

States reject wind farm code proposal

No comment because I am not sure whether this is for or against wind mills.

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State and territorial governments have rejected a proposal for a national code for wind farms claiming it would just add more red tape.

A meeting of environment ministers (EPHC) in Sydney voted against the federal government's call for a National Code for Wind Energy Installations.

"A national wind farm code would just be more red tape to hold up wind farms, to hold up the sort of clean, green energy that we need in Australia," Victorian Environment Minister John Thwaites said after the conference. "What we don't need is a whole lot of bureaucratic red tape imposed by the commonwealth which will strangle our wind farms and lead to a reduction in that clean, green energy."

He said the states were "absolutely comfortable" with communities voicing their opposition to wind farms. "We encourage communities to express their support or opposition to the particular proposal," Mr Thwaites said. He said there was an "independent system to consider and assess proposals" within the state system. "And that's the appropriate way to go," Mr Thwaites said.

Mr Thwaites said it was ironic the proposal's rejection coincided with the federal government's push for nuclear energy. "The lack of support for wind farms from the Howard government is coming at the same time that they seem to be supporting nuclear energy," he said. "We want to facilitate wind farms. We want to ensure the we can get clean green energy, not nuclear power plants, in states that don't want them."

Federal Environment Minister Ian Campbell denied the government was trying to block wind farms with red tape. "We are pro-wind energy, we are pro-renewable energy," he said. "The reality is that the Australian government has supported, through direct investment and through cross subsidies, a boost in Australia's wind turbine numbers from 20 up to 600." He said what the industry needed was a consistent approach to the planning and an approvals process for wind farms that involved local communities.

Senator Campbell said he would be convening a national round table with the wind energy industry, local governments and local communities to "progress work on a code".

The minister also accused the states of having an "ideological bent against nuclear". He said if Australia was going to address the world's energy security needs and greenhouse gas consequences, all forms of energy must be considered. But he said it was important a national nuclear inquiry be held before people jumped to conclusions.