

**Submission to NSW Department of Planning and Environment**  
**New England Solar Farm**

**Tom and Sue Newsome**



**17 February, 2020**



*The Cloud Hill homestead is solar passive*

## **Background**

My family live at our 80 Hectare property "Cloud Hill", which adjoins the New England Solar Farm on the northern edge of the project.

I am against the project on the basis of negative outcomes for the following aspects of our business and lifestyle.

- 1) Property Value
- 2) Security
- 3) Biosecurity
  - a. Weeds
  - b. Pests
  - c. Noise
- 4) Environmental impact
  - a. Dust
  - b. Vibration
  - c. Light
- 5) Equity
- 6) Lifestyle and Amenity
- 7) Conduct of the Applicant's business
- 8) Community impact
- 9) Business
  - a. Livestock
  - b. Horses
  - c. Tourism
  - d. Education

## Submission in response to UPC Renewables proposed Solar farm

### Background

UPC renewables have lodged a proposal for the construction of a solar farm in the productive grazing area of New England in New South Wales.

This proposal is currently under consideration by the Independent Planning Commission.

### Introduction

The Newsome family purchased an unnamed 80 hectare paddock that was sub divided from an adjacent grazing property in 2011. Since purchase, the current owners have invested over \$1.8 million in the property, replaced 90% of fencing, erected a beautiful 516.5m<sup>2</sup> homestead, hayshed, horse arena, tack room, garden sheds and cattle yards. In addition a 10.4kw stand-alone solar system and solar powdered stock watering system have been installed. The entire property has been pasture improved and fertilised annually with three dams built and two dams extensively renovated. As a result, the Newsomes have created a beautiful property, unique to the district, all within 10km of Armidale.

Cloud Hill is a valuable property, due to the beautiful views, the quality infrastructure and complete absence of noise and dust along with the absence of light at night.

We object to the project because of the impact on:

- our family home;
- the value of the parcel of land we have developed; and
- our livestock grazing business.



*The view from the homestead toward Mt Duval*

## Impacts particularised

### Location

Cloud Hill is the nearest neighbour joining the project on the northern edge of the array. The visual amenity will be severely impacted by the project.



*This current view to the south*

The array will be located 130 metres from our southern boundary.



*The expected view from the southern boundary of our property*

The proposed Solar array can be seen from the homestead and the visual amenity to the south is completely disturbed.

### **Environmental Planning issues**

The land where Cloud Hill is located is zoned Primary Production under the Uralla Local Environmental Plan 2012 (LEP). The development being proposed is only permitted with consent under the LEP.

We are concerned regarding the impact that the proposed development will have on the outstanding biodiversity value of our property. On and near Cloud Hill are species of flora and fauna that may be impacted by the proposed development. We understand that the New England Tableland Bioregion, of which Cloud Hill is a part, provides habitat for 68 flora species listed in the schedules of the Threatened Species Conservation Act. Thirty of these species are listed as endangered, 39 are listed as vulnerable.

In terms of fauna the “New England Tableland Bioregion supports a considerable proportion of the endangered regent honeyeater (*Xanthomyza phrygia*) population in woodland fragments. Numbers of grassland and ground-feeding insectivorous birds have declined in the bioregion, as have some temperate woodland and forest species, mainly due to changes caused by agriculture (eg. land clearing and habitat fragmentation), a trend which is likely to continue and has occurred across temperate Australia (**Australian Terrestrial Biodiversity Assessment 2002**).

Ninety-two fauna species listed in the schedules of the TSC Act have been recorded in the New England Tablelands Bioregion (**NSW NPWS 2001**). Of these, 18 are listed as endangered, 72 are listed as vulnerable and a number of species are considered extinct in the bioregion.” (NSW Office of Environment and Heritage

<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/bioregions/NewEnglandTableland-Biodiversity.htm>)

We are concerned that the rich biodiversity that we have in and around Cloud Hill will be significantly disrupted with potential devastating effects and impacts on endangered and vulnerable fauna and flora due directly and indirectly to the proposed development.

It is our view that the proposed development will have significant adverse impacts, including environmental impacts on the natural environment of the locality including Cloud Hill. Further, the proposed development will have adverse social and economic impacts.

### **Noise**

We object to the project on the basis that noise associated with construction and ongoing management of the site will impact on our family and livestock.

Noise is measured in terms of background noise (loudness measured in decibels) and in terms of frequency (pitch) as measured in Hz.

Cattle have a range of hearing that is far broader than humans and can hear as low as 23Hz and as high as 35KHz. High pitched noises cause stress to animals (Grandin,2008). Noise associated with the construction of the New England Solar Farm will include high pitched noise associated with driving steel structures into the soil. This noise will stress our animals, affecting fertility, weight gain and profitability as was shown in the CSIRO study on the effect of clanging noise associated with metal work. (Moran and Doyle, CSIRO, 2015).

Any ongoing noise associated with the project will affect livestock, leading to negative outcomes for the farm business. These include effects on fertility and weight gain. The cause of the stress is the susceptibility of horses and cattle to novel sounds and sights in the environment, which were identified as a major source of stress (Grandin, 1999).



*Performance horses at Cloud Hill*

Our family built our home on Cloud Hill to have a peaceful existence in an area of absolute quiet. Any additional noise will have a negative impact on our lifestyle.

No actual noise modelling measurements have been taken to show the effect of noise from the project on the Newsome household.

We are concerned that the artificial insemination process will be affected by noise impact on female bovine fertility. In addition, the semen morphology of our bulls are expected to be affected by the noise associated with the project.

However, we will be able to provide a more informed opinion if we are provided results of comprehensive noise modelling.

We request that noise modelling be completed for this project.

## **Dust**

Dust from the project will affect our lifestyle during the construction and operation. We currently live in a relative dust free environment due to our regenerative farming techniques that ensure 100% ground cover, even in the current 1 in 100 year drought.



*Award winning Angus and Wagyu cattle at Cloud Hill*

Increased dust will have a negative effect of our livestock through increased incidence of respiratory diseases such as BVDV and dust borne bacterial infections such as pink eye.

No actual dust measurements have been considered to show the impact of dust from the project on the Newsome household. The current dust 'modelling' is unacceptable as an estimate of actual dust pollution impact. The proponent should provide dust modelling to quantify the impact of dust on adjoining properties.

## **Light**

One of the aspects that makes Cloud Hill unique is the absence of light, enabling star gazing at night and an escape from the lights of town.

We object to the project on the basis that increased light effects the amenity of Cloud Hill and the property value.

## **View**

The view from the Cloud Hill homestead is exceptional, with 360° views of surrounding countryside for up to 40 kilometres. The view is consistently (practically always) commented on by visitors, including UPC representatives on their visits. Currently we can only see one house, which is located approximately 3 km to the north. The remaining view is of countryside and there is no light in addition to the house mentioned at night.

The photo montage provide in the EIS depicts an impact on our view to the north west, south and south west. This impact will be felt in lifestyle, amenity and land value, as much of the value of Cloud Hill is associated with the ambience that is linked to the view, lack of noise and dust and the countryside, while being located close to town. This property is unique in possessing such attributes whilst being located within 10 minutes of the city of Armidale.

## **Land Value**

Cloud Hill is a valuable property, due to unique features such as:

- A modern, newly constructed, beautiful home
- Located within 10km of a major rural city
- Located within 10 minutes to a major rural airport
- Secure location at the end of a no through road
- Peaceful, quiet location with no discernible noise, dust or light
- Productive agricultural land, supporting award winning livestock

The diminution in the value of Cloud Hill will be significant.

## **Security**

Security is a major concern for our family. Tom Newsome travels consistently for work and it is important that the family feels secure in his absence. One of the key attributes of Cloud Hill is the security, being at the end of a dead end road, with full view of oncoming traffic. The Newsome family considered 45 properties before purchasing Cloud Hill.

The Newsome family rarely has unwanted visitors and they have previously requested that Uralla Council erect a no through road sign to ensure their privacy.

The construction and maintenance of such significant industrial development adjoining our property to the south of Cloud Hill will decimate the privacy and security that is so important to the Newsome family. While the applicant can offer screening of personnel, this will not alleviate the perceived or real threat to the security of Sue when at home with the four children, while Tom is away.

We will either have to sell our property, move away and rent or Tom will have to stop travelling for work. If we choose the latter, it will risk the business at a potential cost of \$300,000 per year.

The remote Cloud Hill setting which currently provides comfort to the family while Tom is away will be transformed to a very unsettling location for a lady and four children alone at night.

Members of our immediate family have anxiety and been hospitalised with acute anxiety related health issues. The perceived security threat is very real for our family.

## **Pests**

There is a current threat from feral pests including rabbits, foxes, pigs, stray dogs and cats. The solar farm cannot realistically protect neighbours from impact from feral animals.

Additional use of contractors will be required to manage pests. This will subsequently impact on the security of our family. Even if the security threat was considered as only a perceived threat, it is important to note that the perception is real for our family.

## **Weeds**

Noxious weeds are a constant issue for farmers, with the potential to degrade land, decimate farm production and reduce land values. The Kellys Plains area is affected by several damaging noxious weeds including Chilean Needle Grass, Serrated Tussock, Couch, Blackberry, Bracken fern, African Love Grass, Nodding thistle, Scotch thistle, Variegated thistle and Carpet grass. Seeds are spread by wind, vehicles, rainfall if let to seed.

The project will not be able to effectively control such weeds without a complete under carriage wash down process and a regular weed eradication effort.

Additional labour will be required to manage additional weed burden, which will add to the cost of weed management throughout the area.



*Chilean needle grass*



*Serrated tussock*



*African lovegrass*

## **Fire**

With the onset of climate change, the New England is experiencing hotter, drier summer conditions. As a result there is an increased potential and impact for fires, including grass fires that could effect Cloud Hill. The project will increase the pasture dry matter yield and also has the potential to increase fire risk through electrical fault. The increased fuel load will put our property and family at risk.

Additional labour will be required to manage fire risk.



*The fire threat is real at Cloud Hill*

### **Eco- Tourism**

We intend to transform Cloud Hill and our other properties Glenlivet and Long Point into a farm eco-tourism resort.



The home was built based on Spicers Peak Lodge, a similar luxury farm stay at Warwick in Queensland.

In order to do so, we have enabled ensuite plumbing in all bedrooms to move to bed and breakfast style rooms. The project will threaten the viability of this enterprise.



## **Education**

There is a growing market in Australia and Asia for education in both English, physical education and natural ecosystems. This is due to the emerging concerns in relation to the increasing urban environment around the world. These factors combine to provide a market for both tourism and education in a natural environment.

Sue is an experienced teacher and holds a bachelor degree in Arts and a diploma in education. These qualifications enable her to teach English and Geography at all levels. There is a growing market for English education that we are considering.

We intended to incorporate education and training from our base at Cloud Hill, focussing on English and geography. We have purchased some of the most spectacular natural environments in the gorges that will provide a perfect environment for this enterprise.

## **Ownership**

UPC Renewables is a privately held company, whose ultimate ownership is a company based in Hong Kong. There is only one resident director. The other two directors both reside in Hong Kong. According to UPC staff that attended Cloud Hill on 16 August, 2018 the directors who reside in Hong Kong do so for "tax purposes".

This begs the question as to why our Government would allow a private enterprise which is unlikely to pay tax in Australia, based on its ownership and locality, to displace Australians and transform a productive agricultural setting of great beauty into an industrial site. The effect will be costly through decimated land values that reflect an industrial setting reminiscent of the Anthropocene.

**A once secure, idyllic family home will be replaced with a noisy, dusty, potentially unsafe industrial site.**

## Loss Quantification

I have quantified the loss to as follows:

### QUANTIFICATION OF LOSS DUE TO IMPACT OF THE PROPOSED UPC SOLAR FARM

Tom and Sue Newsome, Outcross Pty Ltd

Assumptions			
Discount Rate	4%		
Current Property Value	\$1,500,000		
Inflation	2.5%		

Livestock		Property Value	
Number	100	Expected Annual Increase	5%
Weight Gain	292	With solar	1%
Price- Long Term	3.5		

Weeds / Pests		Tourism / Education	
Cost / Hour	70	Rate	200
Hours / Week	2	Number	5
		Occupancy	0.6
		With solar	0.2

Period	Assumed Annual Loss		
Item			NPV
Property Value- Expected			
Property Value- Solar			
Loss			\$4,022,219.91
Amenity			
Visual	\$20,000		\$649,889.33
Lifestyle	\$20,000		\$649,889.33
Biosecurity			
Weeds	104 Hrs		\$236,559.72
Pest	104 Hrs		\$236,559.72
Livestock Business			
Noise	20%		\$664,186.90
Dust	20%		\$454,922.53
Light	5%		\$113,730.63
Vibration	5%		\$113,730.63

<b>Security</b>	<b>\$300,000</b>		<b>\$7,436,031.74</b>
<b>Tourism Business</b>	<b>60%</b>		<b>\$2,559,312.32</b>
<b>Education Business</b>	<b>60%</b>		<b>\$2,559,312.32</b>
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$19,696,345.07</b>

Notes:

- 1) Property Value: Reduction in the value of the property through the the removal of the peaceful, attractive setting
- 2) Security- The loss of a secure environment will impact Toms ability to travel, impacting his business, which relies on travel across Australia.
- 3) Biosecurity- The proponent has not produced a weed management plan of any substance. This will effect the whole area that is under threat from noxious weeds such as Chilean Needle Grass, Serrated Tussock and African Lovegrass.
- 4) Modelling of environmental impacts is inadequate for noise, dust, vibration, light
- 5) The locals remain affected by this project for life, while the proponents and adjacent landholders live elsewhere
- 6) The rural residential community now has an industrial backdrop
- 7) Business opportunities are now limited due to impact of industrial site

**Neighbours**

The consultation process has been poor, with many neighbours not knowing the detail of the proposed solar farm. While there has been advertised community meetings, these have been ineffective in distributing relevant information to affected landholders close to the project.

I have provided support for this view in the form of a petition against the UPC Solar Farm, signed by 33 neighbours and close residents. This petition was lodged with our local member, Adam Marshall.

I have also attached as Appendix 2 a response from Ministers Marshall and Stokes.

I note that the petition was only distributed to residents on Harriet Gully Rd, Corey Rd and Old Gostwyck Rd (beyond Saumarez Creek).

I have been notified that there are a number of concerned residents on Barley Field Rd and the western and southern parts of the project that do not understand their options to object, but feel that they have not been consulted. This is consistent with the feedback that we received from the residents that we spoke to whilst distributing the attached petition.

I have attached as a Bibliography, a range of reference material that supports the views stated in this objection.

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**List of Appendices**

Appendix 1: Petition against the New England Solar farm

Appendix 2: Reply from Ministers Marshall and Stokes

# PETITION

**To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the  
Legislative Assembly of New South Wales.**

The Petition of the citizens of New South Wales:

Brings to the attention of the House, the environment impact statement that UPC renewables has lodged for the erection of the 'New England Solar Farm'. The project is a 720-megawatt generating capacity solar farm to be developed over more than 2,000 hectares of prime productive grazing land in the New England district of New South Wales. As part of construction a 500 person camp is proposed to be located on the site and proximal to existing local residents.

**The undersigned petitioners object to the project on the basis that it will:**

- **Negatively impact threatened and declining fauna and flora** during and following construction, **mitigating against the partially government funded "Closing the Gap" project** for functional habitat for threatened New England fauna (<https://snelandcare.org.au>).
- **Produce noise levels during and after construction** which will have a negative impact on both people and livestock. This will completely change the quiet and peaceful amenity that they enjoy now and that brought them to the area;
- **Produce dust during and after construction** which will have an adverse effect on people (eg. asthma sufferers) and livestock (through increased incidence of respiratory diseases such as BVDV and dust borne bacterial infections such as pink eye);
- **Increase the spread and incidence of vermin** (foxes, cats, rabbits) **and noxious weeds** (including serrated tussock, nodding thistle, African lovegrass and Chilean needle grass) which have the potential to cause widespread damage to primary production in the region. The project faces the very difficult task of effectively managing undercarriage washdown of so many vehicles entering and exiting the project grounds, and effectively carrying out regular and systematic weed eradication processes;
- **Increase the potential for fires** due to elevated levels of dry matter across unused grazing land in addition to the increased risk of electrical fault;
- **Impede the views of surrounding countryside and introduce light pollution at night** where there has been none before;
- **Introduce an additional 500 persons to the immediate area** during the years of construction, creating an **immediate potential safety and security risk to local families and property**, as well putting **immense pressure on a number of local roads**;
- Due to the issues raised above, **negatively impact on lifestyle, health, native biota and value of the land and property** in the vicinity of the project.

**The undersigned petitioners therefore ask the Legislative Assembly to refuse permission to UPC to erect the New England Solar Farm, unless and until the above serious issues are addressed.**

Name	Address	Signature
P. Stillie	59 HARNET GULLY RD	P Stillie
W DEXTER	75 HARNET GULLY RD	W Dexter
ROB NETHERY	77 HARNET GULLY RD KELLYS PLAINS	Rob Nethery
P. RYAN	79 Harnet Gully Rd Kellys Plains	P Ryan
S. POK	72 HARNET GULLY RD KELLYS PLAINS	S Pok
Wendy Stoe	" " " "	Wendy Stoe
Sue Newsome	778 Old Gostwyck rd	Sue Newsome
T Finlayson	10 Corey Rd Kellys Plains	T Finlayson
S Finlayson	" " "	S Finlayson

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Name	Address	Signature
DAVID HEALEY	498 COREY RD KELLYS PLAINS	David Healey
Annette Healey	48 Corey Rd Kellys Plains	[Signature]
Tom Newsome	778 Old Gostwyck Rd Kellys Plains	[Signature]
Tony Spiller	45 Corey Rd Kellys Plains	[Signature]
Kate Wilkinson	42 Corey Rd Kellys Plains	[Signature]
Elena Anderson	718 Old Gostwyck Road, Kellys Plains	E Anderson
JA ANDERSON	718 OLD GOSTWYCK RD KELLYS PLAINS	[Signature]
DAVID MACKAY	17 HARRIET GULLY RD, KELLYS PLAINS	[Signature]
Sarah Murray	30 HARRIET GULLY RD, KELLYS PLAINS	[Signature]
Abelie Cumbers	30 Harriet Gully Rd, Kellys Plains	[Signature]

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Name	Address	Signature
Cherene Spendelove	72 Harriet Gully Rd, Armidale	CK Spendelove
Dale Fredericks	62 Harriet Gully Rd Armidale	D Fredericks
Alison Neithery	77 Harriet Gully Rd Armidale	A Neithery
Eileen Hunter	56 Harriet Gully Rd Armidale	E Hunter
Matt Broom	31 Harriet Gully Rd Armidale	M Broom
Michelle Dexter	75 Harriet Gully Rd Armidale	M Dexter
Helen Dickson	607 Old Castlereagh Rd Kellysbrn	H Dickson
Michael Dickson	607 Old Castlereagh Rd Kellysbrn	M A Dickson



# PETITION

**To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the  
Legislative Assembly of New South Wales.**

The Petition of the citizens of New South Wales:

Brings to the attention of the House, the environment impact statement that UPC renewables has lodged for the erection of the 'New England Solar Farm'. The project is a 720-megawatt generating capacity solar farm to be developed over more than 2,000 hectares of prime productive grazing land in the New England district of New South Wales. As part of construction a 500 person camp is proposed to be located on the site and proximal to existing local residents.

**The undersigned petitioners object to the project on the basis that it will:**

- **Negatively impact threatened and declining fauna and flora** during and following construction, **mitigating against the partially government funded "Closing the Gap" project** for functional habitat for threatened New England fauna (<https://snelandcare.org.au>);
- **Produce noise levels during and after construction** which will have a negative impact on both people and livestock. This will completely change the quiet and peaceful amenity that they enjoy now and that brought them to the area;
- **Produce dust during and after construction** which will have an adverse effect on people (eg. asthma sufferers) and livestock (through increased incidence of respiratory diseases such as BVDV and dust borne bacterial infections such as pink eye);
- **Increase the spread and incidence of vermin** (foxes, cats, rabbits) **and noxious weeds** (including serrated tussock, nodding thistle, African lovegrass and Chilean needle grass) which have the potential to cause widespread damage to primary production in the region. The project faces the very difficult task of effectively managing undercarriage washdown of so many vehicles entering and exiting the project grounds, and effectively carrying out regular and systematic weed eradication processes;
- **Increase the potential for fires** due to elevated levels of dry matter across unused grazing land in addition to the increased risk of electrical fault;
- **Impede the views of surrounding countryside and introduce light pollution at night** where there has been none before;
- **Introduce an additional 500 persons to the immediate area** during the years of construction, creating an immediate potential safety and security risk to local families and property, as well putting immense pressure on a number of local roads;
- Due to the issues raised above, **negatively impact on lifestyle, health, native biota and value of the land and property** in the vicinity of the project.

**The undersigned petitioners therefore ask the Legislative Assembly to refuse permission to UPC to erect the New England Solar Farm, unless and until the above serious issues are addressed.**

Name	Address	Signature
<i>Andrew Will</i>	42 COREY RD KELLYS PLAINS	<i>A Will</i>
<i>Debbie Swadling</i>	Granview Old Coshupct Rd	<i>D Swadling</i>
<i>Stephen Swadling</i>	..	<i>S. Swadling</i>
<i>Frances Spiller</i>	45 COREY RD, KELLYS PLAINS.	<i>F. Spiller</i>



**Adam Marshall** MP  
MEMBER FOR NORTHERN TABLELANDS

Ref: lh:nesf

Mr Thomas Newsome  
778 Old Gostwyck Road  
**KELLYS PLAINS NSW 2350**

Dear Mr Newsome

I write further to a petition dated 28 August 2019 that you signed regarding your concerns about and objection to the UPC Renewables proposed New England Solar Farm.

As the requests in your petition were not able to be determined by the Legislative Assembly, I made direct representations to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, the Hon Rob Stokes MP seeking his advice and direction on this matter. I asked that the Minister consider your petition as a submission.

Following my representations, I have now received the enclosed response from the Minister. I note that the proponent completed a Response to Submissions report that included the removal of one of three proposed solar arrays and set another solar array further away from residential areas.

I also note that the Minister expects the Independent Planning Commission to hold a public meeting in the area given the level of public concern and registration for updates on the project can be completed at [www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects](http://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects).

Should I be able to provide you with any further assistance, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely

**ADAM MARSHALL MP**  
Member for Northern Tablelands  
Enc:





**The Hon. Rob Stokes MP**  
Minister for Planning and Public Spaces

Ref: MDPE19/3482

The Hon. Adam Marshall MP  
Minister for Agriculture and Western NSW  
Member for Northern Tablelands  
PO Box 77  
ARMIDALE NSW 2350

RECEIVED  
10 DEC 2019

Dear Minister *Adam,*

Thank you for your correspondence on behalf of your constituents regarding the proposed New England Solar Farm in Uralla (SSD-9255).

I note that the correspondence includes a petition signed by more than 30 people objecting to the project and raising concerns regarding its potential impacts.

I am advised that the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (the Department) publicly exhibited the project from 20 February to 20 March 2019, and some of those that signed the petition lodged detailed submissions objecting to the project.

The proponent has completed a Response to Submissions report describing how it will aim to address the issues raised by the community. The Department advises that the proponent amended the project to remove one of three proposed solar arrays and set back another array from residential areas to minimise impacts on the local community.

I understand that the Department has visited the site and surrounds and has met with nearby landowners to understand their specific concerns about the project. The Department will consider all the matters they raised during its detailed assessment of the project in accordance with applicable NSW Government policies and guidelines.

The Department is currently finalising its assessment of the project and, once complete, will refer the application to the Independent Planning Commission (the Commission) for determination.

Given the level of community concern, it is likely that the Commission will hold a public meeting in the local area, which will provide your constituents with a further opportunity to raise concerns directly with the Commission before any final decision is made.

Your constituents can register on the Department's Major Projects website to receive updates on the progress of the project at [www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects](http://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects).

If your constituents have any questions, they are welcome to contact Ms Nicole Brewer, Director of Energy Assessments at the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment on 9274 6374 or at [nicole.brewer@planning.nsw.gov.au](mailto:nicole.brewer@planning.nsw.gov.au).

Yours sincerely

**The Hon. Rob Stokes MP**  
Minister for Planning and Public Spaces