Locals' wind farm fears 'cast aside'

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The Turitea wind farm submissions process has been slammed for casting aside concerns of locals instead relying on specialist witnesses unaffected by the proposed turbines.

Huatau Marae's legal counsel Wayne Johnson told the board of inquiry considering Mighty River Power's proposed wind farm yesterday at FMG Stadium that concerned Turitea residents have been left to their own devices.

"Submitters are marginalised in the process because they are not experts."

Experts giving evidence often talk past locals, he said.

"To add insult to injury, some experts do not reside in New Zealand, let alone have an appreciation of local issues.

"People are an important part of this process."

There had to be empathy for locals who do not have the resources to oppose applications like this some of whom were unable to participate fully in the process due to work commitments, Mr Johnson said.

"The process has taken its toll on many." Kahuterawa resident John Adams, who appeared alongside Mr Johnson, echoed his concerns.
The Adams family property is situated between the proposed Turitea wind farm and the recently rejected Motorimu wind farm.

He told the board many witnesses submitting on behalf of Mighty River Power used "unacceptable" language.

Witnesses saying there would only be a small amount of construction traffic on Kahuterawa road and calling the road a low-speed environment, were examples of the inaccurate language being used, he said.

"I could describe myself as more than short," the six-foot-four-inches tall Mr Adams said.

Expert witnesses speaking about the effects of unreasonable noise were not qualified to put forward evidence based on human perception, he said.

Mr Adams said there were 34 turbines in Mighty River Power's proposal he hoped would not be built.

Should those 34 turbines get struck from the proposal, the Adams family would not seek further mitigation measures, he said. Speaking after the hearing, Mr Adams said he supported renewable energy and an amended proposal from Mighty River Power would be a "happy compromise".

"The way [Mighty River Power has] has gone about it was ruthless."

Mr Adams said his family had been told by Mighty River Power it was the landowner most affected by the Turitea proposal.

Rangitane descendant Peter Te Rangi said he was concerned Mighty River Power had considered a Maori perspective on the issue too narrowly.

While Mighty River Power had signed a memorandum of understanding with Rangitane, it had not given the same attention to other iwi.

Tribes such as Ngati Apa also had a deep association with the Turitea range, he said.

The hearing continues.

COMMUNITY 'POLARISED'
Mighty River Power's wind farm proposal has "polarised" a once tight-knit community, says a Kahuterawa Valley resident.

Rosemary Adams told the board of inquiry the wind farm proposal had pitted locals who supported the wind farm against those who opposed it.
Mrs Adams, whose husband John also spoke, said she was recently working outside on her farm when an unknown man drove on to her property and abused her.

"I was home alone and felt very vulnerable." The man turned out to be someone who had recently moved into the area and was set to receive a "substantial payment" from Mighty River Power should the wind farm go ahead, she said.

"Neighbours keep to themselves in a way that was not part of this community prior to this proposal."