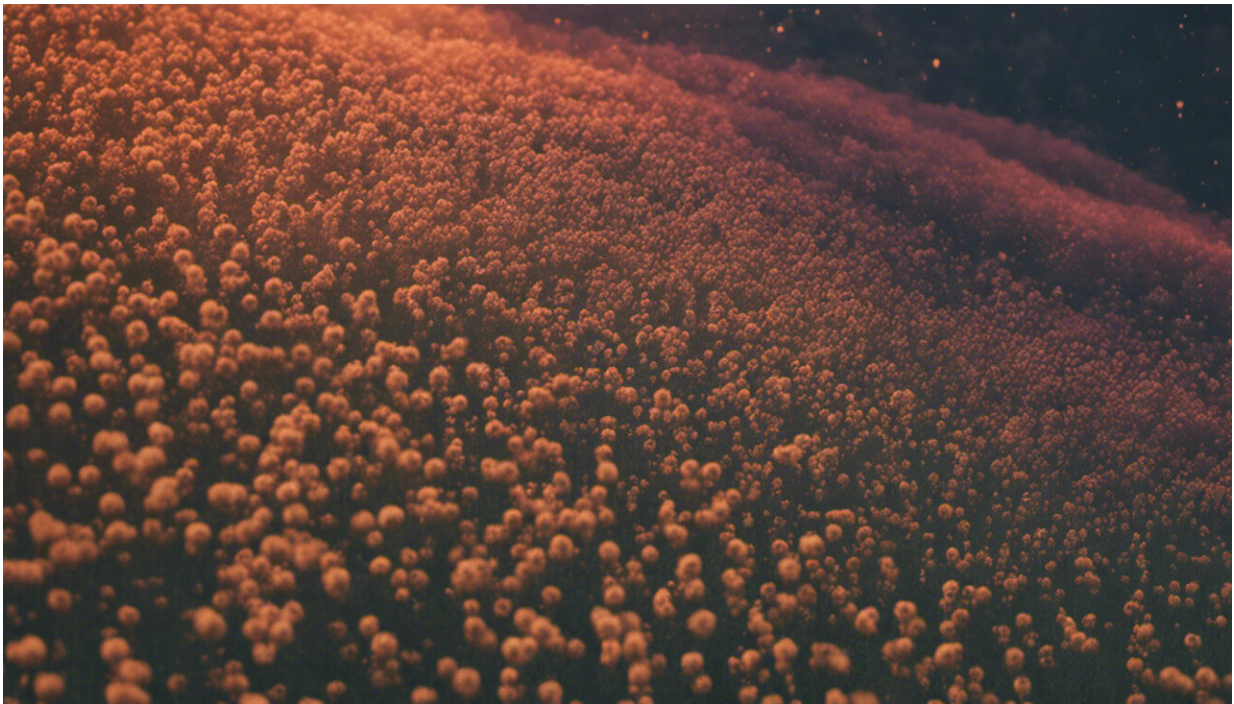


The stampede of wind farm complaints that never happened

April 7 2017, by Simon Chapman



Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

National Wind Farm Commissioner, Andrew Dyer, has just released his much anticipated [first annual report](#).

In its first year of operation until the end of 2016, the [National Wind Farm Commissioner](#) says his office received:

- 46 complaints relating to nine operating wind farms (there were 76 operational wind farms in Australia in 2015)
- 42 complaints relating to 19 proposed wind farms
- two complaints that did not specify a wind farm.

The commissioner's office closed 67 of these 90 complaints, with the remaining 23 complaints still in process.

Of the 67 now-closed complaints, the office closed 31 because the complainant did not progress their complaint. This suggests these complaints were minor.

The office closed the file on another 32 after it sent complainants more information about their complaints.

This leaves only four, which the [report](#) describes two as being settled after negotiations between the parties, and two given the ambiguous category of "other".

These figures are frankly astonishing.

The complaint investigating mechanism was set up after a Senate enquiry [report](#) that cost undisclosed millions to deal with a "massive" problem with wind turbines.

But the hordes of people who apparently needed a way to help them resolve matters have now gone shy.

Chair of the [Senate Committee on Wind Turbines](#) was ex-Senator John Madigan, a public critic of wind farms.

Other members who signed off on the senate inquiry report included Senator Nick Xenophon, another long-time critic.

Complaints vs complainants

The National Wind Farm Commissioner's first annual report avoids two key issues.

First, it doesn't mention how many complainants made the 90 complaints. The anti-wind farm "movement" in Australia is often busy plaguing politicians and the few supportive media outlets that give it time.

One woman from Victoria often sends out emails to well over 100 politicians and journalists. Others join her to try to demonise wind turbines. Those in this small group appear again and again as submission authors to what have now been three senate enquires and two state government enquiries.

This phenomenon is well known in government circles. In the last three months of 2016, [just 10 people](#) submitted half of Heathrow Airport's 25,000 noise complaints.

The second omission from the annual report is any mention of its budget or expenditure. The Office of the National Wind Farm Commissioner is independent and has its own [website](#). But unless I missed it, there are no budget or expenditure figures in either the annual report nor the website. Is this a first for an annual report?

We know that commissioner Andrew Dyer gets [A\\$205,000 a year](#) for his part-time role, on a three year contract. With the numbers we now have about the low number of complaints, this sounds like a tough gig. But what about the staff and office costs, which are nowhere to be found.

No complaints in Western Australia and Tasmania

As I reported in my [2013 peer reviewed report](#) into wind farm complaints, there were no records of complaints for Western Australia and Tasmania.

Of the total complaints about operational or planned wind farms, 40 came from Victoria, and 23 from each of South Australia and New South Wales. Just two complaints were received from Queensland about planned farms.

Our [study](#) found records of only 129 people who had ever complained about wind farms since the first one was built in Western Australia in the 1980s.

Three years later, after the door is left open for complaints, a mere 90 are received from an unknown number of individuals.

Wind turbines and sickness?

This is all very awkward for those who argue [wind turbines](#) cause illness. How is it that if wind farms are a direct cause of illness, that 67 wind farms around the country (88%) saw not one [complaint](#), about health or anything else across a whole year?

The stock answer given here by wind farm opponents is that wind farm illness is like sea sickness: only a few get it. So in the whole of two states, and across 88% of wind farms, there's apparently no-one with susceptibility to wind farm illness.

Former Prime Minister Tony Abbott, who described [wind farms](#) as ["ugly", "noisy" and "visually awful"](#), threw the senate committee a giant

political bone.

The committee, and the Office of the Wind Farm Commissioner, put up their "we're open" shingle and invited the alleged throngs of suffering rural residents to air their problems.

This annual report shows very few did, and the great majority of "complaints" dissolved by being sent information.

This sorry episode in appeasing the [wind farm](#) obsessions of a tiny number of cross-bench senators needs to have its time called, fast.

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