

Saturday, May 03, 2003

MRET REVIEW PANEL

Dear Members,

My name is Brian Foster; I am a mixed farmer growing cereals and wool on Eyre Peninsula in South Australia.

Our family has been farming here since the mid 1860's and our farm is 75 kms. Northwest of Port Lincoln and 35 kms. West of Cummins on the West Coast of Lower Eyre Peninsula.

I am also a member of the Eyre Peninsula Catchment Water Management Board.

I would urge your committee to take public evidence in Port Lincoln, I believe that the Eyre Region Development Board, E.P. Local Gov Assoc. EPCWMBBoard, individual Councils and Landowners at least would be prepared to make verbal submissions, if not I would be interested in appearing in Adelaide.

I have an "option to lease" contract with a Wind Energy Developer.

I wish to strongly support an increase in the MRET to encourage and sustain the continuing development of the renewable energy industries in Australia.

Taking into consideration the issues of Climate Change, Kyoto Protocol, Carbon penalties, Sustainability and Carbon trading, a strong renewable energy industry is of critical importance to the future development of Australia.

Our political credibility as a good corporate member of the global community is also at issue, as is sustainable energy production as a political issue at State and National level.

I wish to point out to you a few of the issues for our local community and also as they potentially effect me as a landholder.

I am personally aware of approximately 450 @1.5 Mw. Turbines being proposed for this area, as several projects, that either have been approved at the planning application stage or will be submitted for approval by the end of this calendar year.

I don't believe that these will proceed unless the MRET is increased. These initial proposals represent only a part of the utilization of Eyre Peninsula's wind resource and further projects are being discussed.

While I understand that the increase of the MRET may marginally increase costs to consumers, this is far outweighed by the creation of a more "level playing field" in relation to existing generator privileges.

The amount of investment and construction jobs as well as the ongoing jobs in this region and the nation as a whole and the building of this sort of infrastructure in remote communities such as ours and the consequent opportunities available make the promotion of this industry through an MRET mechanism vital to the future development of regional Australia and indeed of Australia as a nation.

ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE Industry and energy production is vital to the long-term survival and prospering of the AUSTRALIAN NATION.

I understand that it takes six months for a wind turbine to produce the amount of energy that was used in its installation and manufacture, it spends the next 20/25 years producing energy from a renewable source at no cost to the environment.

The benefits to this region of a viable wind energy industry.

Huge investment in infrastructure that would not otherwise occur and the consequential investment in jobs and business inputs to the local community.

The very real opportunity for land based aquaculture development on western Eyre Peninsula where the clean green cold-water conditions are ideal compared with those on the eastern side.

The very real opportunity to integrate desalination with wind energy to assist with the augmentation of Eyre Peninsula's fragile ground water based public water supply.

The drought proofing of a significant number of farming operations by providing a source of non-agricultural income to the participating farm owners.

The enhancement and rehabilitation of some degraded local environments in conjunction with some of the projects.

The further development of Eyre Peninsula's Tourism product.

The provision of jobs and services during a. Construction
b. Operation.

The potential of some component manufacturing.

Spin-offs in confidence on the peninsula, (the investments being considered in the realistic projects being seriously considered at present would amount to something approaching one billion dollars.)

Eyre Peninsula is unlikely to see this level of infrastructure development and investments occur from any other source!

The consequential improvement in power infrastructure would greatly enhance the reliability of this regions power supply. This is a major concern now, particularly for the existing aquaculture industry as well as others.

The benefits to me as a farmer and landowner.

In my situation I would be one of 5/10 landowners involved with this one project who would have various numbers of turbines on our properties. Our share of the energy generated and any potential green credits or carbon credits would represent an income independent from our agriculturally based income. We experience the vagrancies of both climate, (rainfall mainly) and international commodity prices this unrelated stream of potential income would improve our viability and stability as a farming unit immeasurably.

We would receive an income from a resource that we have but only recently became aware.

The physical effect of the wind industry installations on our day-to-day farming operations would be negligible and agricultural output would not be affected negatively at all.

The installations would largely occur on degraded (cleared) low producing marginal limestone coastal grazing farmland, and would not hinder our day-to-day operations. In fact the provision of access and some rehabilitation projects will enhance our farming operations.

The affect on our small communities of the new income streams would be stabilizing and significantly beneficial.

There would be potential for new opportunities simply because of the availability of the new power infrastructure.

The negatives

The only real potential negative is a change to visual amenity; this issue is handled positively in many communities around the world. In the case of Australia our region is sparsely populated, and it has a world-class wind resource, so in many ways is ideal for this type of development away from dense populations.

Although we have a vested interest, I believe that the real benefits of this development opportunity for our community outweighs many times the one issue of perceived visual amenity.

Summary

I believe that the raising of the MRET to 10% would realistically and quickly stimulate the establishment of a strong, viable and sustainable Wind (and renewables) Energy Industry.

We would see the construction of the projects I have described.

The cost of the increase MRET would be insignificant compared to the benefits both in sustainability and regional development.

The political logic and public commitment to a sustainable renewable energy industry would be significant both locally and internationally.

The investment would be economically significant.

I have not commented on the technical issues surrounding this issue, I believe that they are best handled by the industry representatives and the operators and developers. I have rather tried to look at the regional and local implications.

I thank the review committee for the opportunity to make a submission and would be pleased to be of further assistance if appropriate.

I reiterate my earlier suggestion for a public hearing in this region at Pt. Lincoln and would be prepared to appear.

Thank you for your attention
Yours Sincerely

Brian Foster.....

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