

Oppose the Large Scale Solar Development known as Culcairn Solar Farm (SSD-10288).

I am President of the Eunony Valley Association which represents 50 landholders that live adjacent to 1 completed, 1 under construction and a 3<sup>rd</sup> that will be built immediately after the 2<sup>nd</sup> solar power station is built.

I speak today against this development now having experienced the construction and operation of these apparently modern power stations

I am now going to refer the Large Scale Solar Guidelines and our communities experience and observations.

1.1 **Objectives** The objectives of this guideline are to:

- provide guidance to the community, applicants, industry and regulators on how the Department of Planning and Environment (the Department) assesses environmental, social and economic impacts of State significant solar energy projects
- encourage industry to select suitable sites for projects to reduce the likelihood and extent of land use conflicts and environmental and social impacts
  - facilitate better on-ground outcomes by promoting early identification of potential impacts
  - promote meaningful, respectful and effective community and stakeholder engagement
- support the development of a sustainable solar industry in NSW by providing a clear, consistent and responsive policy framework

### 1.3 Strategic context

The NSW Government supports the development of a sustainable solar energy industry in NSW and acknowledges it would help to reduce reliance on fossil fuels, thereby contributing to reductions in air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. – **what do we know about the impact of solar on our environment – very little, it involves mining, land clearing, loss of prime agricultural land, no known recycling (globally), chemical residues, panel breakages – what happens – if we don't know the answers does this make it right to proceed?**

In the strategic context, large-scale solar energy projects provide an opportunity to:

- contribute to NSW achieving net-zero emissions by 2050 as set out in the NSW Climate Change Policy Framework
- deliver on commitments in the NSW Renewable Energy Action Plan – **yes but at who's expense**
- support Australia's commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions – **carbon offsets – so how does knocking over mature established trees fit with this policy?**
- contribute to any Commonwealth renewable energy targets
- assist in meeting energy demand and improving energy security for NSW.

**These points may be strategic to NSW & federal government but are not necessarily good planning or governance statements.**

### 2.2 Where are large-scale solar energy projects allowed?

***RU1 – where else can it go?***

## 3. Stakeholder engagement

**Scoping meeting with the Department** During scoping and before commencing the formal development assessment process, applicants should contact the Department and arrange a meeting to discuss the proposed project. The Department will provide preliminary feedback about site selection and potential constraints. **Why are adjoining landholders provided with the same opportunity of direct access to the department.**

- **Community** – affected landowners, special interest groups and other stakeholders, including:
  - **Local land owners** – both of the project site (if not owned by the applicant) and those whose land is required for access during construction and maintenance.

## 4. Site selection

### 4.2 Key site constraints

While the following site constraints do not preclude large-scale solar energy development on certain land, they do indicate issues which may exist, and which can be helpful for applicants to identify and carefully consider in the site selection and design process:

- **Visibility and topography** – sites with high visibility, such as those on prominent or high ground positions, or sites which are located in a valley with elevated nearby residences with views toward the site. This is particularly important in the context of significant scenic, historic or cultural landscapes.
- **Biodiversity** – areas of native vegetation or habitat of threatened species or ecological communities within and adjacent to the site, including native forests, rainforests, woodlands, wetlands, heathlands, shrublands, grasslands and geological features.
- **Residences** – residential zones or urbanised areas.
- **Agriculture** – important agricultural lands, including Biophysical Strategic Agricultural Land (BSAL), irrigated cropping land, and land and soil capability classes 1, 2 and 3. Consideration should also be given to any significant fragmentation or displacement of existing agricultural industries and any cumulative impacts of multiple developments.

So this is the guidelines that you as a panel have been given to follow, a very difficult task for you.

I ask how this development can be supported when there are no measurables around these motherhood statements:

How far from homes is ok?

What is visual impact for properties that can see it

What is acceptable water run-off and discharge

What is acceptable dust levels during construction

How many hours, days, times of the year did the EIS assessors visit the site. Has nocturnal fauna be assessed i.e. squirrel glider, has migrating birds – red breasted snow robin, the superb parrot, kingfishers

Why is it ok to knock over mature trees - Murray LLS have funding programs to preserve hollow trees, paddock trees,

What is acceptable levels of bio-diversity impact

What is acceptable levels of damage to heritage

What is safe distances to live from Large Scale Solar – do we know

What research has been done around fire management within solar power stations?

So what have we experienced:

Flooding during and after construction through to neighbouring land, fences knocked over, weeds washed in – Bathurst burrs, silver leaf nightshade, khaki weed, horehound – all noxious weeds

Visual impact – glare and reflection: quote from Wagga GM Peter Thomson – “its like there is 2 suns – not acceptable”, NSW EPA Katrina O’Reilly – yes there is glare issues, local MP Joe McGirr – this is unacceptable, independent visual assessment now openly states that some residences have between 5000 and 7200minutes of “glare per annum”

screening – I have planted 11,500 trees. Planting trees under established mature trees does not work, please explain how little trees are going to grow.

Bushfire Management I am Deputy captain of our RFS brigade– a plan may be signed off by Sydney or Regional Offices however our first-hand experience shows that you cannot drive a fire truck down the rows. The security fencing does not allow escape strategies in the event of being trapped. In summary we will not enter

the site, so instead of putting a small fire within the solar site, we now have to battle a larger fire on private adjoining land – simple rule of fire-fighting - put out little fire to stop it becoming a big fire. So how can this be approved.

So in closing as a now impacted community looking to seek best practices in other communities how can this development be approved without having measurables around the motherhood statements.

This is not about anti-solar, this is about good governance, good planning, learning from the past.

In closing my final question to the panel is:

Have you ever seen a large scale solar development?

Have you spoken to neighbouring and or impacted properties of developments that are now in operation?

Are we as a society, as a planning panel as consent authorities are we prepared to learn and improve or are we going to go down a path of blind faith, which is exactly what probably happened with coal fired power stations in their day. We are now critical of coal but are we heading down the same un-informed path today with solar.

You will lots of emotion today from the locals, that same emotion now is reality for my community – living next these developments is a life sentence, living next to the neighbour from hell 24/7.

So if you can't answer the questions around measurable outcomes then how can approval be granted of this development based on the developers nicely written application where none of these people have to live next to it for the rest of their lives?

**Withhold my name please**

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