



NICK O'LEARY

OBJECT

Submission No: 189622

Organisation:	Nick O'Leary Wines. Nick O'Leary Cellar Door Restaurant	<p>Land use compatibility, Visual Key impacts, Biodiversity, Traffic, Heritage, Noise, Dust, Hazards issues: and risks, Community benefit, Decommissioning and rehabilitation</p>
Location:	New South Wales 2618	
Submitter Type:	an individual making a submission on my own behalf	
Attachment:	Nick O'Leary_public meeting submission.pages	

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Panel Chairman and Commissioners,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a written submission to assist you in your deliberations of the Wallaroo Solar Installation application (SSD-9261283). As you know, I spoke at the public community meeting on 18 July 2024 to voice my objections to the application in its entirety and will attach my speech with this submission for ease of reference. In addition to the objections I have already made, I would like to reiterate the following points for the Commission's determination:

Wallaroo is home to a hundreds of acres of vineyards, and is an established and prominent grape growing district. There has been no consultation with Destination NSW or any business owners in the Wallaroo region, in particular, no consultation with wine tourism businesses including my own, Nick O'Leary Wines and Heywood Cellar Door Restaurant. We have over 50,000 visitors to the Wallaroo/Hall wine region every year, who, if the project was to proceed, would witness the solar farm construction and final infrastructure every time they frequented the wineries, both inbound and outbound which would directly impact their experience of the picturesque Wallaroo setting. Aesthetically, Wallaroo has some of the most spectacular landscapes and scenery associated with the region and holds considerable value to the community on account of this. The area also affords fine views of the Brindabella hills and mountain ranges that greatly contribute the the outstanding scenic value of the place. An industrial project of the size and magnitude stated in the application does not belong in this setting. For your records, I would like to reiterate the fact that the residents of Wallaroo are supporters of renewable energy with solar panels already covering a number of existing infrastructure, however, this is in proportion to land usage.

To my knowledge there has been no risk assessment or consultation with the NSW Department of Primary Industries, in particular, the Agricultural Branch for vineyards. Why? On the Clean Energy Council/Renewable Energy Australia web site it states temperatures of solar farms can increase surrounding temperatures. How can we have confidence that this project won't effect our local micro-climate? Where is the scientific data that negates this concern? There are a number of bio-security risks to the Wallaroo/Hall wine region. With the amount of trucks entering the region from other areas of Australia on a daily basis this would significantly increase these risks. For example, Phylloxera - an insect pest of grapevines that has no cure and can wipe out vineyards simply by the transfer on ones shoes, let alone trucks.

What are the benefits of this proposal to the Wallaroo community? The application mentions economic benefits to the Wallaroo region - what are these exactly? It's my understanding a small financial amount will go to the Yass Valley Council, however this would not be enough to cover the negative economic impacts the project would have on the Wallaroo community as a whole - such as a significant decrease in land values, and damage to roads.



Where was the consultation with the Ngunnawal (Ngunawal) peoples of the region - the first inhabitants of Wallaroo. Residents of Wallaroo took it upon themselves to do their own consultation and were unpleasantly surprised to learn that they had not been contacted, consulted or provided with a walk through of the proposed land conversion. As it turns out, the site of the proposed project is on "Women's" land and was part of an established path from One Tree Hill to Ginninderra Falls for pregnant Ngunnawal women.

There are serious concerns about the building phase of this project which would bring in a huge number of trucks and machinery. The increased traffic load would adversely effect our already narrow, badly damaged and poorly maintained roads. No amount of tweaking certain areas of the road, as proposed in the application, would negate these traffic risks.

Thank you for the opportunity to again provide the above concerns and objections to the Wallaroo Solar Installation application (SSD-9261283). I, along with the Wallaroo community hope that you consider the public objections and input in their entirety and refuse consent of the Wallaroo Solar Farm development application. It is very important that these types of projects receive community support before they reach this stage of the process, and it is overwhelmingly obvious that there is no community support for this proposal.

Kind regards,

Nick O'Leary

Business owner/Winemaker

Nick O'Leary Wines and Heywood Cellar Door/Restaurant [REDACTED] *Wallaroo, NSW 2618*

[REDACTED]

Good afternoon Panel Chairman and Commissioners. My name is Nick O'Leary. I am a local resident and winemaker/owner of Nick O'Leary Wines and Nick O'Leary Cellar Door Restaurant - situated on Brooklands Road in Wallaroo just to the north-west of the proposed solar project.

I will mention like most residents in Wallaroo we are supporters of renewable energy. We support renewables. Our main winery and vineyard sheds are covered in solar panels. We use minimal machinery, hand prune and pick all our vineyards and pride ourselves on making hand made wines in a traditional manner.

Nick O'Leary Wines has been operating for 17 years. We made a significant investment in the Hall/Wallaroo wine region when we bought a small existing vineyard and 135-acre land holding eight years ago. We have made a significant investment in establishing a 500-tonne crush winery and extending the vineyards to 35 acres. With more in the planning. We are one of the biggest producers in the Canberra District, buying grapes off other growers and leasing other vineyards in the Yass Valley region. We also make wine for other prominent local wine brands. Where we are standing right now in Murrumbateman for this is a prominent wine area.

There are four cellar doors in the Hall/Wallaroo sub-region of the Canberra District, three of them with restaurants and many other vineyards in the area. We are situated 25 minutes from the Canberra City which is why we decided to buy in Wallaroo and set up a cellar door/restaurant. And 13 months ago we opened our cellar door, restaurant and function centre, aimed at attracting Canberrans, Sydneysiders and interstate visitors. The two businesses employ around 30 direct employees and many more indirect. This was a huge financial investment to showcase our wines and share what is a special place to the public - and that is Wallaroo, it is a beautiful place. I feel we have achieved a massive interest in this venture with well over 20,000 visitors in the first 12 months. Brindabella Hills, a winery down the road also had over 20,000 visitors.

If you look at the Assessment report - Section 4.3 - *Summary of Advice Received from Government agencies - Destination NSW is missing - our major tourism body. Why have we been forgotten? I had to ring Destination NSW to see if they were aware of the project and they were not! So I thought maybe ACT tourism were aware but they were not! Why weren't they consulted? Both entries from the Barton Highway say 'Hall Wineries'. There are signs on Northbourne Avenue in Canberra and on the way out in both directions along the Barton Highway. There are also signs on the Hume and Federal Highways promoting Hall District wineries and Canberra District wineries. Even more signs on Wallaroo, Gooromon Ponds and Southwell Roads. This industry brings in thousands of visitors a year into the Yass Valley and the Canberra region. Where has there been consultation amongst the stake holders in this category? The Mining & Exploration Department was notified - I think that is a joke!

My question to NSW Planning is this. Where is the mention in the assessment report on the possible economic effects to winery tourism and other businesses in the area if a 100MW, 185,000-panel solar factory is in the vicinity of the area? Will people want to visit or get married in a rural vista if an industrial project of

this size is in view of our rural setting? This would be the first thing they notice as they venture down Gooromon Ponds Road or Southwell Road. Not the beautiful rolling hills - but a massive industrial solar farm. If this solar factory is approved it would completely change the visual appeal of Wallaroo as a destination to visit.

Should NSW treasury of been consulted? Will people lose their jobs? Why hasn't this been considered? Why hasn't the economics been mentioned in detail on the other end of the scale. For the farmer, the grape grower, for the local businesses, for the employees that have been in Wallaroo for years, for the people who have invested their life savings to live in this beautiful rural setting, for the residents that have been living in Wallaroo and West Belconnen for decades. Just saying in a report that values won't be effected is not good enough. It's pathetic actually.

There has been a lack of consultation with those who have the most to lose. This report states that in February this year the Department of Planning visited the proposed site and spoke to objectors of the project. Who did they speak to? They didn't speak to anyone I know! They did not speak to any business owners in the district! Just a blatant lack of consultation.