



ADAM WIGHTMAN

OBJECT

Submission No: 189483

Organisation:		Key issues: <i>Land use compatibility, Visual impacts, Traffic, Heritage, Water, Noise, Hazards and risks, Decommissioning and rehabilitation</i>
Location: <i>New South Wales 2612</i>		
Submitter Type: <i>an individual making a submission on my own behalf</i>		
Attachment:		

Submission date: 7/31/2024 12:02:35 AM

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed Wallaroo Solar Farm development. As a concerned resident of the community, I believe that this project will have significant adverse effects on our environment, community, and local economy. Below, I outline my key concerns and reasons for opposing this development.

Environmental Impact:

The construction and operation of the Wallaroo Solar Farm will lead to substantial disruption of local ecosystems. The clearing of land for solar panels will destroy habitats for native wildlife, including threatened and endangered species. Additionally, the alteration of the natural landscape can lead to soil erosion, water runoff issues, and other environmental degradation. The proposed site includes a watercourse that feeds into the Murrumbidgee River. Any contamination or disruption to this watercourse could have far-reaching impacts on water quality and aquatic life downstream, affecting the broader ecosystem reliant on the Murrumbidgee River. Environmental persistence is another significant concern; many of the chemicals in lithium batteries do not degrade easily. Once they enter the waterways, they can persist for long periods, continuously harming the ecosystem and making it difficult to remediate the contaminated areas.

Visual and Aesthetic Concerns:

The proposed solar farm will drastically alter the visual character of the area. The rural and scenic landscape, which is a significant aspect of our community's identity, will be marred by the industrial appearance of the solar panels and associated infrastructure. This change could also negatively impact local property values.

Impact on Agriculture:

The area designated for the solar farm is currently utilised for agricultural purposes. Transforming this land into a solar farm will reduce the availability of fertile land for farming, potentially harming local agricultural productivity for future generations.

Health and Safety Issues:

There are concerns about the potential health risks associated with large-scale solar farms. These include possible electromagnetic field (EMF) exposure and the impact of photovoltaic (PV) panel materials on human health. Comprehensive studies on these risks should be conducted before proceeding with the development. Moreover, the installation of large-scale lithium-ion batteries poses additional health risks. Exposure to lithium can cause respiratory, skin, and eye irritation, and in the event of a fire, the batteries can release toxic gases and pose explosion hazards. The potential for such incidents raises significant safety concerns for the nearby residential areas.

Economic Considerations:

While renewable energy projects can provide economic benefits, it is essential to consider the long-term economic impact on the local community. This area significantly contributes to the local economy, with several



wineries relying on tourism for their business. The presence of a solar farm does not fit in with the aesthetic and touristic appeal of the region, potentially deterring visitors and negatively impacting these businesses. The Wallaroo Solar Farm might not generate significant local employment opportunities, and any economic benefits could be outweighed by the potential negative impacts on tourism, agriculture, and property values.

Traffic and Road Infrastructure:

The proposed development will result in a significant increase in heavy vehicle traffic, including large trucks transporting equipment and materials. According to the recent RFI response, the peak vehicle movements per day will be 90, involving large trucks that the local roads are not designed to accommodate. Roads such as Gooromon Ponds Road and Wallaroo Road are currently not suitable for heavy vehicle traffic, which could lead to accelerated wear and tear, increased maintenance costs, and heightened safety risks for local residents. The swept path analysis indicates that substantial road upgrades will be necessary, but these may not fully mitigate the impact on the existing road infrastructure (RFI Response - 27 June). We make note that the large amount of truck traffic will not cease at the end of the construction as a constant refurbishment of solar panels will be required.

Proximity to Housing:

The proposed site is in close proximity to housing developments in the ACT, including high-density residential areas. This proximity raises significant concerns about noise pollution, which has been assessed to ensure compliance with noise limits; however, the long-term impacts of continuous low-level noise on residents need further study. Additionally, the installation of large-scale solar batteries poses potential fire and chemical hazard risks. Incidents involving battery storage systems, though rare, can have severe consequences, including toxic gas emissions and explosion risks, which are particularly concerning given the nearby residential areas.

Lack of Adequate Consultation:

The community consultation process for the Wallaroo Solar Farm development has been inadequate. Many residents had to conduct their own research on the internet to understand the project's implications. The town meeting was scheduled with late notice and during school holidays, limiting participation. Moreover, any information and fact-finding efforts were at the cost of the residents, leading to frustration and a sense of being unsupported by the responsible authorities.

In conclusion, while I support the transition to renewable energy, I believe that the Wallaroo Solar Farm development is not the right solution for our community. The potential environmental, aesthetic, health, safety, and economic impacts are too significant to overlook. I urge you to reconsider this proposal and explore more suitable alternatives that align with the needs and values of our community.

Thank you for considering my concerns. I hope that you will take these points into account when making your decision regarding the Wallaroo Solar Farm development.

Sincerely,
