loss, tinnitus, high blood pressure and even heart problems – to people exposed to excessive noise levels they emit.

The WHO provided these specific noise recommendations to protect the community.

In new guidelines the WHO developed for the European Union – but which it stressed are relevant globally – it recommends that exposure to wind turbines should not exceed 45 decibels during daytime operation.

On the presumption a wind farm is permitted to operate throughout an entire 24-hour period of a day, the WHO guideline for noise limits at night becomes 35 dB(A) as a measured level.

This level is lower than the 35 dB(A) or background + 5 dB whichever is GREATER, provided in windfarm noise guidelines of South Australia's EPA.

Soft radio music, by comparison, has 50 decibels, WHO said.

Mr President, we need to ensure that the implications of the WHO report are now taken into account in our own windfarm noise guidelines to prevent serious adverse health impacts on rural residents living near windfarms in South Australia – noting background noise, atmospheric and house construction conditions are quite different in Australia, compared to much of Europe, and that as a result even lower noise levels may be required.

Cause for concern indeed.

But it gets even more worrying.

An independent report ordered by the Supreme Court of Victoria found that noise from the Bald Hills wind farm in Victoria is having an adverse impact on the comfort and wellbeing of residents living out to 2.4km on surrounding properties, even when the wind turbines were compliant with their planning permit, and were operating in noise reduced mode.

A class-action lawsuit is now being planned by local residents against the South Gippsland (pronounced Gipps-Land) Council, the Victorian government and the wind farm operator following the report.

But Mr President, the noise pollution wind farms cause is only part of a greater problem.

Wind farms are increasing in size – in terms of both the capacity of energy generated and the size of the wind turbines.

A wind farm being proposed by French company, Neoen (pronounced Nee-O-En), at the gateway of our pristine Flinders Ranges, near Crystal Brook, in South Australia's mid north, is just one example.



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Currently the subject of a State Commission Assessment Panel for approval, each of the project's 26 wind turbines will stand 240 metres high – **the highest ever built in the state and double that of many of the existing windfarm turbines in SA.**

Each turbine will have an output of just under 5MW – **again around double that of most existing windfarm developments. By way of comparison, the Bald Hills wind turbines are only 2.05 MW.**

Neoen's proposed wind farm is situated only three kilometres from the Crystal Brook township and a lot closer to nearby rural living properties – an issue that has concerned local residents, many of whom have contacted SA-BEST.

Current laws permit a wind farm to be built one kilometre from a property without the owner's consent and two kilometres from a town.

In Opposition, the Liberals had a longstanding policy to better protect residents by banning new wind turbines from being built closer than two kilometres from an existing dwelling without the homeowner's consent and five kilometres from any town or settlement.

Mr President, the revelations by the influential World Health Organisation (WHO) that wind farms have the potential to cause significant health dangers is damning.

The new guidelines by the universally-respected WHO should send a shiver through us all – especially those who live close to wind farms.

The newly-released WHO guidelines highlight the fact our state's own noise guidelines – which are already complex to decipher – are also grossly inadequate. I note that the SA Wind Farm Noise guidelines exclude noise characteristics specifically identified by the WHO as of concern, including low frequency noise and amplitude modulation.

It's no secret wind farms are getting increasingly bigger in physical size and greater in output capacity.

In light of the WHO report and the sheer magnitude of the wind farm being proposed by Neoen, SA-BEST implores the Marshall Government to take decisive and immediate action.

At the very least, we call on it to place an urgent moratorium on approval or construction of any new windfarms until an independent, full and thorough review is undertaken, and an updated, evidence based, planning and noise pollution compliance regime is implemented that is transparent, effective in protecting health, and relevant for much larger, more powerful wind turbines.

We must ensure both currently operating and future wind farms in South Australia are not allowed to emit noise that causes sleep disturbance or otherwise harms human health..

We must also review all legislation surrounding wind farm developments to ensure that SA residents are adequately protected from harm over the lifetime of each project, and that SA taxpayers will not foot the bill in future for noise nuisance litigation because inadequate planning and noise pollution regulations have failed to protect SA residents from harm.

SA-BEST is also concerned that windfarm proposals are starting to encroach on some of our state's most scenic landscapes, including the Flinders Ranges, Barossa and Clare Valleys.

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If Neoen's project is given approval to be construct on the cusp of the world-famed Flinders Ranges, an ugly and irreversible precedent will have been set.



At present, development assessment for windfarms assumes – but completely discounts – their substantial visual impact on the landscape.



While windfarms are 'not explicitly' envisaged in designated landscape protection zones, much stronger protection is needed to make it clear to developers that our iconic landscapes are off limits.



The most recent *State of the Environment* report (2013) by the South Australian EPA reported an increase in noise complaints from existing wind farms, yet there has been no change to monitoring and compliance requirements, even though turbines are getting bigger and more powerful.



Again, I use Neoen's Development Application for the Crystal Brook Energy Park – which includes 26 turbines, each with an output of close to 5MW – as an example.



The company has concluded it would be compliant with the current EPA windfarm noise guidelines, despite a number of disturbing issues raised by residents, including that:



- The company's background noise measurements were based on only five sites, two of which are landholders receiving payments for hosting turbines
- The three closest non-associated residences did not have background noise monitoring undertaken by Neoen.
- The company's baseline noise monitoring was conducted in the middle of the grain harvesting period, when there is a higher than usual background noise level.
- There is no consideration of amplitude modulation or separation of night-time noise levels, which is a real concern for assessing the impact on sleep.
- The type of turbine is unknown. The assessed assumed a GE 4.8-158 WTG but identified the final WTG selection will occur during the design phase.
- Spacing between many turbines is also much closer than recommended by the manufacturer, which will further increase the level of noise and turbulence.



The EPA's *State of the Environment* (2013) report also notes that noise above safe levels leads to a number of known health impacts such as stress, high blood pressure, loss of sleep, inability to concentrate and loss of productivity.



That the WHO has now explicitly identified windfarm noise as a source of such health impacts for residents is of significant concern.



Furthermore, independent acoustic engineers and researchers have identified noise and infrasound issues up to 15km from turbines – depending on the local topography.



All this information – together with the recent independent report ordered by the Supreme Court regarding the noise impact of the Bald Hills wind farm in Victoria – paints an emerging and concerning story.





It's worth noting that a State Commission Assessment Panel assessment into the Neoen wind farm project near Crystal Brook received more than 250 submissions, with the vast majority opposing the development.

This includes the Local Council, who resolved to actively oppose the project.

Only around 15 submissions were in favour of its development.

The majority of these were from people living close to the proposed site who will receive significant financial gain for having wind turbines built on their properties.

One landholder does not live in the local area and one has made public comment as to his intent to relocate once the turbines are constructed.

The Port Pirie Regional Development Plan has an Objective to “protect the community health and amenity from adverse impacts of development” and specifically for wind farms to avoid or minimise excessive noise impacts on nearby property owners/occupiers, road uses and wildlife.

The Neoen wind farm assessment has not identified any adverse noise or health impacts for people or wildlife.

Accordingly, without such an assessment, the Neoen Application cannot be approved while the Port Pirie Regional Council Development Plan has not been addressed.

In view of the WHO report – specifically identifying wind turbine can create a health impact – an urgent moratorium is required to protect the state and South Australian taxpayers from class actions against the state if the Neoen project is approved.

On 13 April 2018, the Minister for Environment, the Hon David Speirs, stated on ABC Radio Adelaide that he hoped to get a review of the windfarm noise guidelines moving.

Given more than six months has passed since the Minister made those comments, SA-BEST is keen to be updated by the Minister on where that review currently is.

We also seek the government's assurances that this review is undertaken with full transparency with input from the community and independent acousticians – and improved safeguards for nearby residents are in place – before any new wind turbines are approved or constructed.

Until these issues are resolved, the State Government must place an urgent moratorium on approval or construction of any new windfarms.

In closing I make the point – we would never build a wind farm on Mount Lofty, so why are we even considering one on the doorstep of our internationally-renowned Flinders Ranges and other treasured areas of the state.

 **Windfarm moratorium**
from SA-BEST

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