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Minister says wind farms just hot air

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Peter McGauran speaks with dairy farmers and industry representatives at Cheeseworld in Allansford yesterday. □

Picture: GLEN WATSON

WIND farms are a "complete fraud" that "only exist on taxpayer subsidies", Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries Peter McGauran told dairy farmers at Allansford yesterday.

The minister spent the day travelling the south-west talking to farmers about issues including blue gum plantations and supermarket price-fixing.

Mr McGauran's comments on wind farms revealed a difference of opinion between himself and fellow Coalition MP, member for Wannon David Hawker, who hosted the minister's visit to the region.

Mr Hawker said he had been supportive of the many wind farm projects that had been proposed for the south-west.

``It's bringing jobs and investment to the district," he said.

Mr McGauran said he was speaking as member for Gippsland, another wind farm hot spot, where he said most locals had come to hate wind projects.

``They devalue the land and to see hardworking individuals have their properties devalued so considerably is immoral," he said.

Mr McGauran said the wind farm industry was driven only by tax subsidies and not by efficiency.

``They generate next to no electricity, for heaven's sake, when the wind is not blowing," he said.

``It can't be stored and their contribution to the electricity grid is so small that it is hard to even measure."

Mr McGauran said wind farms would have minimal environmental benefits.

``The wind farms will diminish greenhouse gas emissions by so small an amount I doubt you could calculate it.

``They are simply an excuse for some entrepreneurs to make money at the expense of taxpayers and adjoining landholders." He said only wind farms on sites that didn't affect adjoining landholders were acceptable.

Roger Learmonth, president of the Hawkesdale Macarthur Landscape Guardians, is opposed to a proposed 183-turbine Macarthur Wind Farm project to which he is a neighbour.

Mr Learmonth said he was ``pleasantly surprised" to hear Mr McGauran was also against wind farms and hoped he would actually do something about the issue.

``It's easy to say that but can he follow through?" he said.

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