

6 April 2006

Media release

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Bald Hills Hypocrisy

The Odd Dead Parrot More Important than Climate Catastrophe?

Environmental policy under Federal Environment Minister Ian Campbell has sunk to new levels of absurdity with the announcement that Senator Campbell has used federal environment laws to block the Bald Hills Wind Farm because of the threat to the orange-bellied parrot.

‘Minister Campbell has claimed he has knocked back the application for the Bald Hills Wind Farm on the basis of his concern for the orange-bellied parrot, but this is nothing more than a case of a politician pandering to a vocal minority at the cost of Australia’s economy and environment’, Executive Director of The Australia Institute, Clive Hamilton said.

‘Scientific studies on climate change, including one quoted as an authority by the Government, have identified the orange-bellied parrot as one of a potentially large number of native species that are at risk of extinction as a result of global warming.

‘If we are going to deal with climate change, however, there needs to be a rapid expansion of the wind energy sector.

‘It is ludicrous to suggest that we should stop wind farm developments on the grounds that they could potentially harm a very small number of orange-bellied parrots, when we know climate change could wipe out this and many other species within 50 years.

‘Research shows that bird deaths due to collisions with wind turbines are rare and steps can be taken to mitigate these risks. The Government’s own study says that stopping wind farms will have “extremely limited beneficial value to conservation of the parrot without addressing very much greater adverse effects that are currently operating against it”’, Dr Hamilton said.

‘The real threats to the orange-bellied parrot are habitat loss, predation by feral animals, competition from exotic birds and climate change, not the very occasional death that arises due to a collision with a wind turbine located at the edges of this species known range.

‘If Minister Campbell was concerned about biodiversity loss he would have taken steps to curtail the catastrophic levels of land clearing that have occurred since the Howard Government came to power. Over the last decade, around four million hectares of native vegetation has been cleared in Queensland alone and the Federal Government has not lifted a finger to stop it.

‘This is only the third time in the six years since the EPBC Act commenced that it has been used to block a development proposal. Around 55 wind farm referrals have been made to the Federal Environment Minister, including seven in Tasmania, 21 in South Australia and 16 in Victoria. All of these, with the exception of Bald Hills, have been approved.

‘The only difference in this case was that the Minister saw more votes in knocking it back than approving it’, Dr Hamilton said.