

Independent Planning Commission
Culcairn Solar Farm
SSD 10288
Written Submission
By Karen Ashford-Schoff

This is my written submission for the Culcairn Solar Farm SSD 10288. I am aware of my legal rights and responsibilities and as such I do not authorise any redactions to my submission. I believe that all parties mentioned in this document are aware of their legal rights and responsibilities and can take appropriate action if necessary.

Red is the information provided in the DPIE Assessment Report for SSD 10288

Black is my own personal submission

Culcairn Solar Farm

State Significant Development Assessment

SSD 10288

January 2021



Overall, the Department considers the site to be appropriate for a solar farm as it has good solar resources and available capacity on the existing electricity network and is consistent with the Department's Large-Scale Solar Energy Guideline.

The project is also consistent with NSW's Climate Change Policy Framework and Net Zero Plan Stage 1: 2020 - 2030, as it would contribute 350 MW of renewable energy to the National Electricity Market.

The project would also provide flow-on benefits to the local community, including up to 500 construction jobs, 10 ongoing operational jobs, a capital investment of \$636 million, and up to \$5 million in contributions to Council for community enhancement projects.

On balance, the Department considers that the Project is in the public interest, and is approvable, subject to strict conditions.

I have read and support the Assessment Report written by the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) in relation the Culcairn Solar Farm (CSF) SSD 10288 being assessed by the Independent Planning Commission (IPC).

3.3 Permissibility 3.3.1 The site is located wholly within land zoned RU1 - Primary Production under the Greater Hume LEP, the provisions of which are discussed in section 5.1. The RU1 zone includes various land uses that are both permitted with and without consent. As electricity generating works are not expressly listed as permitted with or without consent, it is a prohibited land use under a strict reading of the LEP. However, the LEP expressly references the State Environmental Planning Policy (Infrastructure) 2007 (Infrastructure SEPP) and acknowledges that electricity generating works are regulated by the Infrastructure SEPP, rather than the LEP. (pg. 7)

Greater Hume Shire LEP 2012

Zone RU1 Primary Production

1 Objectives of zone

- To encourage sustainable primary industry production by maintaining and enhancing the natural resource base.
- To encourage diversity in primary industry enterprises and systems appropriate for the area.
- To minimise the fragmentation and alienation of resource lands.
- To minimise conflict between land uses within this zone and land uses within adjoining zones.
- To maintain the rural landscape character of the land.

2 Permitted without consent

Environmental protection works; Extensive agriculture; Farm buildings; Forestry; Home occupations; Intensive plant agriculture; Roads

3 Permitted with consent

Air transport facilities; Airstrips; Animal boarding or training establishments; Aquaculture; Bed and breakfast accommodation; Boat building and repair facilities; Boat launching ramps; Boat sheds; Camping grounds; Caravan parks; Cellar door premises; Cemeteries; Charter and tourism boating facilities; Correctional centres; Crematoria; Depots; Dual occupancies; Dwelling houses; Environmental facilities; Extractive industries; Farm stay accommodation; Flood mitigation works; Freight transport facilities; Function centres; Heavy industrial storage establishments; Helipads; Highway service centres; Home-based child care; Home businesses; Home occupations (sex services); Hotel or motel accommodation; Industrial training facilities; Industries; Information and education facilities; Intensive livestock agriculture; Jetties; Marinas; Mooring pens; Moorings; Open cut mining; Passenger transport facilities; Recreation areas; Recreation facilities (major); Recreation facilities (outdoor); Roadside stalls; Rural industries; Rural workers' dwellings; Signage; Truck depots; Veterinary hospitals; Water recreation structures; Water supply systems; Wharf or boating facilities

4 Prohibited

Any development not specified in item 2 or 3

https://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/epi-2012-0522#pt-cg1.Zone_RU1GreaterHumeLEP

I agree with the assessment made by the DPIE that the Greater Hume Shire (GHS) Local Environment Plan (LEP) objective for RU1 objectives of zone • To encouraging diversity in primary industry enterprises and systems appropriate for the area; and • To minimising fragmentation and alienation of resource lands.

I note that the GHS LEP, RU1, Permitted with Consent; contains enterprises not consistent with Council's rhetoric of RU1 land can only be used for agricultural purposes in relation to the Culcairn Solar Farm project. I believe Council has acted in a misleading manner with repeatedly advising that you can only have agriculturally based enterprises on RU1 land.

I have highlighted a few enterprises that are permitted with consent. I find the variety interesting.

NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE

4.5.9 The Rural Fire Service (RFS) and Fire & Rescue NSW (FRNSW) recommended that a comprehensive Fire Safety Study (FSS) for the BESS component should be prepared. The Department has adopted this into the recommended conditions of consent where appropriate. (pg. 12)

5.3.1 Hazards • Ensure that the development complies with the relevant asset protection requirements in the RFS's Planning for Bushfire Protection 2019 and Standards for Asset Protection Zones. • Prepare a Fire Safety Study and an Emergency Plan in consultation with RFS and Fire and Rescue NSW. • Store and handle all liquid chemicals, fuels and oils used on-site in accordance with all relevant Australian Standards and the EPA's Storing and Handling of Liquids: Environmental (pg.31)

I do agree and support the DPIE comments and recommendations in 5.3.1. and I believe that the recommendations from the DPIE regarding FRNSW's recommendations and the workshop notes from the Applicant show a greater understanding of the Hazards and Risks associated with the Solar Farm. I would ask the IPC to dismiss all comments or requests from the GHS or Culcairn South West Rural Fire Brigade (CSWRFB) as inconsequential.

To highlight my comment: -

In the GHS's written objection on the 12th of February 2020 The GHS Director of Environment & Planning (DofEP) wrote "4. **Concerns in Relation to the Bushfire Risk Posed by the Development** Local residents have raised concerns to Council about the bushfire risk posed by large scale solar farms such as the proposed development. Whilst the EIS does review the risks posed by bushfire and other sources of fire, it does not do so in the context of **responding to comments provided by the NSW Rural Fire Service** as part of the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARS).... Colin Kane Director Environment & Planning GREATER HUME COUNCIL 12 February 2020" <https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=SSD-10288%2120201002T012032.894%20GMT>

Nowhere in the SEARS or the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) - CSF can I find any comments provided by RFS. Where is the DofEP getting his information from to justify his recommendation for Council? How can GHS Councillors make an independent and impartial decision when misinformation is presented to them?

I believe that the first responders responsible for Solar Farms within NSW is FRNSW with additional support if requested from RFS.

I believe that this is clearly shown within the DPIE portal for the CSF by: -

1. The documentation in the EIS CSF pg. 78 identifying FRNSW as first responders.
2. "A response from NSWRFSS during the SEARs was **NOT** received" – RTS CSF pg. 87
3. NSWRFSS **DID NOT** make a EIS or Response to Submissions (RTS) submission.
4. FRNSW **DID** make a EIS and a RTS submission. Part of FRNSW EIS Submission and reiterated in their RTS response states that: -

*"FRNSW reaffirm comments and recommendations previously submitted in preparation of the SEARs and maintain that they remain relevant in **addressing fire and life** safety considerations for the proposed development. Furthermore, it is recommended that should Development Consent be granted, a Condition of Consent be included that would require the Applicant to prepare a comprehensive fire safety study (FSS) for the Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) component of the development. The FSS should be developed in accordance with the requirements of Hazardous Industry Planning Advisory Paper No.2 (HIPAP No.2), and in consultation with and to the satisfaction of FRNSW."*

<https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=SSD-10288%2120201002T012033.212%20GMT>

Fire and Rescue (FR) NSW

Issue summary	Addressed in this EIS
<p>In the event of a fire or hazardous material incident, it is important that first responders have ready access to information which enables effective hazard control measures to be quickly implemented. Without limiting the scope of the emergency response plan (ERP), the following matter are recommended to be addressed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That a comprehensive ERP is developed for the site. 2. That the ERP specifically addresses foreseeable on-site and off-site fire events and other emergency incidents (such as fires involving solar panel arrays, battery energy storage systems, bushfires in the immediate vicinity) or potential hazmat incidents. 3. That the ERP detail the appropriate risk control measures that would need to be implemented to safely mitigate potential risk to the health and safety of firefighters and other first responders (including electrical hazards). Such measures will include the level of personal protective clothing required to be worn, the minimum level of respiratory protection required, decontamination procedures to be instigated, minimum evacuation zone distances and a safe method for shutting down and isolating the photovoltaic system (either in its entirety or partially, as determined by risk assessment). 4. Other risk control measures that may need to be implemented in a fire emergency (due to any unique hazards specific to the site) should also be included in the ERP. 5. That two copies of the ERP (detailed in recommendation 1 above) be stored in a prominent 'Emergency Information Cabinet' located in a position directly adjacent to the site's main entry point/s. 6. Once constructed and prior to operation, that the operator of the facility contacts the relevant local emergency management committee (LEMC). The ELMC is a committee established by Section 28 of the <i>State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989</i>. LEMCs are required to be established so that emergency services organisations and other government and non-government agencies can proactively develop comprehensive inter-agency local emergency procedures for significant hazardous sites within their local government area. The contact details of members of the LEMC can be obtained from the relevant local council. 7. As a Condition of Consent that a Fire Safety Study (FSS) be prepared for the BESS part of the site and submitted to FRNSW for review and determination. The FSS should be developed in consultation with and to the satisfaction of FRNSW. 	<p>Section 7.4.2</p>

Because of comments concerning fire risk management were made during the submission process the Applicant, Neoen organized a workshop for FRNSW and NSWRF in March 2020. The only attendee from the RFS was the CSF host landowner (Speaker 20 – IPC Culcairn Public Meeting). I believe that Speaker 20 comments highlighted in detail events of the Workshop. Minutes of the meeting can be found on the DPIE planning portal on pgs. 48- 53 of the Appendix to RTS – Community Consultation.

MEETING MINUTES
Neoen and Fire Services Workshop – Numurkah Solar Farm

Meeting Title:	Site Inspection – Interstate fire agency workshop	Date:	17 March 2020
Location:	Numurkah Solar Farm	Time:	10:00am AEST
Facilitator:	Patrick Dale – Neoen (PD)		
Attendees:	Paul O'Brien (POB): Site Manager - Downer Frank Finlay (FF): Duty Commander RS3 – Fire and Rescue NSW Barry Fisher (BF): Captain Culcairn Fire Station – Fire and Rescue NSW Paul Horton (PH): Commander - Country Fire Authority Bill Pawels (BP): Captain, Goorambat – Country Fire Authority Matt Hicks (MH): Councillor, Greater Hume Council; Rural Fire Service Volunteer and Culcairn SF host landowner	Apologies:	Andrew Gray (AG) – District Coordinator – Rural Fire Service (RFS)

“The Proponent invited local member of the NSWRF and FRNSW to visit an operation solar farm in Numurkah, Victoria. **Any concern for accessing the site during a fire event was resolved**, with agreement that a containment strategy with the Site Manager would be planned prior to entering the site. These details will form part of and be included in the final FMERP and FSS.”

<https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=RFI-10583808%2120201117T041113.901%20GMT>

I was informed that CSWRFB members were invited to the Neoen and Fire Services Workshop – Numurkah Solar Farm and that the CSWRFB did not acknowledge the invitation nor send an apology. An unsigned email from Feuerherdt Pastoral Company (R24) sent to the Councillors in relation to Council’s RTS – Matter of Urgency, June 2020 states “An invitation to attend a workshop was extended by the RFS the night before the workshop was to occur.” This statement I believe shows that an invitation was made to the brigade appropriately through the correct channel and the timing of the invitation was not the fault of the Applicant. Why the unknown author from Feuerherdt Pastoral Company (R24) shared this information to the GHS and not the CSWRFB is particularly questionable in motive. [Information obtained via GHS GIPA request.](#)

The lack of engagement from the CSWRFB local volunteers to professionally work with the Applicant to address legitimate concerns indicates to me a level of dis-interest. I personally would have thought that any workshop where visual assessments of potential hazards and risks, ability to increase knowledge of potential hazards and risks and the opportunity to share and raise concerns with a local Fire Captain, Brigade and Supervisors on site of an operational solar farm would have been invaluable. The actions of the CSWRFB make me question, are their “concerns” authentic?

CSWRFB and some members have stating in their DPIE submission and subsequent IPC Public Meeting that “members of the Culcairn South West RFS have decided that they will not enter either site to combat fire due to the unacceptable risk to the health and safety of members. In the event of a fire within these sites, a position will be held on the outside perimeter of the site and the fire will not be engaged until it leaves the site.”

<https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/submission/693671>

The CSWRFB Captain (**R24**) also made public comments mentioning his inability and limited skill set to handle a development like this. I personally am mystified that a RFS Brigade who has said they will not enter a solar farm are now concerned with not having the skills to evaluate and deal with electrocution, entrapment etc. As the narrative keeps changing, it leads me to wonder if some individuals are trying to use their Rural Fire Service positions to assist them in their personal agenda?

An unsigned submission during the EIS does indicate that RFS members are aware of who the first responders are because the author writes "RFS members are not HAZMAT trained or equipped and therefore will not enter. and this has been discussed with the District Manager of the Albury Local Fire Command. HAZMAT responders are NSW Fire and Rescue in Culcairn, Henty and Holbrook".

<https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=EXH-2683%2120200303T022053.537%20GMT>

I also like to mention that I do not understand how the DoFEP and some GHS Councillors has not shown a level of competency or knowledge in their position to articulate or reiterate information contained in the GHS Local Disaster Plan (**DISPLAN**) during numerous reports, submissions, and public meetings in relations to all the Solar Farms within the Greater Hume Shire. The DISPLAN clearly shows who are the related first responders for each risk and what relevant planning or authority is needed within the GHS. The DISPLAN, the CSF SEARs, the EIS, and RTS all indicated deferment to FRNSW as the first responders to an instalment like the CSF.

<https://www.greaterhume.nsw.gov.au/files/sharedassets/public/polices-and-documents-page/documents/local-disater-plan-displan-march-2012-8-aug-2013.pdf>



Regarding comments made by speakers at the IPC – CSF Public Meeting. I have enclosed some general information on the fire, if the IPC required more detailed information, information can be provided with consent of the RFS, via the landowner's RFS GIPA application.

On the 10th of December 2020, a **grass fire** which ignition cause is **undetermined**, started in the road reserve on Wattlevale Rd, Walla Walla, travelled north into standing wheat crop, then turned south encompassing a hayshed, then east towards Back Creek touching the western boundary of the CSF development footprint. The fire was called in at about 1.20pm and the Southern Border Rural Fire Service Volunteers didn't leave until early Friday morning around 2.00am after the massive mop up of the hayshed and hay on neighbouring property (**R19**).

The Southern Border Rural Fire Service Volunteers who attended did a wonderful professional job of handling and containing the fire. After the fire in the hay had been contained to a satisfactory level, the Controlling Officer handed over controlling jurisdiction to the Walla Walla Rural Fire Brigade. The fire burnt 10 ha of land. There was no loss of life, human or livestock, no damage to houses or vehicles.

The very next morning I observed the CSWRFB Captain (**R24**), tried to procure the services of the GHS through a GHS staff member without the correct RFS authorisation for "potential" fire mitigation work within the CSF project area on the unnamed road.

The CSWRFB Captain (**R24**) was an objector to the unnamed road closure and purchase application currently before council. The CSWRFB Captain's (**R24**) actions are concerning because it indicates his disregard for the policy and procedure of both the RFS and the GHS. What was his motives?

The CSWRFB Secretary (**R34**) called a general meeting without the proper procedural protocol. At that general meeting it was determined that an email was to be sent to the GHS Staff and Councillors on the 14th of December 2020. The Secretary wrote on behalf of the CSWRFB asking that the Councillors not approve the closure and purchase of the unused road in question because it's needed as a fire access road, due to a recent fire!

Proposed Road Closure Culcairn

From : Steve Campbell [REDACTED]

To : Doug Meyer 'DMeyer@greaterhume.nsw.gov.au'; MailMailbox 'mail@greaterhume.nsw.gov.au'; Steven Pinnuck 'SPinnuck@greaterhume.nsw.gov.au'; Heather Wilton 'HWilton@greaterhume.nsw.gov.au'; Matt Hicks 'MHicks@greaterhume.nsw.gov.au'; Jenny O'Neill 'JO'Neill@greaterhume.nsw.gov.au'; Lea Parker 'LParker@greaterhume.nsw.gov.au'; Tony Quinn 'TQuinn@greaterhume.nsw.gov.au'; Annette Schilg 'ASchilg@greaterhume.nsw.gov.au'; Terry Weston 'TWeston@greaterhume.nsw.gov.au';

Sent : 14 December 2020 11:00:17

Dear Greater Hume Shire and Councillors,

Re: Proposal to close a Council Public Road – The section of unused road separating Lot 53 DP 753735 from Lot 1 DP 171815, Lot B DP 972054, Lot 73 DP 753764, Culcairn

I am writing to you today as the Secretary of the Culcairn South West Rural Fire Service. The proposed road closure is within the area that the Culcairn South West RFS are responsible for.

On the 13th December 2020, a General Meeting of the Culcairn South West RFS was held and a motion was passed to contact the Greater Hume Shire Council and protest the closure of this road. It is noted that this section of road has been endorsed as 'unused road' and is in essence a laneway that divides a number of rural properties. This roadway is used for the movement of stock and machinery between properties without the need to impact upon main roads, thereby eliminating risk to other motorists of slow moving stock and machinery.

On the 10th December 2020, a fire started at the eastern end of Hoffman Road near to the entry to the rural property 'Wattlevale'. The fire originated near the Hay Shed upon 'Wattlevale', spreading into the wheat crop on 'Frogmore', crossing Back Creek and moving in a generally easterly direction towards the section of road proposed to be closed. Back Creek is a natural obstacle for vehicles attempting to access and extinguish the fire on the eastern side of Back Creek. This area is moderately forested and should a tree have fallen over the rudimentary creek crossing, access would have been greatly restricted. Furthermore, had there been more water within the creek, access may have been further restricted.

On this occasion, NSW RFS vehicles were able to access the eastern side of Back Creek and extinguish the fire by travelling along the road that the Council are proposing the closure of. The closure of this section of road will, in the future, greatly impede the movement of NSW RFS vehicles and increase response times in the event of a fire impacting this area or other rural properties that border the road.

This section of unused road incurs little to no expenditure by the Council in terms of maintenance, however was invaluable on the 10th December 2020 in allowing the rapid deployment of fire trucks to an emergency situation.

With Thanks
Steve CAMPBELL
Secretary
Culcairn South West Rural Fire Service
13th December 2020

During the GHSC ordinary meeting on the 16th of December 2020 when the Mayor asked if any Councillors has any questions of queries about the minutes from the November Council Minutes. **CR. TERRY WESTERN** said "Yes Madam Mayor, I would like to bring up 5737, The closure and sale of unused road. Is it the appropriate time to say that the email we have seen from Steve Campbell has a lot of appropriate things in them and mainly the use of that road, or that unsured road for fire vehicles to travel through and if there is a solar project placed in that vicinity I think, we need every road available that there is, and we shouldn't allow this road to be closed!"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9siKqL4jeJA> Time 14.25 – 15.43 / 46.04

On the NSW RFS website under Fire Trails, it clearly identified who is responsible and that correlates with the Greater Hume Shore Local Disaster Plan (DAPLAN), relevant information: -

- **Establishing local needs** - Local **Bush Fire Management Committees** will be responsible for identifying the needs for the fire trail network in their area. Working with firefighters, land managers and other agencies, a local Fire Access and Fire Trail (FAFT) plan will be developed. This will identify the location of the strategic network of access routes and fire trails.

- **Fire trails on private land** - In some areas, the local Bush Fire Management Committee may identify the need for a fire trail on private property. If the fire trail is identified on private land the NSW RFS will seek to enter into an agreement with the landholder to establish the fire trail.
- **How volunteers will be involved** - The Bush Fire Management Committee, through its normal operating procedures will engage with local volunteers. Workshops will be held in each area involving local volunteers, land managers and other agencies. <https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/plan-and-prepare/fire-trails>

I believe that the CSWRFB would indeed know or have access to information pertaining to the brigade's level of authorisation to request that a road should **not** be closed and purchased by a ratepayer of the Greater Hume Shire due to fire concerns!

I believe that the actions of members of the CSWRFB are highly questionable, and once again I believe that the objecting neighbours are using all avenues available to then to hinder this projects success. I request that all comments and requests from the CSWRFB regarding the CSF be dismissed.

NSW CROWN LANDS

4.5.10 The Department's Crown Land Group (DPIE Crown Lands) required closure and purchase of a Crown public road within the site (i.e. Schoffs Lane), in the event that it is required for access to the project area. In its response, Neoen confirmed that the Crown Road is currently in the process of being purchased by one of the landowners. DPIE Crown Lands confirmed it has no further comments.

The Landowner concerned has put in two applications. One with Crown Land for Schoffs Lane and one with the Greater Hume Shire for the unnamed road reserve.

The Crown Land Schoff Lane closure and purchase: - Offer of Sale of Land has been offered by Crown Land and agreement signed by the landowner on the 9th of November 2020. Tax Invoice was issued and amount owing was paid on the 10th of December 2020 by the landowner. The Plan is currently being prepared and 88B Instrument for TransGrid.

The Greater Hume Shire Unnamed Road closure and purchase: - The required closure and purchase of application lodged with GHS for the unnamed road reserve has not occurred due to two written objections from neighbours (**R24 & R33**) within the submission period. Both objecting neighbours' families are also Greater Hume Shire Staff members and both objections stated **fire risk** concerns! Please see NSW Rural Fire Service for addition comment. One written objection from **R34** on behalf of the CSWRFB was submitted outside the submission period. Interesting to note that every objection mentioned fire before and after the grass fire with an **unknown** ignition source. The objections extended the application process by a further 2 months.

https://www.greaterhume.nsw.gov.au/files/sharedassets/public/council-meetings/minutes-and-agendas/2021/17feb21_annexures7to14.pdf

Council added the unnamed road closure application **recommending closure and purchase** to the February 2021 Council Meeting. Majority of Councillor voted against the motion. All objections cited fire risk concerns!

Long and protracted history to get to this point 7th November 2020, the GHS placed the public notice to close and sell Schedule 2 in The Border Mail Classifieds (pg. 85) Subsequent notice was place on the GHS website and Facebook page. All affected landowners were notified in writing, Submission clearly shows that the close was 5pm **Monday the 7th of December 2020.**

<https://digital-print-edition.austcommunitymedia.com.au/BMM/2020/11/07/3dissue/index.html>

Two month later

Public Notices



Greater Hume Council
greaterhume.nsw.gov.au

Proposed Road Closings under Section 38B Roads Act 1993

In pursuance of the provisions of the Roads Act 1993, notice is hereby given that Greater Hume Council proposes to close the Council public roads listed in Schedule 1 and 2 below.

Schedule 1: The section of unused road separating Lot 301 DP 806527 and Lot 90 DP 753342 from Lots 140 & 141 DP 753342, Jindara.

Schedule 2: The section of unused road separating Lot 53 DP 753735 from Lot 1 DP 171815, Lot B DP 972054, Lot 73 DP 753764, Cudjoe.

Upon closure of the roads, Council intends to sell the land to adjoining land owners.

All interested persons are hereby invited to make submissions concerning the proposals to the General Manager, Greater Hume Council, PO Box 99, Hillbrook, NSW 2944.

Submissions close 5pm Monday, 7 December 2020

Please note that under the provisions of the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009, such submissions may be referred to third parties for consideration.

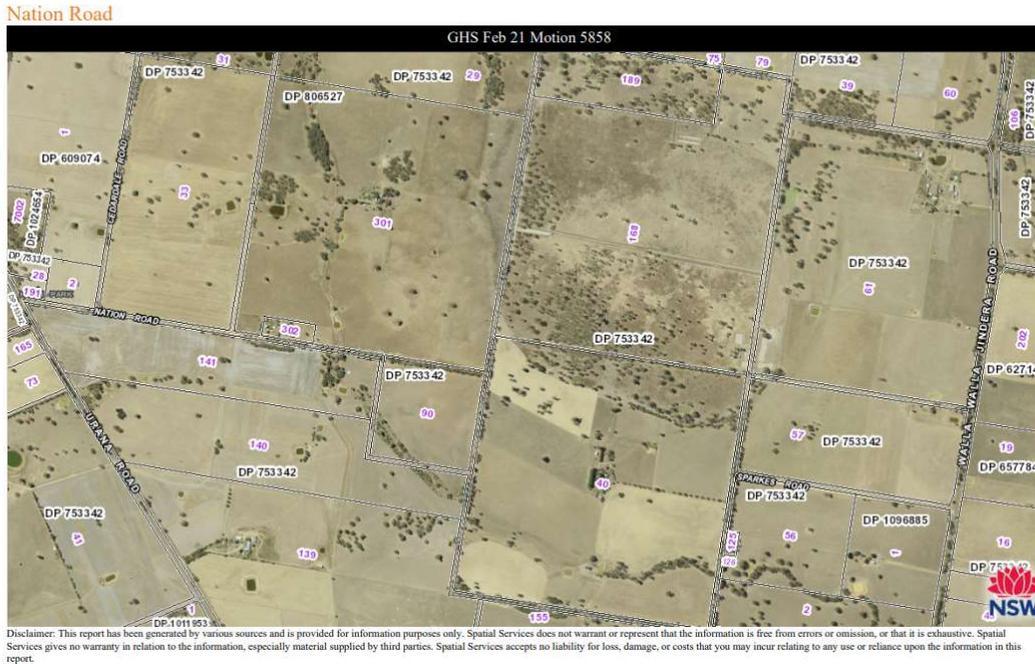
Once the submission period is completed, Greater Hume Council will consider all duly made submissions before deciding whether to continue with the road closures proposal.

Should you require further assistance in relation to this matter please contact Council's Manager Corporate Services, Suzanne Klemke T 6026 0100.

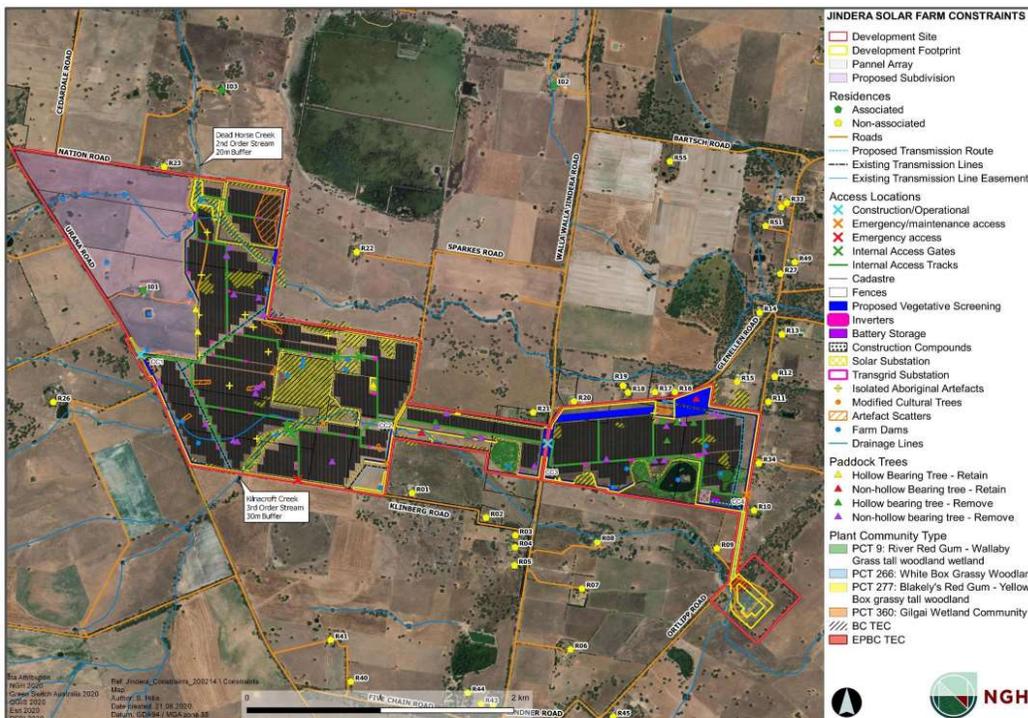
3. CLOSURE AND SALE OF UNUSED SECTION OF ROAD – NATION ROAD

Report prepared by Manager Corporate Services – Suzanne Klemke

REASON FOR REPORT To advise Council of submissions received for the proposed road closure and to seek Council’s consent to close the section of unused road separating separates Lots 141, 140 DP 753342 from Lot 301 DP 806527 and Lot 90 DP 753342 and sell the land to the adjoining property owners.



No map was included in the Nation Road closure and purchase addendum. Nation Road is within the Jindera Solar Farm footprint.



Outcome of the closure and sale of the Nation Road application for the landowner of the Jindera Solar Farm was successful

MINUTES OF THE ORDINARY MEETING OF GREATER HUME COUNCIL HELD AT COMMUNITY MEETING ROOM, LIBRARY COMPLEX, LIBRARY LANE, HOLBROOK ON WEDNESDAY, 17 FEBRUARY 2021			
3. CLOSURE AND SALE OF UNUSED SECTION OF ROAD – NATION ROAD			
5828 RESOLVED [Quinn/Hicks]			
That:			
1. the unused section of road separating separates Lots 141, 140 DP 753342 from Lot 301 DP 806527 and Lot 90 DP 753342 be closed and upon closing sold to the applicant			
2. the applicant shall meet all costs associated with the closure and purchase of the road			
3. the purchase price of the subject land be determined based on the Valuer General's valuation for adjoining and surrounding land			
4. the Mayor and General Manager be authorised to execute the necessary documentation to affect the road closure and subsequent sale of land to the applicant under the Common Seal of Council			
COUNCILLORS FOR	COUNCILLORS AGAINST	COUNCILLORS ABSENT	COUNCILLORS DECLARING INTEREST
Hicks Meyer O'Neill Parker Quinn Schlig Weston Wilton			

<https://www.greaterhume.nsw.gov.au/files/sharedassets/public/council-meetings/minutes-and-agendas/2021/minutes-ordinarymeeting-17feb21.pdf>

Very **next** agenda item

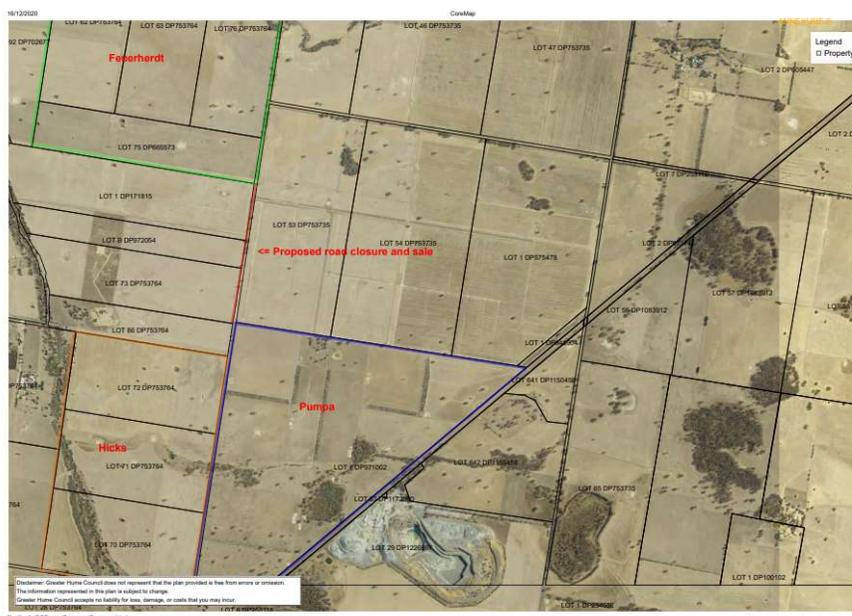
ORDINARY MEETING OF GREATER HUME COUNCIL TO BE HELD AT COMMUNITY MEETING ROOM, LIBRARY COMPLEX, LIBRARY LANE, HOLBROOK ON WEDNESDAY, 17 FEBRUARY 2021 Pg. 70

4. CLOSURE AND SALE OF UNUSED SECTION OF ROAD – CULCAIRN

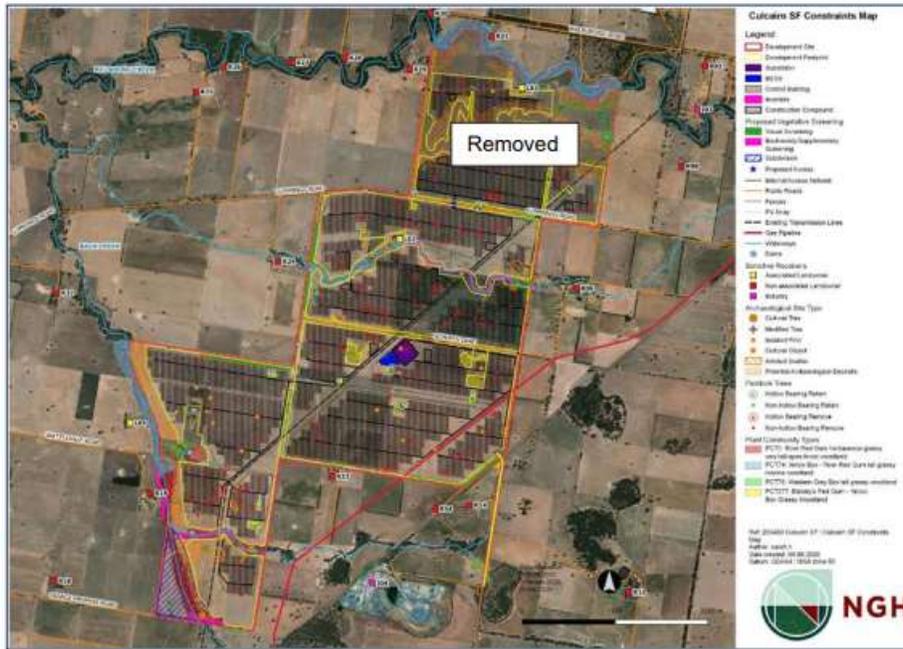
Report prepared by Manager Corporate Services – Suzanne Klemke

REASON FOR REPORT To advise Council of submissions received for the proposed road closure and to seek Council's consent to close the section of unused road separating Lot 53 DP 753735 from Lot 1 DP 171815, Lot B DP 972054 & Lot 73 DP 753764 and sell the land to the adjoining property owners.

The **red** line highlights the unnamed road with lot and DP numbers.



Unnamed Road closure and purchase application is within the Culcairn Solar Farm footprint.



Outcome of the closure and sale of the unused road application for the landowner of the Culcairn Solar Farm was **NOT** successful.

**MINUTES OF THE ORDINARY MEETING OF GREATER HUME COUNCIL
HELD AT COMMUNITY MEETING ROOM, LIBRARY COMPLEX,
LIBRARY LANE, HOLBROOK
ON WEDNESDAY, 17 FEBRUARY 2021**

4. CLOSURE AND SALE OF UNUSED SECTION OF ROAD - CULCAIRN

AT THIS JUNCTURE, COUNCILLOR MATT HICKS MADE A DECLARATION OF NON-PECUNIARY INTEREST IN THE MATTER NOW BEFORE THE COUNCIL AND LEFT THE MEETING ROOM AT 7:09PM PURSUANT TO SECTION 45(1) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1993 AND TOOK NO PART IN THE VOTING ON THE MATTER, THE REASON BEING THAT COUNCILLOR HICKS IS A NEARBY OR ADJOINING LAND OWNER.

5829 MOTION [Quinn/Schlig]

That:

1. the unused section of road separating Lot 53 DP 753735 from Lot 1 DP 171815, Lot B DP 972054, Lot 73 DP 753764 be closed and upon closing sold to the applicant
2. applicant shall meet all costs associated with the closure and purchase of the road
3. the purchase price of the subject land be determined based on the Valuer Generals valuation for adjoining and surrounding land
4. Council consents to the preparation of two Section 88B Instruments for an easement for access to TransGrid.
5. the Mayor and General Manager be authorised to execute the necessary documentation to affect the road closure and subsequent sale of land to the applicant under the Common Seal of Council.

ON BEING PUT TO THE VOTE THE MOTION WAS LOST.

COUNCILLORS FOR	COUNCILLORS AGAINST	COUNCILLORS ABSENT	COUNCILLORS DECLARING INTEREST
Quinn Wilton	Meyer O'Neill Parker Schlig Weston		Hicks

Cr Hicks returned to the meeting room at 7:11pm.

I do not know if the Councillor above colluded with the objecting neighbours, whose own actions could be views as a deliberated attempt to slow or stop the Culcairn Solar Farm from processing any further. **CR. Doug Meyer** mentioned that he “would not support the closure or purchase at this time due to fire concerns!” I note that **CR. Doug Meyer, Terry Weston & Lea Parker** are all members of a local fire brigades within the Greater Hume Shire!
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NqtCbeXRBdw>

The Landowner will ask Council to review the decision and if unsuccessful legal action may proceed. I believe that the actions of some GHS Councillors should be review by a higher governance body.

I would like to ask, if it is within the Panel’s parameters, that a recommendation be made that the GHS need to approve the closure and purchase of the above-mentioned unused road as directed by NSW Crown Land.

NSW FARMERS

4.7.2 NSW Farmers - Billabong Branch objected to the project as it considered that the subject land has the potential to be mapped as 'Important Agricultural Land' by the Department of Primary Industries and that the data on which Neoen had assessed agricultural capability in the EIS was incorrect. The agricultural capability of the site is discussed in section 5.1. (pg. 14)

5.1.9 The majority of public submissions, including a submission from the local branch of NSW Farmers Association, raised the loss of agricultural land as a key concern, as well as impacts on surrounding agricultural practices. While DPIE Primary Industries did not raise any concerns regarding the project, many submissions, including from Council, also considered the site should be classified as prime or important agricultural land, and objected to the long term use of the site for electricity production over agriculture (pg. 15)

4.7.3 Other issues raised by NSW Farmers - Billabong Branch include negative social and economic impacts, loss of amenity to nearby neighbours and bushfire risk. These issues are further considered in section 5.3. (pg. 14)

5.3.1 Hazards • Neoen would be required to maintain 10 m of defensible space around all project infrastructure and manage the defensible space and solar array areas as an Asset Protection Zone. Neoen would also be required to comply with the RFS's Planning for Bushfire Protection 2019 and prepare a Fire Safety Study and Emergency Plan to manage the fire risk. • The Department and RFS are satisfied that the bushfire risks can be suitably controlled through the implementation of standard fire management procedures (pg. 31)

The NSW Farmers Billabong Branch do not represent all the farmers of this community and the members of the Billabong Branch, I am led to believe have about **10 active** members. Most of the members are the immediate neighbours of the Culcairn Solar Farm together with Greater Hume Shire Councillors and staff. The immediate neighbours are also members of CSWRFB and I believe that the immediate neighbours are using all avenues at their disposal to enhance their own personal agenda.

In October 2018, the NSW Farmers Billabong Branch held a Community Meeting to discuss Large Scale Solar!

Community Meeting On Solar Infrastructure

NSW Farmers Billabong Branch is holding a **Community Meeting** to explore the development of Solar Infrastructure in the Greater Hume area. This is an opportunity to gather and express opinions on this issue.

Meeting to take place in the Auditorium from 6pm. **Members are encouraged to bring guests along.** Only Members will be able to express positions for recommendation to the Association.

Agenda

General Meeting:

- Discussion on Solar Infrastructure in Agricultural areas
- General Business

Please contact the below if you have any questions:

Peter Campbell | Billabong Branch Chair

0427 293715

Daniel Brear - Regional Services Manager South West

0427 773 495 | breard@nswfarmers.org.au

When

2/10/2018 6:00 PM - 10:00 PM

Where

Culcairn Bowling Club Auditorium CULCAIRN

As stated in a written submission to the DPIE, “NSW Farmers became involved **after we made contact** to voice our concerns and held a formal meeting on 2 October 2019 at which time the following formal motions were put forward due to the great concern of our members:

1. That the NSW Farmers lobby the NSW Government and relevant authorities for clarification in relation to categorization of agricultural land use in NSW.
2. That the NSW Farmers lobby all levels of Government for state significant solar infrastructure development to be placed on land with limited agricultural potential.
3. That the Association lobby for research of the triple bottom line impact of Large Scale Solar infrastructure.

Approximately 150 concerned members of the community attended this meeting.

The proponent only engaged with NSW Farmers after this meeting and then a forum was held in response.”
<https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=EXH-2683%2120200303T022053.537%20GMT>

I would like to draw you to the words “concerned members of the community”. The community was only just starting to hear about this issue for the very first time and this meeting by all accounts given to me was to gather **negative** community support. As this was the first public meeting held in the GHS regarding this issue the misinformation, emotionalism, and possible deformation by members of NSW Farmers Billabong Branch to the community was left unchecked. NSW Farmers Billabong Branch facilitated a public event which spread misinformation throughout the community which, has had, continual reverberations throughout other community groups and I believe this has caused the community to be fractured & left much hurt and pain. I believe that NSW Farmers Billabong Branch have much to answer for in their lack of professionalism and ethical behaviour.

I would also like to draw you to the wording “The proponent only engaged with NSW Farmers after this meeting and then a forum was held in response.” The Applicant only engaged with NSW Farmers after this meeting when they were informed by the landowner that the meeting took place! NSW Farmers Association and the Billabong Branch did **not** inform the Applicant of the meeting **nor** invited them to attend! Which in my options is very unprofessional!

Further reading regarding the meeting can be found here in a Border Mail newspaper article

<https://www.bordermail.com.au/story/5682311/farmers-rally-and-call-on-government-to-better-protect-land-from-solar-projects/>

After the NSW Farmers event when the community meeting contents became known to the Landholder of the CSF through media articles and private conversations, the landowner contacted the Regional Services Manager – South West (**RSM-SW**) to discuss the contents of the meeting. The landowner requested that the NSW farmers Association hold another meeting where the **public** could hear from independent experts in their field and the proponent and that the community could ask further questions to form a clearer picture without the emotive content. The RSW-SW indicated that the request for another meeting would be up to the NSW Farmers Billabong Branch Chair to decide! The landowner rang the Billabong Branch Chair who did agree that it would be appropriate to hold another meeting with independent experts. The Landowner gave the Billabong Branch Chair the contact details of the proponent’s project manager.

During the Landowner’s phone call with the RSW-SW, I heard this comment. “you know the branch is dying and if this controversy helps get more members and keeps the branch alive than I’m happy.” The words spoken by the RSW-SW rang true when the NSW Farmers Billabong Branch hosted an information evening a month later but this event was not open for the 150 “concerned” members of the community, it was for **members only!**

The number of “concerned” members of the community attending this meeting was significantly smaller, I suppose not everyone could afford the NSW Farmers Association’s Basic Farm membership which starts at \$435!

Billabong Branch - Information Evening - Large Scale Solar



NSW Farmers Billabong Branch invites interested members to a presentation from key bodies involved in large scale solar in the Southern NSW region. With this infrastructure becoming more prevalent in our communities this will be an opportunity to raise questions with the key parties.

The event will consist of a brief presentation from our key speakers followed by panel questions.

Speakers include:

NSW Farmers Association Economist Ash Salardini
TransGrid. Representatives to speak on the future planning of transmission lines in the area
Department of Planning; Representatives will present on:

- the State significant development process for large-scale solar energy developments,
- the NSW Large-Scale Solar Energy Guidelines, and
- discuss the Guide for Host Landowners.

Neoen: Large scale solar developer

Please note this is a **MEMBERS ONLY** event.
Please RSVP for catering purposes by 24 November 2018.
To RSVP or for further information please contact:

Peter Campbell - Chair
0427293715

Daniel Brear - Regional Services Manager South West
0427 773 495 | breard@nswfarmers.org.au

When

28/11/2018 6:00 PM - 28/11/2018 9:00 PM

Where

Culcairn Bowling Club CULCAIRN

https://www.nswfarmers.org.au/NSWFStaff/iCore/Events/Event_Display.aspx?EventKey=NBRBIL1118&WebsiteKey=ba3cab56-8ad0-4dd6-adf1-9163dc1b1058

The latest Billabong Branch meeting held on the 11th of February 2021 during the IPC Culcairn Solar Farm public submission period was once more open to guests. When there was an inquiry asking if guests were invited by NSW Farmers Billabong Branch meeting held during the IPC public submission period to the Walla Walla Solar Farm, this was part of the reply from the RSW-SW. "Thanks again for reaching out. The Billabong Branch held a meeting on the 29/10 in Culcairn. The agenda for this meeting was a discussion on the status of large scale developments that had been referred to the Independent Planning Panel. A meeting notice was sent out with proper notice to all financial members of the branch. **The meeting held 29/10 was a member only** event If you would like to discuss your options to rejoin the association please feel free to reach out." (correspondence 7th of February 2020) Once more membership was mentioned! Revenue raising?

Please note that the NSW Farmers Billabong Branch Secretary resides at **(R24)** and that this meeting was held during the IPC public submission period of the Culcairn Solar Farm.

Billabong Branch General Meeting

11th February | 6pm | Culcairn Hotel

NSW Farmers' Billabong Branch invites members **and their guests** to the General Meetings at 6pm on Thursday, 11th February at the Culcairn Hotel.

This will be a brief meeting to discuss developments around the State Significant Solar Developments in the region. Concerns around the obligations of proponents of developments, lack of research into impacts of developments, dissatisfaction with the classification of Agricultural Land and the challenges of the planning process will be discussed.

The branch will meet following COVID safe guidelines at the Culcairn Hotel. Members are welcome to come for dinner from 6pm with the meeting commencing at 7pm.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, RSVP's are essential if you are attending, either by using the below button or by contacting one of the below contacts. Social distancing will need to be adhered to, we ask members to adhere to the COVID-19 Safe Meeting Guidelines.

General Meeting Agenda

- Solar developments
- General Business

RSVP are essential, please click here or on the green RSVP button.

For further information please contact:

- **Sharon Feuerherdt** - Branch Secretary
ssjrc@bigpond.com | 0427 798948
- **Daniel Brear** - Regional Services Manager - South West
breard@nswfarmers.org.au | 0427 773495

RSVP here

[*Invitation sent via personal email correspondence, February 2021*](#)

I personally believe that the NSW Farmers Billabong Branch views are not in line with NSW Farmers Association as a whole. NSW Farmers' Association have stated publicly and throughout their documentation that a landowner of RU1 land has the right to "farm" their land in any compacity and that the Government of the day must address lowering energy prices for rural and regional communities and that all levels of Government must transition away from fossil fuels to mitigate the harmful effects of the changing climate. I have highlighted a few of NSW Farmers Association statements to support my findings: -

Under What NSW Farmers has achieved

6. AFFORDABLE, SUSTAINABLE ENERGY Rising energy costs have placed a large burden on the farming sector, exacerbating the financial effects of drought and bushfires for farm businesses and the farming families who run them. Having access to reliable, affordable and sustainable energy is a must, and NSW Farmers' advocacy is delivering better energy outcomes for our members. We have also continued our ongoing work with the energy sector to develop the Energy Industry Customer Charter, which requires public accountability from energy companies, including around the basic area of affordability. We have also electricity pricing and reliability issues through submissions to IPART on electricity reliability standards and the NSW Government Energy Security Target and Safeguard.

Under NSW Farmers' Association Policy Statement Book 2019 – 2020

Climate Change Policy

Solar

- **17Jul EC** That there are clear guidelines and regulations for the development, operations and decommissioning of Solar Farm Energy Generation, which avoid the negative impacts on current and future neighbouring landholders 4211 (pg41)

Transition to Renewable Energy Sources

- **15 AC** That NSW Farmers acknowledge that primary producers are on the front lines of seasonal variability, exacerbated by a changing climate, and supports its members playing an active role in the issue. That NSW Farmers encourage Governments to support the transition from fossil fuels such as coal and gas, towards more renewable energy sources in rural, regional and remote areas where their operation can be shown to be a net benefit to farming communities. (pg41)

Electricity

- **Electricity Demand Tariffs** That NSW Farmers notes the impact of electricity demand tariffs on agricultural industries, particularly those electricity-dependent sectors requiring refrigeration such as horticulture, and calls for action from governments to address their impact. 4215 (pg43)

Environmental Legislation

- **Landholder Rights** That the Association oppose any attempt by the Government to: a. Impose compulsory environmental management land use constraints without the payment of proper compensation to landholders whose rights would otherwise thereby be denied; b. Within the general context of overall land and environmental planning, introduce undue compulsion and creeping bureaucratic infringement on the rights of a landholder; and c. Compulsorily acquire privately held productive rural land. (pg44)

Renewables

- **19 AC** That the many potential impacts to agriculture and to neighbouring farms be considered in the determination of any large scale solar project approved by the NSW Government and that Large Scale Solar Guidelines for State Significant Development are adhered to, ensuring that any evidence used is current and appropriately sourced within a reasonable distance of the proposed development. 4420 (pg52)
- **19 AC** That developers of approved renewable energy projects ensure that: a) Any mitigation measures to protect the renewable energy projects within their development boundary be wholly the responsibility of the development owner and the landholder on which the development is placed; and b) The neighbouring landholder is only required to maintain "reasonable available insurance" with any further coverage to be underwritten by the Operator. 4419 (pg52)

Energy Security

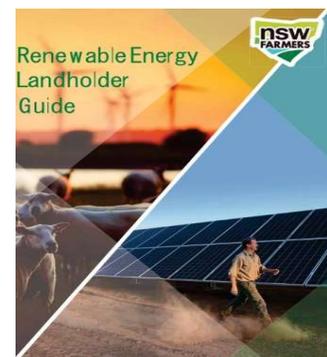
- **11 AC** That the Association calls on the Federal Government to undertake a comprehensive study of Australia's present and future energy needs, addressing conventional and renewable energy options, distribution infrastructure and the potential for off-grid energy supply in regional and remote areas. 2991 (pg56)

[javascript: doPostBack\('ctl01\\$TemplateBody\\$WebPartManager1\\$qwpciPolicyStatementBookJan2020\\$PolicyStatementBookJan2020\\$FileLink', ''\)](#)

in the Renewable Energy Landholder Guide

"This Renewable Energy Landholder Guide has been produced by the NSW Farmers' Association (NSWFA) with funding from the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment.

With increasing interest in the development of renewable energy projects in NSW, a growing number of landholders are considering hosting infrastructure on their properties, particularly wind turbines or solar facilities.



Hosting renewable energy developments can provide landholders with a regular alternative income stream, helping to supplement revenue from farming operations.

This Renewable Energy Landholder Guide (the Guide) provides information and guidance to help landholders navigate the development process, understand the potential impacts and negotiate a fair contract. Please note: Statements in the Guide do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the NSW Government.”

http://www.nswfarmers.org.au/NSWFA/Content/IndustryPolicy/Resource/Renewable_Energy_Landholder_Guide.aspx

I believe the opposing neighbours again used the NSW Farmers’ Association to try and stop the development from going ahead and I ask that the NSW Farmers Billabong Branch submission if presented be dismissed and that their submission holds no weight in your deliberation.

GREATER HUME SHIRE

5.1 Compatibility of Proposed Land Use

Provisions of the Greater Hume LEP

5.1.1 The site is located wholly within the RU1 Primary Production zone under the LEP. As discussed in section 3.2, a solar farm is a prohibited land use under a strict reading of the LEP.

5.1.2 However, based on a broader reading of the LEP, and consideration of the objectives of the RU1 zone and other strategic documents for the region, the Department considers that there is no clear intention to prevent the development of a solar farm on the project site.

“The Greater Hume Shire Council has a right to farm policy that states it will not support any action to interfere with the **legitimate rural and agricultural use of land where the activity is in accordance with **relevant legislation**.”**

https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0006/587184/NSW-Right-to-farm-policy.pdf

5.1.3 Firstly, the LEP expressly references the Infrastructure SEPP and acknowledges that electricity generating works are regulated by the Infrastructure SEPP, rather than the LEP. As described above, a solar farm is permitted with consent on land zoned RU1 under the Infrastructure SEPP.

5.1.4 Secondly, the project is not inconsistent with the objectives of the RU1 zone, particularly in relation to:

- encouraging diversity in primary industry enterprises and systems appropriate for the area; and
- minimising fragmentation and alienation of resource lands.

5.1.5 While the Greater Hume LGA has traditionally relied upon agriculture, the introduction of solar energy generation would contribute to a more diverse local industry, thereby supporting the local economy and community. In addition, the proposed solar farm would encourage renewable energy development which is consistent with the Greater Hume Local Strategic Planning Statement 2018.

GHS Community Strategic Plan, Growth & Sustainability (pg. 28)

Objective: We are revitalising our communities, welcoming visitors, growing our economy and promoting the lifestyle, culture and heritage offered in our communities

Premier’s Priorities: Encouraging business investment, make it easier to start a business. Improving government services, accelerating major project assessment

- <https://www.greaterhume.nsw.gov.au/files/sharedassets/public/community/greater-hume-local-strategic-planning-statement.pdf>
- <https://www.greaterhume.nsw.gov.au/files/sharedassets/public/policies-and-documents-page/documents/live-a-greater-life-csp-2030-30jul19.pdf>

5.1.6 The project is consistent with the Department’s Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2036, which identifies the development of renewable energy generation as a future growth opportunity for the region.

5.1.7 The Department considers that the development would not fragment or alienate any resource lands in the LGA, as the land could be easily returned to agricultural land following decommissioning as the inherent agricultural capability of the land would not be affected in the long term.

5.1.8 Council objected to the project with a number of concerns, including its view that the development may not be consistent with the objectives of the LEP on the basis that the site contains high quality agricultural land. While the Department considers that the project is compatible with the LEP for the above reasons, the project's impacts on agricultural land are further discussed below.

5.1.13 The Department understands that DPI Agriculture is undertaking an agricultural mapping program across NSW to assist with identifying important agricultural land, however this has not yet been finalised, exhibited or adopted by NSW Government and therefore is not directly applicable to the assessment of this project.

I would like to highlight two concerns regarding the inconsistency of the GHS determinations in relation their views regarding high quality agricultural land in relation to the CSF.

In February 2020, The GHS DofEP writes in Councils EIS submission under 4. Loss of high quality Agricultural Land that: - *"The EIS indicates that proposal is located on soil capability Class 4 and is used for a range of crops and pastures. **Inspections by Council of the development site and adjacent land would indicate that it is high quality agricultural land.** Council has been advised that this land **will be** mapped as important agricultural land under the Riverina Murray Draft Important Agricultural Land Mapping project which also indicates it is high quality agricultural land. Due to its impending status as important agricultural land, the site could **be considered** constrained under the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment's Large Solar Energy Guidelines."*

Written correspondence with the DofEP asking about when and how the site was inspected without proper notification to landowners or Applicant, the DofEP indicated that the site was view from the road, but an unsigned EIS submission with the DPIE indicated that the DofEP inspected the development site and neighbouring land Which is it? I requested correspondence between the DofEP and relevant parties via a GIPA application. Council did **NOT** provide me with any correspondence from the DofEP directly! Why?

The DofEP also mentioned that the land may be mapped as important agricultural land in the future and that should be a consideration! The DofEP to my knowledge, knows that a development application can only be taken on the appropriate legislative merits at the time of lodgement and I believe statements of this nature made by the DofEP cannot be considered best practise in determining a development application.

The submission continues with, *"Due to the loss of the high quality agricultural land Council believes that the proposed development may not be compatible with the RU1 zone objectives contained in the Greater Hume Local Environment Plan 2012 **which are:***

- *To encourage sustainable primary industry production by maintaining and enhancing the natural resource base.*
- *To minimise the fragmentation and alienation of resource lands.*
- *To minimise conflict between land uses within this zone and land uses within adjoining zones.*
- *To maintain the rural landscape character of the land"*

Why is the **one** objective mentioned in the DPIE Assessment report, as stated in point **5.1.4 Secondly, the project is not inconsistent with the objectives of the RU1 zone, particularly in relation to: • encouraging diversity in primary industry enterprises and systems appropriate for the area;** removed by Council in all the written reports and submissions? Was impartiality shown?

Councils EIS submission under number 5. Impacts on Native Vegetation and Aboriginal Heritage, the DofEP writes "The EIS has undertaken very detailed studies concerning the biodiversity impacts and impacts on Aboriginal cultural heritage that will occur if the proposed development does proceed. Whilst Council is satisfied with the rigour of the assessment of these impacts, it does believe that the removal .61 hectares of native vegetation, 99 paddock trees and a total loss of value of 39 items of **Aboriginal cultural heritage demonstrates the constrained nature of the site** of the proposed development."

<https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=SSD-10288%2120201002T012032.894%20GMT>

Four months later.....

In the June Council meeting 2020, the DofEP prepared a report for Council requesting AMENDMENT TO GREATER HUME LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL PLAN 2012 - ZONING & MINIMUM LOT SIZE CHANGES FOR CULCAIRN. *"The purpose of the report was for Council to resolve to seek from the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (the Department) a Gateway Determination relating to a Planning Proposal to make a change to the Greater Hume Local Environmental Plan 2012 ("the LEP") for the zoning and minimum lot size of a number of allotments in the vicinity of Culcairn. Council has made a number of attempts to rezone land near these townships, from RU1 Primary Production to either residential zonings or rural zonings with reduced minimum lot sizes for the construction of a dwelling. Unfortunately, the Department has not been supportive of Council's previous attempts to rezone The planning proposal for Culcairn (ANNEXURE 1) has been prepared to utilise the planning system acceleration programme and is considered eligible as Council intends to proceed to the development application stage and commencement of works."*

<https://www.greaterhume.nsw.gov.au/files/sharedassets/public/council-meetings/minutes-and-agendas/2020/agenda-ordinary-17jun20.pdf>

The 68-page report from Habitat Planning which the GHS Council commissioned to produce an independent report states that *"The intended outcomes of the Planning Proposal will be achieved by changes to zoning and lot size maps within the GHLEP."*

The Habitat Planning report looks at 4 sites of RU1 land surrounding Culcairn commissioned by the Greater Hume Shire Council but for expediency I will just highlight one RU1 site, CU3.

https://www.greaterhume.nsw.gov.au/files/sharedassets/public/council-meetings/minutes-and-agendas/2020/17jun20_annexures1-and-2.pdf



1. CU3: - Context - Anticipated - Potential Impacts

- **The subject land is not noted as having a high agriculture or existing land use and is currently used for low scale stock grazing. Rezoning of the land would not remove high quality agricultural land from production.**

2. CU3: - Flora - Arial Photograph and NPWS Wildlife Atlas

- Loss of habitat. The land is cleared of vegetation and retains only a light cover of paddock trees which should be retained where possible. NPWS Wildlife Atlas listed a threatened species siting (Silky Swainson pea *Swainsona sericea* since 1980) in the vicinity of the site.

3. CU3: - Archaeology - AHIMS database

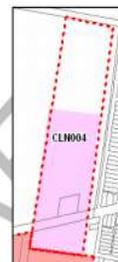
- There are no recorded archaeological sites

4. CU3: - Land Capabilities - DECC mapping

- **Class I** - No special soil conservation works or practices.
- Land suitable for a wide variety of uses. Where soils are fertile, this is land with the highest potential for agriculture, and may be cultivated for vegetation and fruit production, cereal and other grain crops, energy crops, fodder and forage crops, and sugar cane in specific areas.
- Includes "prime agricultural land".

CU3

Map reference number: CLN004
 Subject land: Lot 1, DP311778, Lot 2, DP865572, Lot 3, DP753757
 Area 27ha
 Proposed change in land use zone: 1(a) General Rural to R1 General Residential
 Description: 27 ha Walbundrie Road
 Change instigated by: Greater Hume Strategic Land Use Plan.
 Recommendation: Rezone southern half (approx. 17ha shown coloured in image)



Environmental impact:

Environmental matters	Basis of assessment	Potential impacts
Context	Anticipated	The subject land is not noted as having a high agriculture or existing land use and is currently used for low scale stock grazing. Rezoning of the land would not remove high quality agricultural land from production.
Flora	Aerial photograph and NPWS Wildlife Atlas	Loss of habitat. The land is cleared of vegetation and retains only a light cover of paddock trees which should be retained where possible. NPWS Wildlife Atlas listed a threatened species siting (Silky Swainson pea, <i>Swainsona sericea</i> since 1980) in the vicinity of the site.
Fauna	NPWS Wildlife Atlas	NPWS Wildlife Atlas listed no threatened species sitings (since 1980) in the vicinity of the site or township.
Flooding	Flood Planning Area map	Flood-prone land information for Greater Hume Shire is limited. This site could be affected by a flood event.
Bushfire	Council Bushfire Prone Land Map	Land is not located within identified Bushfire Prone Lands.
Heritage	NSW Heritage Council & Culcairn LEP	There are no listed heritage items within this area. Council is undertaking a heritage study.
Archaeology	AHIMS database	AHIMS recognises no sites within this area.
Land capability	DECC mapping	Class 1 - No special soil conservation works or practices. Land suitable for a wide variety of uses. Where soils are fertile, this is land with the highest potential for agriculture, and may be cultivated for vegetation and fruit production, cereal and other grain crops, energy crops, fodder and forage crops, and sugar cane in specific areas. Includes 'prime agricultural land'. Some sections are already Urban.
Infrastructure	Council officers	Township water supply and sewage treatment by Council. Sites outside of the township may require extensions to services or on site water and/or sewage.
Social	Anticipated	Potential positive impact through provision of increased residential availability and population growth.

Factcheck – the AHIMS database The AHIMS Database is accessible to several different organisations including Local Aboriginal Land Councils. Basic Online Searches: DPC has a free online search function where anyone can register to have access to the AHIMS database. Registered users can conduct a 'Basic Search'. This 'Basic Search' simply provides a Yes or Nil (No) result, indicating whether or not a record of Aboriginal objects or places exist within the defined area of the search. These results can be viewed immediately online. <https://alc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/AHIMS-Factsheet.pdf>

5. MOTION 5598 RESOLVED that: -

1. In accordance with Section 3.34 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 Council resolve to submit to the Department of Planning, Infrastructure & Environment the planning proposal for **changes to the zoning** and minimum lot size of a number of allotments in the vicinity of Culcairn and seek a Gateway Determination.
2. Council advise the Department that it would like to utilise its planning system acceleration program as Council intends to develop land at **CU4 Walbundrie Road** in a timely manner.

<https://www.greaterhume.nsw.gov.au/files/sharedassets/public/council-meetings/minutes-and-agendas/2020/minutes-ordinarymeeting-17-june-2020.pdf>

Audio at the beginning of the Council meeting livestream was not working and the Mayor read out for the Motion 5598 that "All Councillors voted in favour of the motion." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RB0p_AZVEkI

These are my first area of concern regarding the Greater Hume Shire Council and Councillors actions: - -

- 1) Why was there no concern for "Prime agricultural land" **RU1-Class 1** land being rezoned as residential?
- 2) Was there any concern for loss of wildlife habitat changing RU1 to residential?
- 3) Why wasn't there an amendment in point 2 of the motion to reflect the information provided in the Habitat Planning Report? CU4 is situated on Holbrook Road and CU3 is situated on Walbundrie Road.

- 4) Why does the Council accept a report stating that RU1 land is currently used for low scale stock grazing when the attached aerial photographs clearly show that cropping and grazing have occurred?
- 5) Why does Council accept a report which states that there is a light cover of paddock trees, (I counted 29 trees) in the 27ha and recommends that the CSF decrease their tree removal from the project site due to loss of habitat?
- 6) Why does Council accept AHIMS database produced 11 years ago which stated that there are **no recorded finds**, but a report written by Aboriginal Elders and Independent Archaeologists who walked country, side by side consulting and recording every find on the CSF in 2019 **demonstrates the constrained nature of the site**?
- 7) How come Council states that the CSF which is DECC **class 4 as prime agricultural** land when Council's own report showing DECC **class 1 is low quality agricultural** land acceptable for permanent removal from the agricultural footprint within the Greater Hume Shire?
- 8) In comparing Council's commissioned report for, the Amendment to GHLEP 2012 - zoning & minimum lot size changes for Culcairn, and the Council's EIS and RTS Submissions for the CSF SSD 10288 there is much hypocrisy to be found. I find the reports inconsistent in relation to RU1 zoning which leads me to wonder if incompetency or partiality was shown from the DoEP and some councillors regarding the CSF.

This part below is my second area of concern and this is when it gets convoluted.....

Around this time the DPIE asked for Response to Submissions (RTS) for the Culcairn Solar Farm. Knowing Council procedures, I was watching the GHS webpage and their social media platforms carefully.

1. I observed that the Council did **NOT** include Council's RTS submission for the Culcairn Solar Farm in the Council June 2020 agenda paper, when I checked Council website, Friday the 12th of June 2020.
2. I observed that the Matter of Urgency (**MoU**) Report 1, appeared on the Council website Monday the 15th of June 2020.
3. I observed that the Council website Tuesday night, 16th of June 2020 at 5.35pm, **No** changes has occurred.
4. I observed that Council on the GHS website on Wednesday morning at 10.45am, 17th of June 2020 that Council had **added** MATTER OF URGENCY REPORT 2 TO ORDINARY MEETING OF GREATER HUME COUNCIL, WEDNESDAY, 17 JUNE 2020, OFFICER'S REPORT – PART A – FOR DETERMINATION ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING 1. GREATER HUME COUNCIL – COMMENTS IN RESPONSE TO SUBMISSIONS REPORT AND AMENDMENT REPORT – CULCAIRN SOLAR FARM

All Councillors except for CR. TONY QUINN (CR M. HICKS – Declared Interest) voted **FOR** Council recommendation COMMENTS IN RESPONSE TO SUBMISSIONS REPORT AND AMENDMENT REPORT – MATTER OF URGENCY REPORT 2.

So, the conclusion, Motion 5620 was resolved as followed: -

5620 RESOLVED [**Meyer/Knight**]

1. That Council resolve to provide the comments contained within ANNEXURE 1 and Council acknowledge that the modified development addresses some, but not all of the concerns of Greater Hume Council contained within its Submission to the Environmental Impact Statement. Council will also raise concerns about being the Appropriate Regulatory Authority under the Protection of the Environment Operations Act.

2. Council also include as an Addendum to the above correspondence to NSW Planning regarding the following issues raised by **an objector**:

- Loss of High Quality Land due to proposed Important Agricultural Land Mapping indicating that this land should be constrained under the Large Scale Solar Guidelines (loss of cropping land)
- The development does not meet Greater Hume Shire RU1 zone objectives
- Reduced level of amenity for nearby residents
- All cabling should be removed at remediation
- The adjustments to native vegetation removal, reduction of tree removal from 99 to 77 and the loss of aboriginal heritage continues to demonstrate the constrained nature of the proposed development site.
- A very significant reduction in size of the development to the primary property of "Roseworthy" only (therefore not L shaping the property) and a smaller development centralised on that property away

from all waterways and bushfire prone lands and a significant distance away from any environmentally sensitive areas such as the waterway that travels to the property and fenced on the property under a Landcare riparian project

- Absolutely surround the development by trees on all sides so there is no visibility or heat island impacts from the project as recommended by the Clean Energy Council presentation
- Place an earth bank around the project and place trees on top of this earth bank to reduce the visual, heat and noise impacts. This would insulate the surrounding properties and drive heat upwards.
- Compensation made to neighbours for their losses.

<https://www.greaterhume.nsw.gov.au/files/sharedassets/public/council-meetings/minutes-and-agendas/2020/minutes-ordinarymeeting-17-june-2020.pdf>

The middle section is where it become extremely concerning for me and changed the CSF project to the current design presented to the IPC.....

Knowing procedurally, that MoU needed to be voted on by Councillors to 1.) accept that the matter is deemed urgent and 2.) the matter is relevant to be discussed at present. Council was procedural in the Council meeting. Watching the GHS livestream regarding the Matter of Urgency report 2, **Cr Doug Meyer** mentioned correspondence from **objectors!** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RB0p_AZVEkI

I had a heightened level of concern and unanswered questions, so I wrote to the GHS General Manager (**GM**) regarding my concerns on the 18th of June 2020. The GM provided some correspondence, and I was directed that a GIPA would be needed for any further information. As directed, I lodged 2 GIPA applications.

1. What objectors?
 - Numerous objectors wrote to the Councillors (**R24, R33 &**). Two of the objectors are staff members of the GHS (**R24 & R33**). One objector's correspondence (**R24**) was read out at the June 2020 council meeting in part by the General Manager.
2. Was the Matter of Urgency Report 2 opened for public comment?
3. When was the Matter of Urgency report 2 opened for public comment?
4. Where was the public notice that the Matter of Urgency Report 2 was open for public comment?
 - No documental evidence can be found that the GHS opened the Matter of Urgency Report 2 for public comment.
5. Did someone **within** Council informed the objectors that the Matter of Urgency was open to public comment? [Information via GHS GIPA application](#)

The actions taken by some GHS Councillors to include an Addendum to the GHS Council RTS Submission to NSW Planning regarding the following issues changed the whole scope and design of this project as I believe that the DPIE view this as a legitimate request from the Greater Hume Shire Council as a governing consenting body.

The actions of the Greater Hume Shire facilitated that one landowner was removed from the Culcairn Solar Farm project, the sheep grazing opportunity for a neighbouring landowner was lost, the construction distribution payment to 4 adjoining landowners was removed.

- Was the addendum warranted?
- Did Council act in a fair and reasonable manner?
- Were the suggestions legitimate, or had they already been addressed in the Culcairn Solar Farm EIS?
- Did the Greater Hume Shire act on behalf of a Company in relation to a Development Application?
- Did Council follow proper procedure in informing the public that a Matter of Urgency was open to public comment?

Unrelated but relevant, correspondence sent to me from a local resident indicated that they were totally unaware that Council was deliberating the Matter of Urgency Report 2 until they read the June 2020 Council minutes the day of public publication.

FYI, I did receive documentation via of my GIPA requests. Some documents were illegible, some heavily redacted and some documents from Councillor were not presented. There was an external review because of the GHS actions.

I have enclosed the objector's correspondence (R24). The suggestions were included in Councils RTS submission highlighted above in yellow. I note name, time, date of receipted email. It was the day before Council's deliberation, and before, I believe, Council publicly placed the Matter of Urgency Report 2 on their website.

Steven Pinnuck

From: Feuerherdt Pastoral Co <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Tuesday, 16 June 2020 7:56 PM
To: Heather Wilton
Cc: Steven Pinnuck; Colin Kane
Subject: Culcairn Solar Response to Submission - Matter of Urgency Report

Dear Mayor Wilton, I would appreciate if you could please consider the below and whether this could/should be read to the meeting tomorrow night, I seek your consideration of late notice due to the report only being available this afternoon. Note that I have sent this email to selected Councillors. Thank you.

We refer to the Matter of Urgency report for tomorrow night's Council meeting and in view of the following information seek your consideration that the letter responding from Council to Rob Beckett at NSW Planning also include the following points in the area advising that the following concerns are still held:

- Loss of High Quality Land due to proposed Important Agricultural Land Mapping indicating that this land should be constrained under the Large Scale Solar Guidelines (Loss of cropping land)
- The development does not meet Greater Hume Shire RU1 zone objectives
- Reduced level of amenity for nearby residents
- All cabling should be removed at remediation
- The adjustments to native vegetation removal, reduction of tree removal from 99 to 77 and the loss of aboriginal heritage continues to demonstrate the constrained nature of the proposed development site.

[REDACTED]

Ultimately we have made many concerted efforts to request that the developer make the following changes to the development that have fell on deaf ears being:

- A very significant reduction in size of the development to the primary property of "Roseworthy" only (therefore not L shaping our property) and a smaller development centralised on that property away from all waterways and bushfire prone lands and a significant distance away from any environmentally sensitive areas such as the waterway that travels to our property and fenced on our property under a landcare riparian project
- Absolutely surround the development by trees on all sides so there is no visibility or heat island impacts from the project as recommended by the Clean Energy Council presentation
- Place an earth bank around the project and place trees on top of this earth bank to reduce the visual, heat and noise impacts. This would insulate the surrounding properties and drive heat upwards.
- Compensation made to neighbours for their losses

We suggest that it could be a consideration of Council to include the potential for these measures in their response to NSW Department of Planning.

Our family continues to very strongly believe that there are much better places for these developments and that the long term impacts for short term benefit do not justify this project.

Thank you for your consideration.

On the 6th of November 2020, the GHS DofEP and **CR. DOUG MEYER** met with the IPC for the Walla Walla Solar Farm – Meeting with Greater Hume Shire Council. **CR. DOUG MEYER** stated “Yes. My name’s Doug Meyer. I’m Deputy Mayor of Greater Hume Shire. I consider this land to be very highly productive. In fact, there’s been some farms sold within my region and going into Culcairn in the last week where the prices are absolutely astronomical. these solar farms are sitting on the prime pieces of land that are in that tract within Greater Hume Shire.” <https://www.ipcn.nsw.gov.au/resources/pac/media/files/pac/transcripts-and-material/2020/walla-walla/meeting-with-council-transcript.pdf>

CR. DOUG MEYER also mentioned at the IPC Jindera Solar Farm - Meeting with Greater Hume Shire Council, held on the 25th of November 2020 “I’d like to exemplify what’s happened in the last week in this shire that we’ve seen land – **so** this is prime agricultural land we’ve seen some land in the northern part of the shire sell for \$5500 per acre. This is not a hectare, per acre. It’s unheard of, We’ve seen some land in the eastern part of Greater Hume Shire sell **for \$9000 an acre**. Again, per acre, not hectare, **This is unheard of**. It emphasises what we’ve been saying for some time that the commercial market sees this area as being prime agricultural land.” <https://www.ipcn.nsw.gov.au/resources/pac/media/files/pac/transcripts-and-material/2020/jindera/council-transcript.pdf>

The last Council meeting for the year was held on the 16th of December 2020, GHS Council meeting, the GM prepared a report seeking approval from Council for the proposed residential subdivision at Culcairn. I believe that the report could indicate that this is the CU3 – RU1 land mentioned in the June 2020 Council Minutes.

6. PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL SUBDIVISION AT CULCAIRN REFERENCE TO DELIVERY PLAN ACTIONS

“Objective We are revitalising our communities, welcoming visitors, growing our economy and promoting the lifestyle, culture and heritage offered in our communities.”

*Since signing the ‘Deed of Call’ Option Council has submitted and received conditional gateway approval for the Planning Proposal for the rezoning and minimum lot size changes for Culcairn. **The ‘Deed of Call’ Option identified a purchase price of \$37,000 per hectare.***

To address issues raised in the conditional approval Council has also undertaken a:

- 1. site soil analysis which has identified a small amount of isolated contamination at the northern end and a*
- 2. preliminary environmental assessment.*

*The preliminary environmental assessment has identified **a number of significant paddock trees** which may require biodiversity credits to be acquired to enable removal. In this regard **Council is aiming to establish biodiversity credits** within the Holbrook Common that can be used to offset this and other Council developments in the future. Alternatively Council may be able to design around some of the trees to reduce the biodiversity credits required.*

*The author of the report states that since signing the ‘Deed of Call’ Option, Council has submitted and received conditional gateway approval for the Planning Proposal for the **rezoning** and minimum lot size changes for Culcairn. The ‘Deed of Call’ Option identified a purchase price of **\$37,000 per hectare**..... The preliminary environmental assessment has **identified a number of significant paddock trees** which may require biodiversity credits to be acquired to enable **removal.**” <https://www.greaterhume.nsw.gov.au/files/sharedassets/public/council-meetings/minutes-and-agendas/2020/agenda-ordinary-16dec20.pdf>*

CR. DOUG MEYER moved & **CR. TERRY WESTON** seconded the recommendation. When the MAYOR asked the mover if he wanted to say anything, **CR. DOUG MEYER** stated, “I think it’s an opportunity that presents itself for the people of Culcairn and district and **should be acted on.**”_ The MAYOR asked for further comments and **CR. TONY QUINN** stated “Yes, Madam Mayor, it would be one of the **best bits of agriculture** country in the shire, but Culcairn has to grow, this is what happens in life! It’s very good agricultural country.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9siKqL4jeJA> - time 32:38 - 33.20 / 46.04

MOITION 5801 RESOLVED [Meyer/Weston]

All Councillors voted **FOR** the recommendation of Council.

- Why did Councillors who voted against the Solar Farms because it's on RU1 land, didn't vote against residential subdivisions because it's on RU1 land?
- Why did Councillors who voted against the Solar Farms because of concerns about tree removal, didn't vote against Councils residential subdivisions because of concerns about tree removal?
- Why did Councillors who voted against the Solar Farms, say that the current agriculture prices of \$5500 and \$9000 per acre emphasises that the commercial market sees it as prime agricultural land but agree and support Council's decision to purchase RU1 land for \$37,000 per hectare, which equates to **\$15,000 per acre**?

On the 25th of February 2021, **CR. DOUG MEYER** at the IPC CSF, Meeting with GHS made the following comment "That's still high in my mind – that the escalating price of land suggests that this isn't it's, in fact I think the difference between the good and the bad is the fact that it's the people who have occupied those lands as farmers." Once more hypocrisy is shown in relation to land values. **Cr. Doug Meyer's** comments are also highly inflammatory, unprofessional, and extremely bias towards the continual negative narrative of the objectors.

After watching the Greater Hume Shire Council & Councillors interactions with objectors on all the SSD Solar Farms within the Shire over the last 2 to 3 years I believe further scrutiny from a higher body could be warranted.

AGRI-SOLAR

5.1.16 Further, Neoen proposes to manage the land through sheep grazing during the operation of the development footprint. Neoen has estimated that only 25% of the site would be removed from agricultural production during the operation of the solar farm (mainly for construction of roads, buildings, hardstands), with the remainder of the site being available for sheep grazing around the solar panels. Other Neoen operating solar farms in NSW (i.e. Parkes, Griffith and Coleambally solar farms) and in Victoria already successfully include this practice. Neoen has estimated that the proposed sheep grazing would require 1.5 full time equivalent jobs throughout the project operation in addition to 10 jobs required for operation of the project.

Neoen has successfully worked with the landowners regarding sheep grazing on many of their sites and I believe that this site will also be successful.

I have learnt a lot as I have journeyed with my family through this process, Sheep grazing under panels is new and innovative, thus I believe one must think outside-the-box of normal traditional farming methods to achieve quantifiable success.

Together with Neoen, simply speaking, the sheep grazing operation will focus on education and mentoring outcomes. I will divide my vision into three parts: -

Part 1: - to employ local experts to help assist with trainees in cert-based education.

Part 2: - to work towards Zero Net 2030 and 2050 agricultural targets focusing on regenerative farming practices for sheep grazing.

Part 3- to work with Wiradjuri people, Landcare, and agronomists to introduce indigenous grasses into areas like the riparian wetlands for potential seed collection and enhancement of potential wildlife corridors.

The excitement in researching, and consolidating, our business plan over the next year is something we are all looking forward to.

WEEDS

5.1.29 The Department has recommended strict land management conditions to control the growth of weeds, reducing the potential spread of weeds to neighbouring properties. In this regard, Neoen would be required to restore groundcover of the site following construction or upgrading, maintain the ground cover with appropriate perennial species and manage weeds within this groundcover. This groundcover would be required to be maintained to an acceptable standard, to reduce the risk of erosion and loss of soil from the project site. Additionally, Neoen would be required to prepare and implement measures to control weeds and feral pests through a Biodiversity Management Plan, and there are separate regulatory requirements that apply to all landowners under the Biosecurity Act 2015 in regard to managing these potential issues.

I would like to reiterate that the DPIE states that there are separate regulatory requirements that apply to **all landowners** under the Biosecurity Act 2015 regarding managing these potential issues.

I personally found that comments from the former Lessees (**R24**) and their extended family members regarding weeds and weed management concerns highly inflammatory. The Lessees would be aware of legal correspondence sent to them from the Lessor regarding the Lessees lack of weed management control whilst leasing the land.

In response to comments made regarding a Holbrook Landcare article. The landowner was part of the Holbrook Landcare grant funded research SLN management project conducted from 2015 to 2016. Landowners across the Greater Hume Shire were asked to participate in a Landcare case study initiative, background data collection occurred, trial sites were established, and thus subsequent articles were written as per the grant specifications. The articles written by the researcher were for a specific target audience.

Department of Primary Industries Best Practice Manual for further information if required.

https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/839857/Silverleaf-nightshade-best-practice-management-manual-2018.pdf

Workforce Accommodation & Local Employment (pg. 32)

Prepare an Accommodation and Employment Strategy for the project in consultation with Council, with consideration to prioritising the employment of local workers and consideration of the cumulative impacts associated with other State significant development projects in the area.

I support the DPIE in principle and in my professional capacity as a Director of an Apprentice, Trainee and Labour Hire non-for-profit organisation. I am extremely confident that Neoen, as with all the other solar farms within the GHS, will be able to engage local businesses and contractors throughout all phases of this project. Indicators I have seen, show that the local business community are actively engaging with the solar developers like Neoen within the GHS despite the opposition's tactics.

Socio-economic Impacts (pg. 32)

Prepare an Accommodation and Employment Strategy for the project in consultation with Council, with consideration to prioritising the employment of local workers. • Enter into a VPA with Council.

As a former GHS Councillor and current member of both the Culcairn and Walla Walla Development Committees. I support the proposed modelling of the Neoen Community Benefit Fund (**CBF**) as it removes the limiting constraints of Council, like their DA levy area of expenditure, Shire Grant policies, and the annual budgetary outcomes decided by Councillors.

The CBF structure involves both development committees. Most members also sit on other local committees or know someone who is, thus, they are the pulse of the community, and the one thing every member has in common, is their heart and passion for their communities to thrive and grow.

The CBF structure, because it is flexible and grass root based, will assist the Culcairn and Walla Walla communities with projects that have been on their drawing boards for a while now. The Community will be able look at larger projects that are substantial in nature from the federal and state government, which in some cases require 20% community monetary participation.

I think the General Manager of the GHS at the last Walla Walla Development Committee Meeting summed up the VPA - Community Benefit Fund well when he said "I think that the VPA negotiated in relation to the solar farms in this shire have been pretty good, and pretty lucrative, really I don't want to offend anyone, but, if you are opposed to solar farms and you miss out on a VPA then it's a lose – lose for the community, if you are opposed to solar farms and it gets approved and you get a few dollars from a VPA then at least the community will have something to show for it".

I truly appreciate your time reading my submission. I support the Culcairn Solar Farm SSD 10288. I believe that DPIE Assessment Report has been thorough and impartial and I am extremely disappointed that the GHS has not shown similar qualities as one of the consenting authorities.