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OBJECT

Submission No: 189644

Organisation:		Key issues: <i>Cumulative impacts</i>
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The proposal to establish a 100MW solar farm adjacent to residential properties in Wallaroo, NSW, and nearby ACT suburbs raises substantial concerns. While solar energy is a crucial component of sustainable development, its proximity to residential areas can have significant negative impacts on both the environment and the social well-being of the residents, both now and in the future.

Environmental Impacts

- 1. Habitat Disruption: The construction of a large-scale solar farm involves clearing extensive tracts of land, which disrupts local habitats. The reduction in green space also affects the natural balance and health of the environment.*
- 2. Soil and Water Contamination: Solar panels contain hazardous materials such as cadmium and lead, which pose a risk of contamination if not properly managed. During the construction and operational phases, any damage to the panels or improper handling of waste can lead to these toxic substances leaching into the soil and nearby water sources. This contamination can have long-term detrimental effects on agricultural land, local water bodies, and the health of the ecosystem.*
- 3. Increased Fire Risk: The presence of high-voltage electrical equipment and solar panels increases the risk of fires, particularly in dry seasons. Wallaroo and the surrounding ACT suburbs are prone to bushfires, and the addition of a solar farm can exacerbate this risk. Fires not only pose a direct threat to the environment by destroying vegetation and wildlife but also release hazardous chemicals from burning solar panels, further contaminating the land and water.*
- 4. Long-term Waste Management Issues: Solar panels have a limited lifespan, typically around 25 to 30 years. Decommissioning a large solar farm involves dismantling and disposing of the panels, which contain toxic substances. The lack of robust recycling infrastructure for solar panels means that a significant amount of hazardous waste could end up in landfills, posing a long-term environmental threat. Proper waste management strategies are essential but challenging to implement effectively.*

Social Well-being Impacts

- 1. Noise and Visual Pollution: The construction phase of a 100MW solar farm involves significant noise from heavy machinery, vehicles, and construction activities. This noise pollution can disrupt the daily lives of residents in Wallaroo, causing stress and reducing their quality of life. Additionally, the visual impact of vast arrays of solar panels can detract from the natural beauty of the area, affecting the aesthetic value of the community and potentially lowering property values.*
- 2. Traffic and Safety Concerns: The influx of construction vehicles and ongoing maintenance traffic can increase congestion and pose safety risks on local roads, which are often not designed to handle such heavy usage. This increased traffic can lead to accidents and make daily commutes more hazardous, impacting the overall safety and well-being of residents.*



3. Economic Implications: The presence of a large solar farm can negatively impact property values in the surrounding areas. The industrial appearance and potential environmental risks associated with the solar farm may make properties less attractive to potential buyers, affecting homeowners' investments.

4. Community Displacement: The establishment of a solar farm next to residential areas can lead to a sense of community displacement. Residents may feel that their concerns and quality of life are being overlooked in favor of industrial development.

Conclusion

The proposed 100MW solar farm in Wallaroo, NSW, presents several immediate and long-term negative impacts on the environment and social well-being of residents. Environmental concerns include habitat disruption, soil and water contamination, increased fire risk, and long-term waste management issues. Social well-being is affected by noise and visual pollution, traffic and safety concerns, economic implications, and community displacement. While renewable energy is vital for a sustainable future, careful consideration of the location and implementation of such projects is essential to mitigate negative impacts and protect the interests of local communities. Ensuring that large-scale solar farms are situated away from residential areas or integrated with existing industrial sites can help balance the need for renewable energy with the protection of community and environmental well-being.
