

BERYL SOLAR FARM PROPOSAL

POINTS TO BE RAISED - General

- Firstly, we are not opposed to solar energy production.
- What we are opposed to is the positioning of the Beryl Solar Farm located within a unique rural-urban environment. We feel this proposal is occurring at the wrong place at the wrong time.

POINTS TO BE RAISED – Specific to the proposal

In the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Beryl Solar Farm, the Executive Summary concludes with:

Impacts are considered justifiable and acceptable.

The EIS mentions the higher risk issues of: biodiversity, aboriginal heritage, visual amenity and noise. Ten other lower risk issues, such as, water use and water quality, magnetic fields and bush fire risk were mentioned.

We believe these impacts are NON justifiable and NOT acceptable to our community because:

- There is a lack of detail about the future impacts of **noise**. The community cannot access information about noise levels from the developer
- Where and when will noise levels be measured when in operation
- What distance will the noise travel in various atmospheric conditions (windy days) and during different times of the day.
- How many noise measuring sites will be on the solar farm. Where would they be located to monitor noise levels?

- What will be the impact of the noise generated by the solar farm on **surrounding properties** and the **township** of Gulgong.?
- The geographic nature of the surrounding land creates a funnelling effect of noise, directing it towards the township of Gulgong.
- There is no details about the impact of noise on farm livestock. Many of the immediate small farming concerns have horses.
- The impact of noise during summer months will be unacceptable. It is proposed that "the solar farm may in summer operate after 6 p.m. and before 7 a.m. In the case that the panels installed are on tracker units, the solar farm would potentially operate outside standard working hours during summer months". Is this acceptable to residents also on Saturday and Sundays?
- **Vegetation screening** could not be achieved in the foreseeable future as the variable rainfall of the region would have an impact on tree growth. It has taken 30 years for trees to grow to their present height on the Gulgong Golf Course. (Located on edge of township).
- **Fencing** of the solar farm precludes access to firefighting appliances and personnel thereby enhancing the **strength** of bush fires.
- What will be the impact of increased **run-off** caused by the large number of photovoltaic modules on local water systems?
- Run-off is predicted to occur in the E.I S. "Jute mesh will be used to cover bare areas that develop".
- **Fencing** of the solar farm precludes access to firefighting appliances and personnel thereby enhancing the **strength** of bush fires.
- There are too many variables in relation to **bush fires**. The developer classifies bush fires as low risk. The weather conditions prevailing in this area causes great concerns for the people of Gulgong and surrounds. In past years bushfires have threatened the township of Gulgong. During one such episode the local hospital was evacuated when a fire threatened the town originating from a westerly direction.

- The **visual impact** of the solar farm would also be a deterrent to future property buyers in the area. The development of the 2.3 metre Security Perimeter fence coupled with the 20 plus container sized buildings, height (2.6 – 2.9 metres) would reduce the visual amenity of the locale.
- The E.I.S. does not truly address the issue of visual impacts of the proposal. The E.I.S. states "attitudes are greatly divided about the visual impact of large scale solar farms: 30% agree and 26% disagree that large scale **wind** farms have a negative impact" (page 148).
- There is no mention of the **lifespan of the solar farm**. At one stage there is mention of long term production of renewable energy and then the decommissioning of the solar farm after 30 years.
- For the community, how long would the 150 construction workers be working on the project and how many full time jobs will be created after construction has been completed. (Construction phase 3 months estimate)
- This facility will not only have an impact on the townsfolk of Gulgong it will seriously affect the **lifestyles** of the people in the immediate location who have decided to live in a peaceful semi-rural environment. The intrinsic value of the area for them would be lost.
- Economic benefits to township? Clearly the site has been selected by this company because of the close location of the electricity sub-station and power lines. The whole project's viability swings on the fact that this infrastructure is available to them, thus reducing the cost of establishment. In the Executive Summary it is stated "the site directly connects the existing TransGrid Beryl Substation, a robust connection point for the injection of electricity to the national Electricity Market, (NEM)"
- What savings is the company making by not having to build a sub-station to transfer power generated into the State's Grid?
- We are concerned about the **future growth** of Gulgong. The town has seen continual growth over the past two decades. Development to the west of the town would be limited because of this development. Land prices in the vicinity of the proposed solar farm have already fallen.
- A major concern is the impact of noise travelling to the Gulgong Show Ground. This location has become a very popular stop over point for tourists. Approximately 10 – 20 caravan/mobile homes use this site nightly. People generally stay for one or two nights. Noise from the Solar Farm would

seriously impact on any future growth of this community facility. Income from the tourists has enabled the Show Society to up-grade many facilities at the site.

- E I S does not take into account the impact of the Solar Farm on the thriving tourist industry in Gulgong. Noise and sight pollution will have an impact on the character of the town, a major drawcard for many tourists
- The company mentions community consultation results. No one in the vicinity of this proposal was consulted when "ground proofing" for the Solar Farm was developed.
- We are concerned about the amount of "desk top level" data. Has there really been onsite detailed assessments done. In many cases reference to *Destination NSW* does not give a true indication of the character of Gulgong.
- So, in conclusion the company is going to **use our** infrastructure to **create impacts on us.**