

Dear Commissioners Andrew and Zada,

I strongly object to the Culcairn Solar Farm.

As we are a major landowner neighbouring the development, we have a massive frontage on our eastern and southern boundaries.

It is quite disappointing that landholders involved in this project can continue to downplay the productivity of their land and we strongly doubt that the yields suggested for the 2020 year are true. Most yields in this area averaged 4.5 to 7 tonnes to the hectare and it is funny that all landholders around this property magically can achieve such magnificent results whilst they do so poorly. Maybe its convenient to support their application in line with the marketing of the developer to achieve their massive financial goal. We know that through our lease of the solar site from 2017 to 2019 we achieved excellent results.

Misleading marketing has been circulated around our local towns advising neighbours to the development are receiving payments of \$200 - \$300000 for the life of the project falsely suggesting compensation to neighbours. The truth is that neighbours have been offered a one off \$15000 construction disruption payment which equates to mere \$500 per year if calculated over the 30 year period. Significant inequity is applicable to neighbours who are the ones that will bear the burden of this development. The marketing is misleading to portray fair compensation to neighbours but this is so far from the truth especially when payments to local towns are used as a marketing tool to achieve community acceptance. A representative of the company actually told us that some in the community see this as a bribe. All whilst there is no mention of the huge financial returns to be received by the landholders. Where is the equity and how can it be appropriate to market this information with such a misleading appearance?

Marketing also says that the developer has significantly reduced the size of the development by one third when it is actually 23%. They do not however say that the development is still enormous at approximately 900 hectares which will be one of the biggest in our state and on the most viable and valuable land.

I am the Captain of the Culcairn South West Rural Fire Service. As the Captain, I have a responsibility to fight fire within this area. This proposed development is within the area that I am responsible for. The members of the Culcairn South West RFS and neighbouring brigades have significant concerns in relation to our safety, the safety of nearby residents and the safety of towns that are near this development.

In December 2020, a fire started on the farm 'Wattlevale' and crossed Back Creek moving generally east. This area is bushfire prone. The fire entered the proposed development land. A number of RFS vehicles entered the fire scene via Wattlevale Road and other vehicles travelled along an unnamed road that runs through the middle of the development. The fire was contained and extinguished in a few hours. The weather this day was hot and the wind was gusting. The fire conditions were dangerous and fortunately the fire was contained without damaging anyone's homes. This fire was suppressed quickly due to the number of responding fire fighters and the ease of access to the fire ground.

The proposed development is over 900 hectares consisting of 900 000 solar panels in rows. Each row is connected to the next row by steel drive lines. These drive lines prohibit vehicles from being able to drive between the rows of solar panels. The development also includes a large battery storage

site, hundreds of inverters and other machinery that generates, stores or converts electricity. The entire development is surrounded in chain mesh fencing.

Should a similar fire be experienced either from a fire entering from an adjoining property or from a fire commencing within the development, access to the site is very difficult. I have concerns that the chain mesh fencing and rows of solar panels connected by drive lines creates a strong likelihood that fire fighters will be entrapped by this infrastructure which increases the risk of injury or death to fire fighters. I have been advised that should a fire start near the solar panels, water cannot be sprayed directly onto the panels due to risk of electrocution. The electrical inverters, large battery storage area and other machinery create a massive risk to fire fighters of electrocution. NSW RFS members in this area do not have access to breathing apparatus. Burning plastics, metal, solar panels, batteries etc give off toxic smoke that increases the risk of exposure to fire fighters.

I have raised these same concerns with the Rural Fire Service. We have been told that a fire plan will be required to be developed by Neoen. I am yet to see any such plan. Our Brigade members have indicated that they are not prepared to enter this development to fight a fire due to the risk of entrapment, electrocution, and exposure to dangerous chemicals. This creates a huge risk to neighbouring properties and neighbouring towns. If a similar fire to the December fire impacted this development, by the time it exited the eastern side of the development, the size of the fire would be massive and would take a huge amount of effort to control. This would create a massive risk to the entire community, and I have concerns that we could see a similar situation arise to when a fire started in the Walla tip, it escaped and then severely impacted the township of Gerogery.

A landholder stated that he was happy with the Numurkah site for firefighting however the site is totally different, it is smaller, it is not on bushfire prone land, it has roads around all sides of the development and through the middle and it also has large sections in the middle of the development with no panels which would allow access. This site however is just crammed full of panels with limited access throughout the whole site and particularly along the treed inaccessible back creek bushfire prone land.

Weed Management.

I am concerned with weed management on this development. Poor weed management can directly contribute to the risk of fire. As can be seen this year, summer rain causes hairy panic to grow rapidly. When hairy panic is seeding, the stalk breaks off and the weed head rolls along the ground. Over the years, we have seen this cause havoc on the roads by obscuring roads, filling in tree lines, surrounding homes and being stacked against fence lines. The use of chain mesh fencing around this development will cause hairy panic to be trapped inside the development and be packed in tight between the fences, solar panels and other machinery. This will contribute to the risk of a fire starting and spreading rapidly.

Value\Productivity\capability of land

Agricultural land here is too valuable close to \$9000 per acre and increasing. This is due to the reliable agricultural productivity of the land that is now well sought after due to periods of severe drought in many other areas.

As you had the opportunity to look at the land proposed for this development you would have appreciated how well the crops looked.

It has been reported that the land upon which this development is proposed is under performing and unreliable land. To obtain the best results out of farm land, the management of the land and

timing of sowing crops is very important. It has been reported that the land is Class 4 Land which I know is not correct. This land does not fit the definition of Class 4 Land.

This land has been cropped every year for the last 20 years. During 2015 and 2016, we leased and share farmed part of the Schoff's land. From 2017 to 2019, we leased all of the Schoff's land. These were years of less than this area's average rainfall yet still managed to achieve good results in grain, hay and straw. During this period, the majority of NSW was drought declared and produced little to no hay, grain or straw. Thousands of tonnes of hay and straw was produced on this land and was purchased by the NSW State Government and was shipped to fire and drought affected land in the north of NSW.

It has been argued that the land is waterlogged. If you get your crops into the ground at the right time, waterlogging becomes less of an issue. To say that this land is no good is a complete lie. The farmers that surround this development are successful farmers that consistently produce high-yielding crops.

If the land is so waterlogged how will sheep grazing be able to occur (especially with merino sheep as suggested) with foot abscess and the possibility of footrot outbreaks. How will sheep grazing be achieved with the uncontrollable toxic noxious weed Silver Leaf Nightshade that is a massive problem on this property and of great concern to all the neighbouring farmers particularly if the company does not sufficiently undertake biosecurity action in relation to decontaminating all vehicles leaving the property. Where is the sheep grazing plan and I do not believe that the landowners intend to run this property as a wool producing operation due to their previous comments of removing all stock to overcome spreading this weed and their limited ability to do so with no infrastructure to suit. The numbers suggested in the agricultural report and massively overestimated and cannot occur. Cropping is the only way to overcome the issue of this weed. Silverleaf nightshade must be sprayed at least twice per year to be managed and with the land covered in panels this can only occur by hand and with the massive size would be impossible to achieve.

The creation of pasture for the grazing of sheep can be a difficult process requiring many sprays to eliminate weeds and pests even in normal paddocks without panels in place. Pastures will need to be left for a year before grazing to set seed (creating bush fire hazard in summer) and we question how the moisture will sufficiently reach the pasture underneath the panels shielding the ground. Pasture will only be available during growth times of autumn to spring with little growth in cold winter and no growth in summer therefore only providing limited feeding in certain times of the year. How is this considered sustainable agriculture. Rotational farming of cropping and grazing provides a feed source throughout the whole year with grazing available through winter and stubble through summer. Dry years will cause pasture to die and need to be re-established which will be difficult to undertake along with fertiliser applications and spraying due to the rows of panels and drivelines between inhibiting machinery access.

Hairy Panic will have the same issue in relation to crop spraying and if not able to be managed will be a severe fire hazard as the heads will build up around panel infrastructure and fencing. Hairy Panic only has a very small window of opportunity to spray as is fast growing which runs to head quickly.

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Both of these weeds, Silver Leaf Nightshade and Hairy Panic are toxic to sheep causing hepatic damage resulting in hepatic dysfunction and photosensitization. We were unlucky to have lost some sheep on the solar site whilst under our lease due to this problem that was confirmed by veterinary inspection.



The Australian Government has an agenda to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and is in support of renewable energy to the detriment of agricultural land. The 900 000 solar panels will be manufactured in China. China have recently imposed sanctions on and stopped the purchase of Australian barley, wine, seafood, beef and lamb, coal and iron ore. A large proportion of the cost of this development will be spent purchasing solar panels from a country that doesn't support Australia. Consider the life span of solar panels. When these 900 000 solar panels require replacement, what will happen with them. We don't have recycling options for decommissioned solar panels in Australia. The majority of decommissioned solar panels in Australia are disposed of in landfill. Solar panels contain heavy metals such as cadmium, copper, lead, selenium and silver. The disposal of solar panels in landfill increases the risk of these heavy metals leaching into the environment causing further adverse environmental hazards.

We are not against renewable energy. But strong consideration needs to be made as to where these kinds of developments are placed as well as the size of the developments. Ruining productive agricultural land to generate electricity is ridiculous. Snowy 2.0 is currently under construction and is touted as being the largest committed renewable energy project in Australia that will underpin the nation's secure and stable transition to a low-carbon emissions future at the lowest cost for consumers. I am concerned that if this Neoen project is approved, that within few short years it will be outdated and under-performing.

Conclusion\Visual\Neighbourhood\Community Effects

The sheer size of this development is staggering. 900 hectares = 2250 acres. The top of the solar panels will be 4 metres off the ground. The land in this area is predominately flat. The visual impact of 900 000 solar panels 4 metres of the ground will be monstrous.

All of the neighbouring landholders have invested a lot of money and time into their homes, land and farming infrastructure. Of the eleven surrounding houses, four are practically new houses with seven older style homes that are well kept and well presented. Five of these homes have pools, which add to their value. None of these landowners are in support of this development. All of these landowners are adversely affected by this development. All of these landowners currently have beautiful agricultural outlooks. If this development goes ahead these views will change to a view over an industrial development. Two of the landowners will have views of both this development and the Walla Walla Solar Development. It has been argued that land values won't be affected, how can it not if we are forced to live next to a massive industrial development.

It is interesting to contemplate that the landowners themselves have moved away from their home at the site of the development whilst we along with other neighbours are expected to suffer the consequences right next door. They initially stated that they were happy to live around the panels but obviously this is not true. As a result of this development, one of our neighbours has already sold his property and moved away. Another neighbour has entered into negotiation with Neoen to purchase their property so that they don't have to live next to the development. Both of these families have told us they had no intention of leaving the area until Neoen proposed this massive industrial development.

The Greater Hume Shire Council has identified issues and concerns with this development and has voted to object to this development...

We would ask the Independent Planning Commission to please consider the massive impact on our family and our lifestyle. Put yourself in our shoes and consider what it would be like if you owned beautiful, high-producing farmland and then someone comes along and wants to build a massive industrial development next to you with unknown impacts in terms of heat, water shedding, fire risk, effects on land value and health risks.

At the end of the day our families livelihood and life needs to be protected and there is no current effort by this project or the government to do so.

We need for this development to ensure mitigation of all impacts will occur to a level that we are able to continue our life as we have currently been leading.

There must be no impact on our neighbouring farming operation and ability to undertake any tasks. This includes such actions as chemical spraying and protecting livestock on our side of the fence. There should be absolutely no chance that we will suffer any heat impacts due to our cropping enterprise. There should be no changes to flooding or waterways on our side of the fence. We should feel safe as we ever have with no additional fire risk to our homes or our family as volunteer firefighters. Our towns safety should be of paramount concern. No neighbour should have views of the development at all as it does not fit in to the agricultural landscape that we all understand our Council promotes. We should not have to hear it at all and there should be absolutely zero chance of chemical leaching into the future. And there should be conditions of consent in place with exact measurable definitions to ensure all of these things do not occur or compensation payable at any

time during the entire project lifetime. There must be conditions for decommissioning and rehabilitation and there must be a financial guarantee in place to ensure that the capacity for this to occur is always the case.