

Turbines a health risk, warns Foster doctor

RESPECTED South Gippsland doctor, David Iser, has issued a warning about the adverse affects of wind farms on the health of neighboring residents.

And he has called for further health studies to be carried out by the authorities.

Speaking at a South Gippsland Shire Council briefing session last week, Dr Iser said he was prompted to undertake a survey of 25 residents in the area around the Toora

wind farm after repeated calls for medical assistance from people living in the area.

He said the turbine facilities were affecting people's lives considerably, during discussions with the council last week.

"Some people have had their lives tipped upside down by this," said Dr Iser. "And I wondered if there were more (affected people) out there and discovered three more people needing assistance."

He recommended that there be a professional researcher engaged to design a survey, which would give a more detailed report.

"It is always hard in the initial stages to test these things when you have such small sample numbers. It was the same when testing for the impacts of asbestos first started," he said.

Dr Iser's comments were supported by a Toora

resident, Steve Garitto, who has been forced out of his home, with his family due to noise levels.

"For 92 per cent of the time at night, the turbine at L4 is exceeding its noise levels," said Mr Garitto.

"We have been out of our house for two years now, having tried to stay there for eight months."

He said he had received damage to his ears and rated the health impact of Toora's wind farm as "disturbing".

"If the Toora disaster isn't fixed up, there will be a lot more people affected at Bald Hills and at Dollar.

"It's not fair, it's not Australian and it's not right that this should be allowed to continue," said Mr Garitto.

"We have written to Rob Hulls (the new State Planning Minister) and hopefully we will be able to raise these issues with him when we meet him," said the shire mayor Cr Diane Casbolt.

Mr Garitto invited any councillor or government official who dared, to spend a night in his house and test his claims for themselves.

Earlier Dr Iser said that he had discussed his concerns with the council last year after treating a number of residents from around the Toora Wind Farm.

"So I went away and had a closer look at it. I

reviewed a number of studies done overseas and took a lead from a report done in the UK (Amanda Hay).

"I have not encountered what you would call serious illness such as cancer but there's no doubt about the fact that they do have

health affects," he said, noting that similar affects were recorded in the more comprehensive UK study.

Dr Iser said he had put out 25 surveys to residents within a 2km radius and received 20 replies.

Of the 20, 12 people said they had no problems but five in 20 registered "mild problems" such as sleep disturbance and a further three had "significant problems".

"I believe the results warrant a professional survey being undertaken by someone who is expert in the field," said Dr Iser.

Cr John McIndoe asked him for some guidance on where council should go from here.

"I would have to leave it to council to say if it wanted to spend any further money on this," Dr Iser replied.

"People are reporting health problems and in my opinion there should be some sort of compensation and some sort of help provided," he said.

"We are talking about eight people having health problems as a result of the

small Toora Wind Farm. There you have 12 turbines but it is proposed that there be 48 turbines at Dollar so you could have more than three times the number of health problems," said Cr Heather Bligh, noting that this would result in a noticeable drain on local medical resources.

Cr Bligh later suggested that with three to four people per household affected, there could be up to 100 people with health issues in the vicinity of the Toora Wind Farm.

"If you have a negative attitude to these facilities, it could also produce a health affect but this is still an issue," said Dr Iser.

The councillors were at something of a loss as to know where to go with the information until it was suggested by the CEO, Joseph Cullen, that the shire pursue funos from Vic Health or petition the Department of Human Services to undertake a study.

"If you could prove there is a problem, would this lead to the company having to turn off a turbine or a whole area.

"We are the responsible authority for Toora but the State Government will be the responsible authority if Bald Hills or Dollar goes ahead and they are going to have to face up to these responsibilities," said Mr Cullen.

"We have to look for more funding," said the mayor Cr Diane Casbolt.



Pictured is Foster doctor David Iser addressing the South Gippsland Shire Council last Wednesday, February 23 with some disturbing results from a medical survey he conducted at Toora.