

Waubra resident tells court of wind farm "hell"

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Former Waubra resident Trish Godfrey yesterday told an Adelaide court how her dream home became "hell on earth" after wind farm turbines were turned on.

Ms Godfrey said she suffered sleep deprivation, headaches and nausea before moving out in April 2010 when Acciona purchased her property.

"It was like you had a hat on that's too tight and you have a pain that just gets worse and worse, and you can't take it off," Ms Godfrey said. "There was pain most of the time."

Ms Godfrey broke down in tears as she gave evidence at the Environment Resources and Development Court.

Dairy farmer Richard Paltridge is appealing a decision to grant Acciona approval to build a 46-turbine wind farm near his property, south of Mt Gambier.

Ms Godfrey said her symptoms began about a month after turbines were turned on, then got progressively worse.

"I said to my husband I'm not sick but I don't feel well," she said.

"It felt like I had a cold coming on all the time.

"My sleep patterns were changing. I was waking up two, three, four times a night. I couldn't explain it. I couldn't get my head around what was going on.

"You put it down to everything but what it is."

Ms Godfrey said she and her husband Victor, a dental surgeon, went on holiday to Darwin and the symptoms stopped, then resumed when she returned home.

"You get back and it starts all over again," she said. "It all came back with gusto."

Under questioning by George Manos for Mr Paltridge, Ms Godfrey said the 10-acre property was her "dream" home, where she and her husband intended to retire.

She said she planted 750 to 1000 boundary trees, about 30 fruit trees and 17 vegetable beds in the 10 years they lived there.

Ms Godfrey said she had been led into a false sense of security in a meeting with David Shapiro of Wind Power, the company that set up the Waubra project and sold it to Acciona.

“He told us there would be a couple of turbines on Quoin Hill, a couple on Big Hill and a few behind us,” Ms Godfrey said.

“He said there would be no lights, no wires and no noise.”

Ms Godfrey said 63 turbines could be seen from her property and it became “hell” to live there.

She said the noise “pressed in” on their home. “It was anywhere from a low whooshing sound, a sweeping swoosh some days, and when the wind was coming from the north it was like a jumbo jet in the back paddock,” she said.

Former Waubra resident Carl Stepnell told the court yesterday he and his wife’s symptoms of chest pains, heart palpitations and sleep deprivation ceased after the couple moved away from the family farm to Ballarat in November.

“We feel as though we’ve got our health back,” Mr Stepnell said.

Mr Stepnell said his wife also suffered depression while living close to the turbines.

“Her whole appearance ... it was scary to see how bad she was,” he said. “She was really down, depressed ... shocking.”

Mr Stepnell said his five-year-old son attended Waubra Primary School until the family moved.

“I see a big difference in his behaviour,” he said.

“He is nowhere near as emotional ... he was pale. (Now) he’s like a normal five-year-old.”