

Wind Farms and Health 2014

Wind turbine technology is considered a comparatively inexpensive and effective means of energy production. Wind turbines generate sound, including infrasound, which is very low frequency noise that is generally inaudible to the human ear. Infrasound is ubiquitous in the environment, emanating from natural sources (e.g. wind, rivers) and from artificial sources including road traffic, ventilation systems, aircraft and other machinery. All modern wind turbines in Australia are designed to be upwind, with the blade in front of the tower. These upwind turbines generate much lower levels of infrasound and low frequency sound.

Infrasound levels in the vicinity of wind farms have been measured and compared to a number of urban and rural environments away from wind farms. The results of these measurements have shown that in rural residences both near to and far away from wind turbines, both indoor and outdoor infrasound levels are well below the perception threshold, and no greater than that experienced in other rural and urban environments.

AMA Position

- The available Australian and international evidence does not support the view that the infrasound or low frequency sound generated by wind farms, as they are currently regulated in Australia, causes adverse health effects on populations residing in their vicinity. The infrasound and low frequency sound generated by modern wind farms in Australia is well below the level where known health effects occur, and there is no accepted physiological mechanism where sub-audible infrasound could cause health effects.
- Individuals residing in the vicinity of wind farms who do experience adverse health or well-being, may do so as a consequence of their heightened anxiety or negative perceptions regarding wind farm developments in their area. Individuals who experience heightened anxiety or diminished health and well-being in the context of local wind farms should seek medical advice.
- The reporting of 'health scares' and misinformation regarding wind farm developments may contribute to heightened anxiety and community division, and over-rigorous regulation of these developments by state governments.
- The regulation of wind farm developments should be guided entirely by the evidence regarding their impacts and benefits. Such regulation should ensure that structured and extensive local community consultation and engagement is undertaken at the outset of planning, in order to minimise misinformation, anxiety and community division.
- Electricity generation by wind turbines does not involve production of greenhouse gases, other pollutant emissions or waste, all of which can have significant direct and indirect health effects.

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