




Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE

Hansard Tuesday, 11 September 2012

MOUNT EMERALD WIND FARM

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (12.27 pm): I want to raise the growing sense of frustration surrounding the development of the Mount Emerald wind farm on the Atherton Tablelands. Since it was announced the developers, Port Bajool and Thai based RATCH-Australia Corporation, have been dismissive of concerns raised by neighbouring residents of the negative health, environmental, economic and social impacts of such a large scale development in the middle of lifestyle properties and prime agricultural land. Proponents of the development, which include the member for Cook, have called the growing mountain of evidence into the health impacts of low-frequency noise pollution and infrasound unsubstantiated. This is despite the fact that infrasound and low-frequency noise pollution formed the basis of the 2011 Senate inquiry into wind farms and recommendations for greater controls of the wind industry and have also motivated other states such as Victoria to introduce a buffer zone for wind farms.

The member for Cook has been quoted as saying that 'these health claims have no evidential backing at all' and indicated that the developers should not have to accommodate 'unsubstantiated health claims'. The member for Cook also said that \$500 million will be injected back into the tablelands economy. However, this is rubbish, as significant contributions to this development come from federal government grants for clean energy which will not stay with the local economy but will be taken offshore by a large multinational company and all turbines will be shipped from overseas while taxpayers subsidise this development year in, year out.

The member for Cook needs to stand up for his electorate against his government's jobs cutting and the removal of the \$8 million in funding for the upgrade of the Mareeba Airport, which is vitally important for the sustainability of the region, rather than express opinions in my electorate while avoiding affected wind farm residents like the plague. The proponents of the wind farm brag that over 100 local jobs will be created for the community. However, apart from construction, the only long-term employment opportunities will be possibly five jobs required for the maintenance of these turbines while up to 600 farming jobs remain in jeopardy.

As part of its application, RATCH was required to include an aeronautical assessment of the impact of wind farm turbines. The report advised that low-flying operations such as aerial spreading and spraying operations will be affected on the downward side of the turbines over adjoining properties that are sited downwind from the turbines. The proprietor of Tableland Air Services, Mark McDonald, concluded from the report that he will have to risk flying in dangerous conditions to keep his business open. I table the report, titled *Mount Emerald Wind Farm aeronautical assessment for Transfield Services*, dated September 2011.

Tabled paper: Report by Rehbein Airport Consulting dated 26 September 2011, titled 'Mount Emerald Wind farm Aeronautical Assessment for Transfield Services (Australia) Pty Ltd' [\[953\]](#).

Considering that agricultural production within the reported zone makes up 60 per cent of Tableland Air Services customers who use aerial spraying and up to \$80 million in production from farming, which includes one of the largest banana farms in North Queensland, the potential economic impact far outweighs the real economic benefits of this wind farm. In June this year, the Tablelands Regional Council submitted an altered temporary planning instrument, requesting greater control over the development. This temporary planning instrument replaces the 2004 Mareeba shire TPI. It has been sitting on the desk of the

Deputy Premier and without a response for over two months. If there is no response by 8 October, residents will be given no protection from the adverse economic, social, health and environmental effects of this wind farm. Residents are not against clean energy. In fact, many tablelanders, not just affected residents, have asked why this development is going ahead over the Tully-Millstream hydro-electric power plant, which would produce eight times the amount of electricity, provide long-term real employment, revitalise the town of Ravenshoe and have limited environmental impacts when compared with the Mount Emerald wind farm.

The proponents attempt to distort the truth by claiming that there is no opposition to the project. I table 32 media documents issued over the past 14 months relating to this issue. One states, 'Walkamin wind farm protesters warned just to keep your distance.' Another says, 'Council to shut down turbines on Windy Hill because of problems.' Another says, 'Government funding of \$560 million going overseas.' Another says, 'Farmers furious about wind farm restrictions on spraying.' Another says, 'Tableland wind farm plan generates ire of farmers.' Another says, 'Opposition to wind farm debate whips up.' And another says, 'Atherton Tableland wind farm meeting blows hot.'

Tabled paper: Bundle of documents relating to wind farm objections and concerns [\[954\]](#).

I call on the minister to sign off on this temporary planning instrument and I also ask that the Tully-Millstream hydro-electric project be investigated as a viable alternative for clean energy on the tablelands.