



PROF Z. LIPMAN: Good morning and welcome to the Independent Planning Commission's electronic public meeting on the state significant development application for the Springdale Solar Farm. I'm Professor Zada Lipman. I'm the chair of this Commission, and with me is my fellow commissioner, Andrew Hutton.

5 Before we begin, I'd like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet and pay my respects to the Elders, past, present and emerging. RES Australia proposes to develop 100-megawatt solar farm on a rural property located approximately 3.5 kilometres north of the ACT and seven kilometres north-west of Sutton village in the South East and Tablelands region of New South Wales.

10 Commissioners make an annual declaration of interest identifying potential conflicts with their appointed role. For the record, no conflicts of interest have been identified in relation to our determination of this state significant development application. You can find additional information on the way we manage potential conflicts on the

15 Commission's website. In line with regulations introduced in response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Commission has moved this public meeting online with registered speakers provided the opportunity to present to the panel via telephone or video conference. In the interests of openness and transparency, we are live-streaming this public meeting via our website. As always, the public meeting is

20 being recorded, and we will make a full transcript available on our website.

The Independent Planning Commission was established by the New South Wales Government on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 2018 as an independent statutory body operating separately to the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment and other

25 agencies. The Commission plays an important role in strengthening transparency and independence in the decision-making process for major development and land use planning in New South Wales. The key functions of the Commission include determining state significant development applications, conducting public hearings and public meetings for development applications and other matters, and providing

30 independent expert advice on any other planning and development matter when requested by the Minister for Planning or the Planning Secretary.

The Commission is the consent authority for state significant development applications for which there are reportable political donations, objections by the local

35 council or more than 50 public objections. The Commission is not involved in the department's assessment of a project or the preparation of an assessment report. The public meeting forms one part of the Commission's process. We have also undertaken a site inspection and met with the department, the applicant and Yass Valley Council. Site inspection notes and transcripts of all meetings have been

40 published on the Commission's website. After today's meeting, we may convene with relevant stakeholders if clarification of additional information is required on matters raised. The Commission will be accepting written comments from the public up to 5 pm on Friday, the 8<sup>th</sup> of February 2021. That's 5 pm next Friday.

45 Following today's meeting, we will endeavour to determine the development application as soon as possible, noting that there may be a delay if we find that

additional information is required. The Commission invited interested parties, including stakeholders and members of public, to make any submission they consider appropriate. The Commission is particularly assisted, however, by submissions that are responsive to the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment's  
5 assessment report and recommended conditions of consent. The Commission has available to it all submissions already made to the department during exhibition of the environmental impact statement, and members of the public are encouraged to avoid duplication of submissions they have already made in the application. The  
10 Commission also notes that there are factors by law that it is not permitted to take into account in making a determination, and submissions on such topics cannot be taken into account. These factors include the reputation of the applicant and any past planning law breaches by the applicant.

Before we proceed, I would like to outline how today's meetings will run. First of  
15 all, the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment will present the findings of the whole of government assessment of the application. Then we will hear from the applicant. We will then proceed to hearing from the registered speakers in the order set out in the published schedule. I will introduce each speaker when it's their  
20 turn to present to the panel. All speakers were advised of their speaking time ahead of the meeting. It is important that everyone registers to speak receives a fair share of time. As such, I will enforce timekeeping rules, and, as chair, I reserve the right to allow additional time where it is needed to present new material.

If you have a copy of your speaking notes or any additional material to support your  
25 presentation, it would be appreciated if you would provide a copy to the Commission. Please note that any information given to us may be made public. The Commission's privacy statement governs our approach to your information. Our privacy statement is available on our website. Thank you. It is now time to call our first speaker, and our first speaker is Nicole Brewer from the Department of  
30 Planning, Industry and the Environment. Nicole, you have 45 minutes.

MS N. BREWER: Thank you, Commissioner, and good morning. My name's  
35 Nicole Brewer, and I'm the Director for Energy Assessments in New South Wales. I'm supported by members of my team involved in this project: Anthony Coe, team leader; and Natasha Homsey, senior assessment officer. I have a presentation to summarise the department's assessment. So perhaps if we could get that up on  
40 screen. Thank you. So this is a state significant development project that is being assessed under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, which is the planning legislation that all developments in New South Wales are assessed, whether they're state significant, local or regional.

We've taken a whole of government assessment of the application, and by that I  
45 mean we've included and consulted key agencies and Yass Valley Council in preparing the assessment. Perhaps if we can go to the next slide. The Independent Planning Commission is the consent authority, as Commissioner Lipman advised, for this application, and that was because there was more than 50 objections to the application. So you can see from the slide and the timeline there that we are now at

the final stage of the process. I do want to note that through the process shown by that flowchart that there have been a number of formal and informal opportunities for the community and other stakeholders to provide input into the process, and we're now at the determination stage where the final decision will be made on the merits of the application.

Next slide, please. So the project is located north of the ACT border and seven kilometres north-west of Sutton village. The project is 100-megawatt generation, so it's a large-scale energy project with around 260,000 solar panels at four metres high. The transmission connection is to the existing 132 kV transmission line that traverses the site, and the site itself will have a substation. The company's said that the project will operate for around 35 years, but the proposed conditions allow that as long as the development footprint and height remains the same, infrastructure could be replaced or upgraded to take account of more efficient technology. In this case, the development footprint is 185 hectares.

The investment is almost 120 million, and the company, RES Australia, has offered to pay community contributions to Yass Valley Council of \$1.26 million for community enhancement projects. There are also employment opportunities during construction and operation: in construction, around 200 jobs; and in operation, 10 jobs. And access for the project is from Tallagandra Lane with a crossing over Tintinhull Lane. Next slide, please. So this slide shows the project layout in a little bit more detail, with the panels in the purple hatched areas. You can see the layout's an irregular shape, and, as we'll discuss later, this layout has considered the constraints on the site.

Next slide, please. We've exhibited the EIS, and we received 225 public submissions, which is a relatively large number for a solar project. In this instance, there was an approximately even split between the objections and support, with 110 objections and 114 in support. We also consulted with a range of government agencies, and none of those agencies raised any objections. Department also inspected the site and met with the surrounding landowners to understand their concerns in 2018, and we also met with a community group, Sutton Solar Action Group, in June last year to discuss their concerns.

Next slide, please. The key issues raised in submissions included concerns about the loss of agricultural land, visual impacts, impacts to biodiversity on the site, traffic impacts and impacts on local roads, heritage and amenity impacts on local residents such as noise and dust. In regard – if we could have the next slide, please. In regard to the agricultural productivity, the department does recognise that there are community concern around the impacts of solar projects on prime agricultural land. We understand that this issue does need to be balanced in the decision-making for this project and more broadly for renewable projects across New South Wales.

So the site is currently used for cattle grading – grazing, and the agricultural land mapping shows that the site is Class 4 and Class 5. The department does recognise that the land is productive, and sheep grazing is intended to continue on the site

during operation. We recognise that the inherent agricultural capability of the site would not be affected, and it would not significantly reduce the overall agricultural productivity of the region. There are also requirements in our recommended conditions to manage ground cover during operations and also to restore land capability to agricultural following any decommissioning.

Next slide, please. So in regard to visual impact, there are 33 non-associated residences within two kilometres of the proposed development, and many of these did object. The context of this landscape is that it is undulating and there are patches of existing remnant vegetation which provide some screening to views for residents further from the site. The assessment considered the impacts of all residences, but I will focus today on key areas to the north for residences R2, R35 and R8; and to the west, R1; and to the south, R5 and R7. So you can see there are a number of layout changes that are mentioned there that have reduced the visual impact for the site for those key residences, and that includes removing the panels south of Tallagandra Lane, increasing the setback from R35 to 90 metres, relocating the substation and including vegetation screening in the project, and also retaining key areas of vegetation.

Next slide. Looking at R35, which is adjacent to the boundary north of the site, this is a newly constructed residence, but I would note that the residence does not have any south-facing views, and there are existing, established plantings. So through the amendment to the project which set the arrays back 50 metres from this residences and then the department's further recommendations in its conditions with a further setback, the array would be set back 90 metres, and there is landscape screening to further reduce the views. R2 is also to the north, and that is 300 metres from the site. It's slightly elevated, and there is some existing vegetation and farm sheds between the residence and the site. But the setback and the landscape planning that I mentioned for R35 would also minimise the impacts to R2, and you can see there are also gaps through the middle of the site in the arrays where the arrays are set back from the watercourse.

R8 is also to the north, and it's elevated, but the assessment considered the distance from the project, the intervening vegetation and shielding from topography and landscape screening. R1, to the west of the site, is around 410 metres, and the setback from the boundary combined with the large stands of existing vegetation that would be retained onsite obscure views of the project to the north and to the east, and there's also vegetation screening proposed to minimise views of the project from that residence to the south.

For the residences to the south of the project, R5 is 630 metres from the development footprint, and the project was amended to remove the panels south of Tallagandra Lane to reduce impacts to this residence. And there are areas around the watercourse where there are no panels. In this case, also in this area, the substation was moved further to the west so that it would be shielded from this residence by well-established vegetation. You can see the substation in the very south-west corner of

the site. R7 is further again, at 830 metres, and it's shielded by topography, mature vegetation and the landscape planting.

5 Next slide, please. There are a few slides to show some of the visual montages. This  
is R35 to the north, although I note that this is not – this is not with the final  
recommended setback of 90 metres. Next slide, please. This is from – on – taken  
10 from on Tintinhull Road, near residence R2 to the north, but, again, it's also without  
that final recommended setback of those panels adjacent to R35 that you can see in  
the top left of the photo – of the top photo. The next slide, please. This figure shows  
the proposed landscaping and existing vegetation and areas where the habitat will be  
retained, so you can see the dark green shows the areas of the proposed vegetation  
screening.

15 So, in summary, the department considered that with the amendments to the layout,  
the associated setbacks, the landscape planning and the implementation of the  
recommended conditions that there would be no significant visual impacts on  
surrounding residences, and the rural – or the rural character or the visual quality of  
the area. Next slide, please. Another key issue that was raised in many submissions  
20 was biodiversity. You can see the irregular shaped layout in the figure there, and  
that's in part to avoid the waterways, but also the existing vegetation and Golden Sun  
Moth and Striped Legless Lizard habitat. I would note that some submissions  
expressed concern about the site being in a biodiversity corridor, but the site is not in  
a biodiversity corridor.

25 Those corridors are shown in the regional plan to the east and west of the site, and  
each of those corridors run north-south either side of the site. Clearing would  
disturb, overall, 5.38 hectares of vegetation. That native vegetation clearing doesn't  
generate offset requirements, but the clearing of 4.52 hectares of Golden Sun Moth  
habitat and .95 of Superb Parrot habitat that would be cleared does require an offset.  
30 Next slide, please. So RES is required to retire those credits in accordance with the  
New South Wales Biodiversity Offset Scheme, and in regard to the Golden Sun  
Moth, RES is also committed to fencing the existing habitat and creating a  
conservation area in the western section of the site – so it's shown in the blue on that  
figure – and enhancing the retained woodland, which is shown in green on that  
35 figure.

The project's also been assessed considering the Commonwealth controlled action  
and impacts on the controlled matters which relate to biodiversity impacts, and  
approval from the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment is also required for  
40 the project. Next slide, please. The key amenity impacts in relation to traffic, noise  
and dust will happen during construction. So that construction period is at an  
estimated to be less than a year at around 10 months, and I note that within that, there  
will be more intensive times of works. Importantly, our conditions require the  
construction's undertaken between 7 and 6 Monday to Friday and 8 to 1 on  
45 Saturdays, and these are standard construction hours that are imposed under the  
recommended guidelines from the EPA and are typical of construction projects more  
generally.

The department recognises that traffic and the impact on local – the local road network was a key concern, in particular, traffic through the village and in relation to the primary school. So the route that is proposed for the site prioritises use of the State road network, leaving the Federal highway through a dedicated offramp, travelling through the Sutton village and then along Tallagandra Lane. An alternate route was considered in our assessment, exiting the Federal highway further to the north and going along Shingle Way and Sutton Road that might have avoided the Sutton village, but that has an uncontrolled right-hand turn from the Federal highway rather than the dedicated offramp, and it requires heavy vehicle use of a significantly longer portion of local road: 23 kilometres rather than 11 kilometres.

There are road upgrades required in our recommended conditions of consent that were developed in consultation with council for along Tallagandra Lane and Tintinhull Road. There are maintenance requirements, and a traffic – and a requirement for a Traffic Management Plan which would include scheduling construction activities and deliveries to minimise road transport movements and to avoid the school zone period. Next slide, please. The noise assessment's shown that the construction can generally comply with the EPA noise criteria, but there would be some exceedances for five residences when works are in close proximity to those locations. And for operation, there are noise rules that are proposed around six inverters to – and those are the inverters between Tintinhull Road and Back Creek to ensure that there's negligible noise during operation.

Next slide, please. In regard to heritage, which was also a key concern in submissions, the project would not impact important heritage sites present in the locality, including the Reidsdale campsite, which is 4.5 kilometres away, and the Derrawa Dhaura Aboriginal Place, which is located two and a half kilometres west, and that's – that Aboriginal Place is an ochre quarry. The heritage surveys were undertaken with the Registered Aboriginal Parties, and they identified 15 heritage sites, and they're scatters and potentially culturally modified trees. So 12 of these 15 known Aboriginal sites would be avoided, including the moderately significant artefact scatter. RES is committed to salvage and relocate the three impact items to suitable alternative locations.

The assessment identified areas of high subsurface potential, and RES is committed to subsurface testing prior to construction to inform the detailed design of the project, and this would be done in accordance with a detailed Heritage Management Plan, prepared in consultation with the Registered Aboriginal Parties and Heritage New South Wales. The department considered the advice of Heritage New South Wales and concluded that the sites that are likely to be identified through the excavation testing would likely to be similar to that that's already found onsite – and that's low-density artefact scatters – are unlikely to be of high significance like burial sites and that sort of thing, and that other important heritage sites were some distance away and related to different land uses, such as the ochre quarry, which was the reason for the development that was in that area and the dedication of that place. And that it was – the department considered that it was appropriate to require subsurface testing prior to construction to inform the project design.

Next slide, please. So I focus today on the key issues, but the department has assessed other issues, including water supply, bushfire risks and land management, decommissioning and rehabilitation. We've developed conditions in consultation with government agencies and council that require a range of management plans, including landscaping, traffic, biodiversity and heritage. In regard to bushfire risk, we consult with Fire and Rescue New South Wales and the Rural Fire Service, and there are requirements in the conditions that we've developed with them, including an emergency management plan. So our conditions also include strict outcomes for the decommissioning and rehabilitation of the site at the end of the project life, and that includes removing all project infrastructure from the site within 18 months of ceasing operations, and then to restore the land to the pre-existing agricultural capability.

I would note that the department also has a Compliance Unit that is responsible for monitoring and enforcing the conditions of consent, should the project be approved, investigating any complaints and undertaking site inspections, particularly during that – the period of construction. Next slide, please. So our assessment also considered the benefits of the project, and these include employment, the significant capital investment, the \$1.26 million of contributions to council. The project would also assist in transitioning the electricity sector from coal and gas-fired power stations to low-emissions sources, and solar projects also support a range of State and Commonwealth renewable energy policies, and the project provides 100 megawatts of renewable energy that can power over 37,000 homes.

Next slide, please. So, finally, to summarise our evaluation of the project, the department's completed a comprehensive assessment of the project in accordance with the requirements of the planning legislation. This has included community consultation, detailed advice from government agencies. We acknowledge that some members of the community remain strongly opposed to the project and that there are concerns about the environmental and amenity impacts on the local community. However, the department considers that the changes made to the project through the assessment process have significantly reduced the residual impacts of the project, particularly on – visual impacts on nearby receivers and also in maintaining agricultural productivity onsite.

We consider that with these changes and the implementation of the recommended conditions, the environmental and amenity impacts of the project can be managed to achieve acceptable outcomes. The department also considers that the project would provide significant economic and social benefits to the region and would contribute to the transition of the New South Wales economy away from a reliance on fossil fuels in accordance with New South Wales Government policy. So, overall, we consider that the project achieves a reasonable and appropriate balance between maximising the solar resources and the benefits of the project, and also minimising the impacts on land uses, local residences and the environment. And so we've recommended that the project is approvable, subject to the recommended conditions. Thank you.

PROF LIPMAN: Thank you, Nicole. I do have a few questions for you. But thank you very much for your presentation. The first issue that I wanted to look at was the effectiveness of vegetation screening, especially where you have a steep gradient as you do in the case of some of the properties in this project.

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MS BREWER: I think we've – we recognised that, you know, landscaping does need consideration in terms of how it is implemented, and part of our recommended conditions include that landscaping plan which will look at the measures that are needed in order to – the types of plantings that are – that are proposed for the area in order to provide that – the most benefit to minimising those views, and that that consideration of the land in the particular location would be addressed through that landscaping plan.

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PROF LIPMAN: Right. Thank you. I notice that in your montage, in relation to the R5, that the type of vegetation screening that looked so successful involved fairly mature trees. What is your view of that? I presume that would be after three years growth.

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MS BREWER: Yes. I mean, those montages do provide the – you know a representation of what it might look like after the trees are established. The landscaping plan would consider the local conditions, the rainfall and such as to whether – the types of stock that might be used for that planting. In some circumstances, it may be that mature trees can be planted, and they might be able to take with the local conditions. And in some circumstances, smaller tube stock has – in some areas, has more success in taking and can overtake the plantings of mature trees. So they're the sorts of things that the landscaping plan would consider.

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PROF LIPMAN: Right. Thank you. And that's probably why you required mature plantings in relation to 1, 2 and – houses 1, 2, 5 and 35 – sorry, 1, 2, 5, 8 and 35 in your assessment report.

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MS BREWER: Yes. I mean, we've looked at that. The requirements of that vegetation buffer is that it's planted prior to commencing construction and that it can – it comprises of species that are endemic to the area, and that, you know, within three years of commencing operations, that it would minimise views from particular residences that we – you know, we looked at in detail in the assessment.

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PROF LIPMAN: Thank you, Nicole. My next question was in relation to biodiversity, especially the Sun Moth conservation area. And I was wondering if it's quite right to call it a conservation area. If you could just elaborate to me how things will change as a result of the project from what it is now.

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MS BREWER: So, generally, these kind of landscapes can be impacted by grazing, and that that can impact the habitat. So what – the establishing that area will include fencing, so that will exclude grazing which impacts the habitat in and of itself. So there can be natural regeneration of areas purely from fencing an area and preventing it from grazing. So that's one of the commitments that RES has proposed, to fence

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the area, and that it would be protected and enhanced through additional plantings, and that that would be addressed through the biodiversity management plan, which would include more details on how that area is managed.

5 PROF LIPMAN: So it's going to be fenced off from grazing during operations as well as construction?

MS BREWER: Yes.

10 PROF LIPMAN: Okay. Thank you. And the last question I had related to decommissioning and rehabilitation. And I noticed that, in the past, the Commission has been interested in having a decommissioning and rehabilitation plans prepared some years in advance of the closure of the project and also the issue of removing all underground cabling and other sort of solar apparatus as well. What are your views  
15 on this?

MS BREWER: I guess the department's considered the decommissioning requirements for these types of projects. We are aware that the Commission has sought in other projects to and included in the final conditions of consent a  
20 decommissioning plan. And so the department's view is that that is addressed through the outcomes, and so we've focused on outcomes-based conditions where the objectives for the rehabilitation, such as removal of that infrastructure – those endpoint outcomes are described and provided in the conditions. We are open to considering and, you know, have no objection if the Commission wishes to include a  
25 decommissioning plan.

PROF LIPMAN: Thank you very much, Nicole. I have no further questions. Andrew?

30 MR A. HUTTON: No, I'm fine. Thank you for that.

PROF LIPMAN: Excellent.

MR HUTTON: Thank you for that.  
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PROF LIPMAN: Thank you very much, Nicole.

MR HUTTON: Thanks, Nicole.

40 PROF LIPMAN: Our next speaker is Steven Reid. Steven?

MR S. REID: Yes, hi. Can you hear me?

PROF LIPMAN: Is Jamie McMahon with you today?  
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MR REID: Yes.

MR J. McMAHON: Yes.

MR REID: We're - - -

5 PROF LIPMAN: So you're going to speak together, because we've got you down as you for 20 minutes and Jamie for five. So it's going to be 25 for the both of you.

MR REID: Yes, approximately. We will see how we run, but it'll be a bit collective. So Jamie will do a bit and I'll do a bit, so it – it probably won't be me and  
10 then Jamie. It will be a bit of both of us. So, yeah, we will take approximately that amount of time.

PROF LIPMAN: That's absolutely fine. Thank you. Would you like to  
15 commence?

MR REID: Yes. Can I just share my screen? There's just a very small presentation, some images. And can everyone see the slides displaying?

PROF LIPMAN: Could you maximise your screen, please, Steven. We've got a  
20 very small view here – small slide.

MR REID: Okay. Just two seconds.

MR McMAHON: Is that okay?  
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MR REID: Can you see that?

PROF LIPMAN: It's still very small. No, we can't put – yes. You – we don't  
30 really have a view of any of the slide at this stage. You need to click that in the corner.

MR McMAHON: Is that okay? Is that better?

PROF LIPMAN: No, it's – well, we can see the slide now, but it's very small. You  
35 need to enlarge it. Click in the right-hand corner there. There you are – right in the corner of your screen – of your slide.

MR McMAHON: I'm not sure if there's anything we can do.

40 PROF LIPMAN: Yes, there's a little – in – just – no, you're almost there. Yes. That one, I think. That's it. Yes.

MR REID: Okay. I think we're sharing the wrong screen. Sorry.

45 MR McMAHON: Is that okay?

PROF LIPMAN: No. Now we've got nothing.

MR HUTTON: No, there's an orange circle - - -

PROF LIPMAN: We see an orange ball.

5 MR REID: Okay. Well, maybe we'll proceed. There's not a huge amount of slides  
to review. So we'll just proceed. Thanks, and sorry about that – the technicality  
problems. So, thanks, Nicole, for that presentation. We'll probably not try to  
regurgitate too much of it, but we'll pick up on some key themes. I guess today I am  
here – I am Steven Reid, the project manager from RES. I am joined today with – by  
10 Jamie McMahan, our planning consultant from AECOM. Jamie's been involved in  
the project since its conception with former proponent, Renew Estate, back in early  
2017. The former proponent took the project through to EIS and put the project on  
hold just prior to the RTS submissions.

15 RES picked up the project discussions with Renew State towards the end of 2019 and  
really got going on the project in April 2020. So I say that because I've been  
involved from last year, 2020, and Jamie's been involved, I guess, from the start of  
the project. So that's just to set some context for both of us being involved and our  
experiences. So we'll just deal with a bit of a split on the presentation. I was just  
20 going to put up the map and some key information. So I don't know if you can kind  
of see any of this information coming up, but – Jamie and I will - - -

PROF LIPMAN: Yes, we can. We can see it.

25 MR REID: Okay. So Jamie and I will run through these topics pretty high level.  
As I say, Nicole's covered it in very good detail. And I just say I thank Nicole and  
her team for, you know, their diligent work in getting to this point. So just – if we  
flick to the next slide, which is the overall layout of the project, but – just ..... kind of  
look at it and understand the project we're talking about. So just some key points.  
30 It's 100-megawatt project, large-scale solar. It's an excellent resource area in New  
South Wales – that's why we're here, we're looking at it. The location is of key  
interest, really, because it's great capacity and access to the existing grid  
infrastructure.

35 We've got a 132 existing infrastructure line running through the site – to the site, and  
a 330 kV line, which really does bring a robust, good connection to the project. That  
is also helped by the very close and nearby load of Canberra, which really helps  
projects like Springdale and any solar farm in terms of loss factors. You'll find  
projects like Springdale coming closer to urbanised areas for that very reason:  
40 existing grid infrastructure and limiting loss factors to projects. The project is on  
grazing land. We've talked – Nicole's talked a little bit about the quality of that. It  
is a large area of land, undulating ..... suitable for solar. You can see from the image  
on the screen that the red line is the area that the project will take a lease and secure  
over, but 50 per cent – almost 50 per cent of that land is left untouched and also, you  
45 know, will be enhanced through the process through the various management plans.

She also pointed out that this area does fall within a New South Wales REZ. Not the new New South Wales REZes, but there's an ISP REZ. The Southern Tablelands was pinpointed for further renewable development back in 2018 by AEMO. So good reasons to be looking at this location. So that's just a little bit of an overview. I'll  
5 maybe pass over to Jamie just to just talk a little bit about biodiversity, traffic assessment and noise assessment.

MR McMAHON: Yes. So, good morning. Just picking up from what Steve has taken us through so far, the site – the project itself has worked very hard to minimise  
10 a lot its impacts, and as Nicole's pointed out, the residual impacts arising from the project, we feel, are very manageable and quite reasonable. So one of those particularly is the biodiversity impact. So this was actually one of the very early projects to go through the new Biodiversity Conservation Act processes with the Biodiversity Assessment Methodology and producing a Biodiversity Development  
15 Assessment Report. So that was completed back in 2018, and that was – that took into account survey of the site undertaken by our expert sub-consulting ecologist, Niche Environment and Heritage.

They, as credited assessors, did – applied the BAM as is required by the guidelines  
20 and basically got to understand the nature of the site. Through that assessment, we also engaged Alison Rowell, who is possibly the foremost expert on Golden Sun Moths, certainly in this region. And she has spent, well, the best part of decades assessing the impact and understanding the ecology of this species. So she was engaged to undertake surveys of the site, and the areas that you see indicated as  
25 Golden Sun Moth habitat within this map that we have up at the moment are a direct – directly from Alison's assessment, and they have a good – they show a good understanding of where the species exists within the site.

It's worth noting that we had only a single instance of this species recorded within  
30 our project footprint prior to this survey, after which we had approximately 342 instances of this species existing. So it clearly indicates that this area is somewhat of a stronghold for the species and that, as a result, we've responded appropriately to ensure that we are protected – protect the species and avoid it wherever possible. So, hence, we've come up with that strip down the western edge that you can see there  
35 where we call it the Golden Sun Moth Conservation Zone. Now, this doesn't form a formal biodiversity set-aside or stewardship site under the BDAR biodiversity offset process. However, it does give us the flexibility and ensures – allows us to make sure that we can manage the impacts within that zone appropriately so that we can encourage the species and encourage their long-term longevity within this site.

40 So, specifically, that includes things like managing the grazing regime. Now, Alison has communicated this directly to us, and it's within her reports as well, about the need to maintain certain grass heights, particularly during the breeding season, which is late November, early December to ensure that the species has maximum chance of  
45 survival and to breed and to mate. And we've committed to doing that within this site. So we've – as mentioned before by Nicole, we will be fencing off this site. So there will be a fence around the entirety of the site, but there'll also be a fence within

this site in which we can more strategically and specifically manage the grazing regime.

5 The grazing regime is likely to be sheep, and they will be managed at a much lower density than would normally be undertaken on similar land like this, partially to – you know, to make sure that we don't damage the land, of course, but also to ensure that we're managing it, ultimately, for this Golden Sun Moth in the first place. In certain seasons where that may not be appropriate, we can revert to slashing to make sure that the grass height is appropriate. This also – this area also includes the  
10 Woodland Conservation Zone as well, which will also be managed similarly and appropriately. So we think that the – what we have here for Golden Sun Moth is a very reasonable and very good outcome for the species, noting, of course, as I said, that there's a lot more records for this species that we've discovered now that we've done survey, and we would very, very highly suspect that the surrounding land has  
15 substantial numbers of this species as well, but it just hasn't been surveyed to this degree.

So we're committing to that within the project, and we're happy to work with the department to prepare that and to implement that within our biodiversity  
20 management plan. On top of that, we have Superb Parrot habitat, and we've identified potential nest trees – nesting hollows within the site. We've set aside some of those and adjusted the – avoided them through adjustments of the project layout. And we've also offsetted those other impacts that we – as Nicole mentioned earlier that we would like – we have over and above that. The biodiversity corridors issue  
25 came up somewhat later in the day, but that is basically the Southern Tablelands Corridors, which is actually – none of those actually pass through the site. They pass in a linear fashion north-south to the east and the west of the site, following generally riparian zones.

30 So in terms of strategic location for biodiversity movement and corridor connectivity, this is actually a reasonably good location. And so, overall, biodiversity within – augmented with local native plants in our screening would actually be a net positive outcome for biodiversity in this zone, which is otherwise heavily utilised for agricultural purposes. So, moving on to traffic, again, Nicole  
35 rightly pointed out the nuts and bolts of how we're managing traffic and construction of the project. And that, as she mentioned, comes from the Federal highway, using the grade-separated interchange, and then passes up through the north-west, passing through Sutton village.

40 And during the assessment process and the responsive submissions, we have committed to additional controls on those traffic movements to ensure that they are managed appropriately for the town – for the village, making sure that they avoid school times, for example, and that they are undertaken within otherwise appropriate times of the day and during the week. Those movements will be managed via a  
45 Traffic Management Plan which will be developed hopefully with ..... consent. And then lastly for my point was the noise assessment, which, again, was outlined by the department. And I – construction noise will be – will have some impact on the local

area, but given the short duration – the relatively short duration of construction of 10 months, we can't – we don't see that as being a significant impact.

5 In terms of operation, we've worked very hard to – well, initially, we've taken a worst-case scenario with the use of our inverters and what they – their operational noise outputs, and we've worked very hard to manage those inputs and – sorry, manage those outputs such that we don't result in any exceedances of background – rating background noise levels at any of the nearby sensitive receivers. And this is true for – even for R35, which, as mentioned earlier, was – is a new receptor that's  
10 appeared during the prior – sorry, post-commencement of the project. So we've worked very hard during the responsive submissions phase to try to minimise impacts everywhere, and we've achieved that.

15 In reality, there's a good likelihood that the inverters will actually be quieter than our baseline that we've modelled, so that we think the noise impacts will come down even further from what has been presented within the EIS. So that's just the quick outline of those bits and pieces. I'll hand over to Steve now, and he can carry on with a few more of the technical aspects.

20 MR REID: Thanks, Jamie. Just going to move on, again, to another part of the project, visual assessment. Again, covered in detail by Nicole, but just to say the image in front looks a lot different compared to, you know, when it started back in 2017. There's been a lot of manipulation of the development footprint based on the constraints analysis and consultation with the community. It does mean we have an  
25 odd-shaped project, but it significantly avoids those environmental constraints, which we've worked hard to do. We've interacted with the department over the assessment period to come up with even more visual improvements.

30 That's kind of been borne out in the removal of the substation from a highly visible location into its new location, and R35, the new property which Jamie just mentioned, we were aware of that property when we picked up the project last year. We took it upon ourselves to move back from the boundary, introduce landscaping and, in consultation with the department, then move back further from that project. We have – you know, in discussions with our landowner. So we've worked hard to  
35 do what we can to kind of break up views and move back from sensitive receivers. The screening that can be seen, the white areas, have been designed from early on in the project. We have retained them as we've come into the project. We've enhanced them.

40 It's difficult to – for screening to cover off every receptor, but we feel that, you know, the screening does allow the project to be broken up. With the undulating topography, it really does help – in due course, when it's established, will help to kind of integrate it into the background. So the project really has reacted to feedback, where possible. And in some cases, as I said before, we've proactively  
45 amended whilst still maintaining a viable renewable energy project. Just moving to heritage briefly – again, just very briefly. We – the former proponent engaged with

the local Registered Aboriginal Parties. There was a very good turnout for the walkover. Five of the parties were onsite.

5 145 individual stones – stone artefacts were found over 12 sites, with three potential  
scar trees. We do need to do the subsurface trial pits which Nicole mentioned. That  
will occur in consultation with the RAPs – the Registered Aboriginal Parties. That  
will entail ..... trial pitting in sensitive areas. If there are artefacts located, that will be  
enlarged for further trial pitting. So there really is another piece of work we have to  
do, but we do feel that it's appropriately timed and, with its timing, doesn't add any  
10 risk to the process by kind of making sure that it's pre-construction. We'll also be  
consulting the RAPs for – in production of a – the development of a Cultural  
Heritage Management Plan, which is part of the secondary consent. So we look  
forward to carrying out that piece of work in due course – cautious consent.

15 Moving on to the community engagement and benefit sharing aspects of the project.  
So the project, obviously, has been going since 2017 by the former proponent, and  
then lastly by ourselves. So in that time, there's been two public drop-in sessions  
carried out by the former proponent. The – when we took the project over last year,  
it coincided with COVID-19 taking hold, which really has meant public consultation  
20 has been hindered a little bit in terms of those public meetings that we would have  
really liked to have had. But, nevertheless, we have engaged directly with the  
neighbours. Should say RES has – is standing behind and has stood behind the  
offers made by the former proponent to the neighbouring landowners.

25 Those are direct benefits that we see as valuable to the neighbouring landowners who  
are within 1000 metres of the project. But we have not pursued – we've not pursued  
these offers as a means to a positive planning outcome at this point. We are – we  
look forward to engaging with those landowners in a situation where we have a  
positive outcome. We have instead decided to engage with those who are closest to  
30 the project and try and work through any issues that those neighbouring dwellings  
have with the project. We have agreed heads of terms, I guess you can say, with the  
Yass Valley Council on a voluntary planning agreement as far as the community  
enhancement fund ..... long negotiation with Yass Valley by ourselves and by the  
former proponent.

35 We were keen to see a large part of the funds directed to upgrading of Tallagandra  
Lane, the sealing of that. This was not something the council were keen or willing to  
focus the community enhancement fund on. We have agreed a package where we  
think – I think there is still scope for some of that package to be utilised towards road  
40 upgrades. So the community fund package, just so restate, is 100K paid upfront at  
construction commencement, followed by annual payments of 40,000, which are  
index-linked, and that equates to in excess of 1.2 million over the course of the  
project lifetime. The VPA has strict criteria for the funding and projects that that can  
be used – can be – can be granted funding, priority to the closest projects. And  
45 there's also a committee structure which will also be – have locals and local  
members of council and community to help guide that process.

So I think, just in summary, the project, we believe, will deliver a meaningful and impactful fund to the local area in a way that council is unable to do at this point in time. The direct benefits on offer to neighbouring landowners are in line with the Clean Energy Council's guidance on benefit sharing for renewable projects, and we  
5 look forward to progressing those discussions further following a positive outcome of the project. So just in closing, that's all the aspects we wanted to cover. Nicole covered a lot of the aspects in a bit more detail, so we didn't want to really go too much further. So thank you for your time.

10 Sorry – it's a real shame we can't be seeing each other in person, but we really do appreciate the time people have taken today and those who have registered to speak have taken out of their day to do this. So I really appreciate that. In closing, I guess, just a few words. We all have our part to play against climate change, and  
15 Springdale Solar Farm really is a small piece of that puzzle. The project will help to power up to 38,000 Australian homes with clean energy. A small drop in the ocean, you may say, but, collectively, these types of projects are helping to drive the energy transition, and that is worthy of every Australian's support.

The project has been well designed to significantly avoid environmental constraints, and the screening measures proposed go a long way to helping to break up the  
20 project and integrate it into the surroundings. That brings to an end our presentation. I'd like to thank you for listening.

PROF LIPMAN: Thank you very much, Steve, and thanks also to Jamie. We have  
25 a few questions for you - - -

MR REID: Yes.

PROF LIPMAN: - - - on some of the issues you raised. In relation to biodiversity,  
30 you mentioned that you are taking – fencing the Golden Sun Moth habitat and that there'll be managed grazing within it with the – presumably sheep, as you were saying. I just wanted to move to the Superb Parrot area in the south-eastern area next to Tintinhull Road, which we viewed on the site inspection. That was the trees on  
35 the gradient with the panels on either side. Can you just outline for me what measures you're taking there?

MR McMAHON: Certainly. So the project has specifically avoided those trees in  
40 the first place. So, understanding the mitigation hierarchy commences with avoidance in the first place, we've taken the most strident step we can in that regard to try to minimise our impact and not have those trees cleared in the first place. So that is quite a large benefit in its own right, we see it. Then we've actually been in quite detailed consultation with the biodiversity conservation division around the  
45 proximity of the panels to those trees and how that potentially may affect the Super Parrot habitat, and we've discussed, specifically, about certain radii of clearance and so on, and we've come to a mutually agreed position on that with the biodiversity conservation division about to what degree the panel can be separated from those trees and, then, to what degree we should offset the remainder of our impact.

So, in that regard, we think we've come to a very good outcome for the species, noting that it is critically endangered, and it is very important in the Southern Tablelands area. So we're doing our utmost to try to avoid those impacts and manage the impact wherever possible, on top of that. So that's why we have come  
5 up and, as was mentioned earlier, we have the 0.95 hectares impact, which has, I think, resulted in a small number of biodiversity credits that we were required to obtain for that.

10 PROF LIPMAN: Thank you. You didn't mention the fencing aspect of that. Could you elaborate on that, please?

MR McMAHON: Certainly. So the fencing zone will be in that western zone of the project. We have – at the moment, we don't intend to specifically fence around the Superb Parrot area, noting that the area is reserved for the nest hollows in the first  
15 place. So there is some degree of protection, so to speak, from, you know, the ground-dwelling, grazing mammals, pests, and otherwise. But in the western part of the site, yes, we will be internally fencing that in addition to the external fence of the site, so that the grazing density between the development area, i.e. under the panels, can be managed independently of the grazing density within the grazing effort within  
20 the western conservation zone.

So that, as I mentioned earlier, is meant to specifically benefit the Golden Sun Moth through the specific management of grass heights and even species that are present within there, removing the ongoing seeding of the area with pasture grasses, for  
25 example, though, noting that our since-advice is that some degree of exotic pasture grass is quite beneficial for the species. So we'll carry on that detail within the biodiversity management plan, in consultation with Alison, to ensure that we're providing the maximum possible benefit for the species for the life of the project.

30 PROF LIPMAN: Thanks, Jamie. I was just interested to see in your response to submissions and the management plan that you've also specifically undertaken to fence that area off where the Superb Parrots are in the south-eastern section, and to also exclude grazing for five years.

35 MR McMAHON: Sorry if I've missed that point, but yes, if that's what we've mentioned there, then most certainly we will commit to that.

PROF LIPMAN: Excellent. Thank you very much. I just wanted to clarify that. The other aspect I wanted to talk about was the VPA, which, of course, you've  
40 discussed. Was there any – you mentioned previously that there were offers to landowners – associated landowners, non-associated – that you were discussing.

MR REID: Yes, that's correct. The project has previously undertaken discussions with the neighbouring landowners within a kilometre. When RES took over the  
45 project, we said we would stand by those offers, however, we have focused our consultation over the last year, really, with those closest neighbouring properties, being the neighbours who have their houses closest to the project, but we absolutely

stand behind the offers made. We will pick up those offers, post any planning determination, and the offers – the principle of the offer stands. So there is that in addition to the community VPA and ..... it's an additional, direct benefit to those who are closest to the project.

5

PROF LIPMAN: Thanks, Steven. I have no further questions. Andrew?

MR HUTTON: Yes. Just one question, if I may, Zada, just around water use and, in particular, water use during construction. I just want to seek some clarification. You nominate that there will be in the order of 2 megalitres of water required for construction, but that may vary. It's quite a bit lower than, I guess, our experience on other solar farms, so I guess just to clarify that volume and, secondly, to just give us some advice on the source of that water, where that would be likely to come from and how you might obtain it for the construction, in particular.

10

15

MR REID: Yes. Thanks, Andrew. Yes, we are kind of investigating that number a little bit more. It will increase just due to the planting that's being brought forward into the construction timeframe. So the planting that you see on the project will occur now pre-construction, just to try and establish that as early as possible, so any of the water that will be used for that establishment will need to be brought forward. We are investigating the number a little bit more, because we do believe that is a little bit low, Andrew. Just at the moment, trying to understand a little bit more about that internally. We are – I've added that to the request for information you've sought, but I do need to update further on that, Andrew.

20

25

MR HUTTON: Yes.

MR REID: There is – I think it will probably moderately increase, but we will pass that detail to you very soon. In terms of the source of the water, we have discussed with Yass Valley Council. They have a standpipe that is available. There's also, obviously, availability in Canberra in close proximity. Those details, really, will come down to the nominated EPC contractor who would take that forward in their procurement.

30

35

MR HUTTON: Yes. Okay. Thank you for that response.

PROF LIPMAN: Thank you very much for that, Steve and Jamie. The Commission will now take a break and we will resume at 11.20.

40

**RECORDING SUSPENDED**

**[11.07 am]**

**RECORDING RESUMED**

**[11.21 am]**

45

PROF LIPMAN: Welcome to the next session. Our first speaker is Dianne Burgess, and Dianne will be speaking for 15 minutes on behalf of the Sutton Solar Action Group, then for a further 15 minutes as an individual. Thank you, Dianne.

5 MS BURGESS: Thank you very much. I have sent in my document, and I was told that the slides would be available to be seen. I'm not sure whether there's some technical issue, but the presentation – I can start, and hopefully they can sort that out.

MR HUTTON: Ms Burgess, we can see some slides.

10

MS BURGESS: Can you? I can't see anything.

MR HUTTON: Yes, we can see some slides – a slide here entitled "Presentation on behalf of the Sutton Solar Action Group".

15

MS BURGESS: ..... do this with you, that's all. Yes. I'm here talking for – yes. Yes, that's it.

MR HUTTON: Great.

20

MS BURGESS: We're all good. We're good to go. So, am I all right to start?

PROF LIPMAN: Yes.

25

MS BURGESS: Yes. Okay.

PROF LIPMAN: Yes. Please start.

MS BURGESS: Great. I've combined my - - -

30

PROF LIPMAN: We've lost you. You're on mute, Dianne. Right. We're going to take a short break, as there's been a bit of a technical hitch, and we'll be phoning Dianne shortly.

35

**RECORDING SUSPENDED**

**[11.24 am]**

**RECORDING RESUMED**

**[11.27 am]**

40

PROF LIPMAN: Dianne, welcome back. You'll be talking to us on the telephone.

45

MS BURGESS: Okay. Yes, that's fine. Okay, I'm getting a lot of echo here, and I'm not sure – the technical people might be able to tell me. Is that better? Can you hear me?

PROF LIPMAN: Dianne, do you want to .....

MS BURGESS: Okay.

5 MR HUTTON: You just need to turn off Zoom, please, Dianne.

MS BURGESS: I've got my phone - - -

10 PROF LIPMAN: Yes, turn off your screen so that we can see you.

MS BURGESS: If I mute my sound then it doesn't work.

MR HUTTON: There we go. We can hear you.

15 PROF LIPMAN: Yes, that's good.

MS BURGESS: .....

20 MR HUTTON: Ms Burgess, we can hear you.

MS BURGESS: Hello?

MR HUTTON: We can hear you.

25 MS BURGESS: Now I can hear you.

PROF LIPMAN: Yes. That's much better now.

30 MS BURGESS: It was not – it was coming through the computer as well as the phone.

MR HUTTON: Yes, that's right. So we'll just run on the phone and not the computer, and it's nice and clear.

35 PROF LIPMAN: Yes.

MS BURGESS: Okay. So what I do, then, is I talk to the slides and just use the phone as, like, a microphone, I guess; is that right?

40 PROF LIPMAN: Yes.

45 MS BURGESS: Hang on. I'm just trying to – because I can't hold the phone and talk at the same time. Well, I'll just have to. I'll just have to manage. Okay. So, as you said, I'm speaking on behalf of the Sutton Solar Action Group. Before I go into specifics, there's a few things that we'd probably just like to say upfront, primarily to do with the submissions and the assessment report.

I mean, we weren't aware that it was a popularity contest, like, who ..... wins. We were under the impression that it was to do with local people and how they would be impacted. Our analysis shows that a third of these submissions are from outside New South Wales, and we weren't aware that, you know, this is open to people other than  
5 New South Wales residents. We found it a little offensive when the submissions were quoted as being ..... "The submissions objecting to the project", which was ours, "specifically focused on local impact and matters relevant to the local community". Well, we felt that kind of trivialised what we thought a little and we weren't really happy with that.

10 It was quoted that there was substantial community support. Well, the local community doesn't. The local community and the council overwhelmingly do not agree with the ..... being put here. And, as well, that the infrastructure ..... really gives carte blanche over development, so it's regardless of what legislation there is.  
15 It just gives total control, and we found that the language in the DPIE assessment had an extreme perception bias towards developers, and we were made to feel that, well, they knew better than us and that their opinions were far more important than ours.

We started – then, we talk about how misleading we feel the report is. DPIE claim  
20 that loss of agricultural land was the most important, and even you, Professor Lipman, didn't feel that that's what the submission shows, and you're right: it wasn't. Our biggest issue is traffic, visuals, site ....., biodiversity, and socioeconomics, and they are in that order, because I did an analysis of all of the local submissions. Agricultural impacts actually came in tenth, so that seems  
25 misrepresented. People here, it is predominantly lifestyle blocks, so that's where traffic and visual impacts become much more important.

Also, in the transcript for the DPIE, the DPIE rep said, "You know, other solar projects are ..... land in the region", well, I think they have this confused with a  
30 different region. Maybe, possibly, the Greater Hume, because there is some in that area. There's not large solar projects in our area. And the other comment was about, "We're aware that there are concerns about important agricultural land mapping". Well, we never raised that. We were at the Large Scale Solar Forum in Wagga Wagga and the people there raised this as a significant issue, so we feel that what's  
35 been said isn't true representation of what we've put in our submissions. Mr Berry, from the ..... council, he also considered that, you know, he supports what we're saying, and that this area is the lifestyle, rural residential, and the people don't derive their incomes from living off the land. Now we're going to more specifics: the five-kilometre transition zone - - -

40

MR HUTTON: Excuse me, Ms Burgess, one quick question.

MS BURGESS: Sure.

45 MR HUTTON: Are you talking to slides – a number of slides?

MS BURGESS: Yes, I am.

MR HUTTON: In that case, could you just let us know what slide you're up to?

MS BURGESS: Yes. Yes, of course. And that's why - - -

5 MR HUTTON: That's okay.

MS BURGESS: - - - ..... here.

10 MR HUTTON: We can certainly help from this end. It's no problem.

MS BURGESS: Perfect. Okay.

MR HUTTON: If you just let us know what slide and, effectively, just say "next" and we'll just turn it over for you.

15

MS BURGESS: Yes.

MR HUTTON: Here we go.

20 MS BURGESS: Yes. We're on slide 2.

MR HUTTON: Yes. Thank you.

25 MS BURGESS: Yes. Sorry. Now, actually, if you go to slide 3, we'll get into the five-kilometre zone.

MR HUTTON: Great.

30 MS BURGESS: Now, there was a question asked of DPIE about the five-kilometre zone – the adoption of the final settlement strategy. The DPIE wasn't able to provide a reason. We have the reference in documents that tells you why they didn't include the five-kilometre zone, and it was because the department actually said they believed the strategy clearly outlined council's intentions and it provides a significantly strong message discourage inappropriate development. They didn't see a need to have a specific zoning: that may have unintended consequences. So, in other words, it wasn't necessary because the document was strong enough, and the DPIE's interpretation of the LEP – you know, they say, "Well, just because they don't have it in there, it doesn't mean it should be excluded" and you go, well, if it's not in the document, it is not in the document. The zoning laws and provisions are quite clear.

40

We'll move on to biodiversity challenges, and it's been discussed here this morning, the location of the ..... biodiversity corridors. Again, DPIE wasn't able to show you the development in relation to development corridors. As you can see here, I've provided you with an image with the site, and it shows exactly where the biodiversity corridors are. They practically touch the eastern side, and there is also a lot of high environmental value land around area. So that – it is completely encircled, and I

45

don't know that the animals know where the lines are drawn or where the areas are. I think they use landscapes as their measures.

5 As for the 16-hectare Golden Sun Moth conservation area – which is slide 4, sorry, I will get used to this – we note that Professor Lipman, you asked if they would be able to put some kind of agreement in place to lock that area up, at least for the life of the project, and we note that Mr McMahon from RES said, “Well, the landowner didn't want to do that”. So that basically means that the landowner can do what he likes on that piece of land, regardless of if they put a fence around it. They have no way to prevent him using that land as he sees fit.

15 As for the Golden Sun Moth, you will see that there's an image there which is from the New South Wales government website that says the site is one of only two ..... management areas in New South Wales, and that all conservation work is vital. I find it interesting that from an environment perspective, the reasoning that, “Well, there are probably others around, so it's okay if we get rid of this one”, I don't think that's a very good way to argue environmental biodiversity.

20 You will note I have also quoted Alison Rowell in what she has done, the studies, and I have read her studies. Results clearly say they are not flourishing at all, so the mitigation measures aren't really working, and in most cases the mitigations were never implemented. So that sort of says that's not necessarily going to happen.

25 The other thing we've brought forward that hasn't been seen is the additional biodiversity information that was never provided to the DPIE for the assessment process. The next slide – sorry, my husband keeps reminding me – in this slide, there's an excerpt from OEHs submissions to Yass Valley Council, the seven-month strategy from – I think it was 2017. Now, they specifically mention this area as being important because it provides an area for ..... Mulligans Flat and through Goorooyarroo and how important it is that this – on a landscape scale, not just within the boundaries of a development – that this is a connection and that this should be basically left as is, and anything should be really considered carefully before putting it in.

35 Now, I spoke with the OEH person who signed the submission for the Yass Development Strategy, and I was told that they weren't going – they didn't provide this information to DPIE for the Springdale assessment because they weren't asked about it. They only provide responses to the Springdale development. Now, from our perspective, that seems like a pretty weird process where you know information about a specific site, but because you're not asked, you don't provide.

45 Also, in the next slide, they provided images of the flyways that come over this area, and a map of Goorooyarroo. We've talked about the Superb Parrot – this is the next slide, again. The Super Parrot, now, it's ..... this would probably be unknown to DPIE because they only went to OEH. There's no wider search for anything. And there's – the Saving our Species strategy is the only identified priority management site within this region, and our area is included. The important bit is that Difficult

Bird Research Group, which is out of ANU, and Dr Laura Rayner, who is probably an expert on Superb Parrots, she actually said that it's one of the most ..... threatened bird orders, and this area – and this area doesn't mean just outside the development area, it's this area – it's going to become one of the most important areas for the population. And she said that we don't know enough about how our threatened woodland birds handle development. Extinction is probably one result and, as we all know, yes, our development is causing harm.

Then, the next slide, Bird Life Australia's map also shows the significance of this area. I've also included in there an image of the population distribution for the Superb Parrot, and you can see that this area is heavily dominated as an area for Super Parrots. We also are part of the Greater Eastern Ranges Strategy, which is all about landscape, scale, connectivity. Man-made structures in the middle of this surely can't be beneficial for them.

The next slide: lake effect. Now, there's that roll their eyes and say there's no such thing, yet other countries – USA and UK – they've done research into this because they recognise that there is a potential for impact from these large-scale solar developments and, as you can see, they are done by very credible bodies and they were – this does include the concentrated solar facilities such as the ..... it's completely different. And they – you can see there it talks about mortality causes, and the two main points are the lake effect can cause birds – they attract birds, and if they collide with them, well, then, there's danger. They can be left damaged, they can become – predation by other animals, and probably the most important point is that their findings, probably, mostly says that these things should be far away from protected areas and foraging or migration routes.

The next slide, we've got some images of what lake effect looks like from higher elevations. I've also – the next slide – I've also got, from the other group out of the US, there's actually a Multiagency Avian Solar Collaborative Working Group who are really researching this sort of thing because they are aware that there are problems that need to be addressed.

On the next slide, you will find I have – from the UK, from the Natural England, and they're basically saying the same thing. The researchers in multi ..... approach determined potential impacts and, again, they should be – it's about where these sites – it should be very, very critical for these developments.

Then we've talked – I've heard a lot this morning about mitigation. Phil Gibbons – which I'm probably sure both of you are aware of – he has done lots of in this local area and he's – his paper, there, I've mentioned – he said restoration projects only typically have a success rate of 20 to 50 per cent. So, in other words, restoration is very hard to do, and that goes the same for vegetation. And I note that the New South Wales Scientific Committee, during the biodiversity legislation review, really said the new biodiversity is very pro-development and that it seems that flora and fauna are just obstacles.

Next slide – and you can read these at your leisure, of course – as for whether these have an effect, no one knows. I noticed in Darlington Point’s report ..... he actually said there is a potential for impact, but we don’t know what it is, and that this should be done to see what there is. And the DPIE just says, “Well, yes, in two or three  
5 years we’ll have a look”. Well, what is the lag time? Who know when the land may or may not be harmed? And I note that the infrastructure ..... for some type of development, they have to have site suitability certificates. Well, for this type of development, there’s nothing, which is a bit sad. Moving quickly along to visual impact, glint and glare, firstly - - -

10

PROF LIPMAN: Excuse me, Dianne. Can I just interrupt you here?

MS BURGESS: Yes, certainly.

15

PROF LIPMAN: Did I understand you correctly that you’re consolidating this presentation with your next one?

MS BURGESS: Yes, yes, yes.

20

PROF LIPMAN: So you have an additional 15 minutes.

MS BURGESS: Yes.

25

PROF LIPMAN: Thank you.

MS BURGESS: Sorry, I thought I said that, but you might not have – it might have been when the phone wasn’t working. I’m sorry. And I know I’m talking very fast, but I do have a lot.

30

PROF LIPMAN: No, that’s fine. Thank you. Please proceed.

35

MS BURGESS: So this slide is slide 15: visual impact. Firstly, the landowner is not being impacted by this development. I note many others – the host landowner usually lives where the development is. We find it odd that the DPIE just seems to accept the developer’s opinion and doesn’t really consider anyone else and don’t question the likelihood of the success of the mitigation. We note there’s no nationally accepted standard for visual impact assessment and rely heavily on other countries such as the UK ..... or the US Forestry Service, and what we have found is that the whole process of visual assessment is just judgment, and it’s the assessor: he  
40 or she determines what they consider significant and they decide to make an explanation.

45

Next slide. Now, on the next slide, I actually took the different documents there’s been and different stakeholders and put it into a table just to show how these assessments are. And you can see the EIS rating at the start, then the RTS ratings, then the DPIE rating at the end. Now, there’s nothing consistent. They’re all different. And that’s what we’re saying: these are opinions. They’re not based on

any concrete, tangible evidence and, you know, we kind of feel that how is it that someone who's got no connection to the area, never spoken to anyone, make judgments about how we will be impacted visually? And the language in it is unintelligible and meaningless to the average person, and that is not meant to be  
5 offensive, but it's difficult to read. People either like what they see, how they feel, or they don't. We don't go through a process of categorising it, evaluating and – to determine whether we like things or not. It's a very – we use our senses. We don't use an evaluation process.

10 Next slide. Now, the next slide is the photo montages. Well, I don't know if I have a word to say what I feel about the photo montages. The image on the left is the actual photo, and you can see the family looking at their view. That's their view. You can't deny it. The white lines across the middle, that's where the vegetation barriers would be. The vegetation barriers aren't high, they're wide, and it slopes down  
15 gently away from their block. Now, 20 metre vegetation would hide nothing. That is quite clear. And if you look at the image that the developer sent, you go, "What? They must have laid on their stomach and used maybe a fisheye lens". I'm not quite sure how they came up with that, but it certainly is not what the view is like.

20 I've also gone to the trouble of looking at elevation profiles, and that's the next page. You'll see where the green is the house. Where there's a red line pointing to the elevation profile is where the vegetation barrier would be, and it clearly shows that there's still going to be a lot of vision, regardless of any vegetation barriers that go in there. It won't prevent anything.

25 Next slide. We've got the residents from R5. Now, they were considered as negligible. They did change them to moderate, which is something, I guess, but if you just look at the elevation profile at the bottom of that page, it clearly shows that where the 20-metre vegetation barrier will be, it is just nothing. It does nothing. It  
30 hides absolutely nothing. You can see from their vistas that their view is just completely and utterly unable to be screened, unless you put a wall up at their house, which was proposed on one occasion.

35 Then, you move onto the next page. Here's just two examples of properties to the north-east and east that were never considered because – they used the phrase "topography and intervening vegetation". Well, just because you say that it doesn't make it true. These two slides just show, again, using elevation profiles and the red arrows showing where the vegetation barriers will be, and it clearly shows that the other side of the development, to the west, and the bottom are clearly visible because  
40 we're in a valley. Nothing, no screening, will protect them, either. And you can see that the ..... also show that. They can see so much.

45 Then, the next page, we've got R13. Now, this resident probably has the most view over the entire site, and probably not much different to R5. They can see absolutely everything. There's mature vegetation, but mature vegetation will grow, and it doesn't hide anything. And if you move, now, to slide 25, you can see that where – we were told that it's not going to be out of place in this area. Now, this image, this

shows the area to the left – the bottom left-hand corner is the ACT suburb of Bonner. Look at the area above that in the white shaded area with the houses around it. That’s the area of solar arrays, and we’re being told that that is just going to blend in and it will not be out of place. As you see around it, it is all agricultural pastoral  
5 land. That is going to be very, very visible.

Next page we talk about mitigation and how there’s – the comments that they’ve gone to all this trouble for mitigation, but how effective is it going to be? If you look at the image on page 26 and the following page, 27, that’s – the one on 26 was what  
10 was in the EIS and 27 is what’s in the responsive submission. Now, there is no screen to Tintinhull Road. They’re going to screen across the floodplains, which creates its own set of problems. Vegetation is being removed from Tallagandra Lane, and if you go to the next slide, overall, there’s been a reduction in vegetation screening, so I can’t – I fail to see how they’ve changed anything by reducing the  
15 vegetation screening. As I’ve shown by the elevation profiles, it doesn’t work.

Even Mr Reid made the comment about how “What an incredible amount of screening for the project”, and you go, “Of course it is, because this development’s in a valley, and they’re not usually located where they are”. I recall Mr Hutton, during  
20 the site visit, even remarked about the area being nothing like other solar developments, because they’re really flat and this one isn’t. And if you look at that image on that page – and this was supplied by RES in the overview document of the IPC – that image they show has no resemblance to ours. And if you go through the next three pages, I’ve just got images from Renew Estate, EIS, and other images  
25 from New South Wales government site, and as you can see, they’re flat. Absolutely flat. None of them have got vegetation barriers around them and they’re pretty much in the middle of nowhere.

The next slide, which will be 33, the residents that I showed had the view all over the  
30 valley, and it’s impossible to be screened. That’s their actual view, and the area within the yellow is going to be – all that vegetation is removed, and so it will just become a sea of black solar panels. Now, if that’s not visual impact, I don’t know what is.

Now, the next slide: the effectiveness of this visual impact mitigation. We’ve referred to a couple of sources here to explain how lacking in assessment this is. The first one is – I’ve referred to Jupiter’s Independent Assessor, O’Hanlon, and they state that “ ..... be slower than average due to ..... soil type, water runoff, peat  
35 maintenance, ..... maintenance, species selection. Hard to achieve in well-manage flatter areas”. And, you know, it should only be used ..... where it’s, you know, probably going to work and be good. Now, even Mr Gibbons said, “Around here, it’s very hard to do mitigation to be effective”. It’s 20 to 50 per cent. That’s hardly acceptable, and that would be under perfect conditions. And as you can see below there, on that same page, there’s a number of comments also out of O’Hanlon’s one,  
40 and all of them applied equally to Springdale’s site. Like he said, pastoral land can have significant ..... high sensitivity to change. Now, you know, as I said, you can read through those and you can see.

Now, we find there seems to be a bit of a bias about whether they're high, low, tall, whatever they are, and we say that these ..... they may not be tall and don't continually move, but just like O'Hanlon said, the introduction of highly identifiable man-made elements into a predominantly rural landscape changes the visual balance to industrial landscape, which is what we've been saying all along.

And probably one of the most important parts about visuals that we've referred to – which is page 35 – the Rocky Hill Mine decision, where Mr Moir, who appeared on behalf of the Minister for Planning, his interpretation is, like you can see there, that visual quality increases with land use compatibility. These things are not compatible with the land. It increases due to the presence of natural and agricultural landscapes, and he said – in point 99 he said, “Residential uses, whether residences in a township or rural residences, would have a high visual sensitivity of zero to two kilometres”. And, yet, we're being told that because we're less than two kilometres, it's unimportant for us.

One of the other huge things is that Mr Moir said in number 137 in the decision, “The visual effect is to be assessed at a particular point of time. If there is no mitigation at that point of time, the visual effect is to be assessed at that point of time without considering the mitigation”. Now, if it's good enough that the Land and Environment Court accepts that, why does not that apply to us? Why are we any less likely to be visually impacted? And in the same case, Mr Darroch talked about – on page 36, Mr Darroch – and I hope I've pronounced his name correctly – he talked about vicinity, and you can read those there, which basically says you have to look beyond just the edge of the development, because people aren't fixed in a particular point, they move around, and many of the objectors talk about not being able to enjoy their land without being impacted by a visual interruption. Again, this has never been considered for Springdale.

Then, moving on, he also talks about – there's a lot of talk in the mining one about historical land uses, current, and future. I mean, there's no consideration of that in this. The ..... which was nothing more than a tick and flick exercise by the developers – well, actually, with the consultant who wrote all the EIS and other reports – it's hardly objective. It was mentioned that – and it was mentioned a couple of times by DPIE, as well, but it can't be seen from the village, which is like saying to us, “If the village could see it, it might be more of a problem”. And to us that sort of says, “Well, the impact on you is not as bad as if more people could see it”. It's like, well, that's pretty offensive, as well. It sounds pretty pertinent, but on page 12 of the ..... they actually wrote this passage:

*The solar farm would remain visible for some receptors despite screening vegetation proposed around the perimeter. Potential conflict, however, is expected to ease over time for most receptors, as screening vegetation matures*

Well, good luck with that –

*and people become accustomed to the development.*

5 In other words, “Suck it up. You’ll get used to it”. Now, that did not go down well with ..... people. We felt that was very – it was quite a personal attack, telling people that, “You just get used to it. Just deal with it”. That’s highly unprofessional. And the other one is about the benign nature of a project and, again, we say that there seems to be some sort of idea that just because these things aren’t tall that they’re not offensive. And, as we said, if it’s good enough for the Land and Environment Court to say two kilometres is highly visual, well, we would like the same consideration.

10 The glint and glare, which is the next slide, they are, again – this is another study out of the US, another credible organisation, and you can read those findings there which support everything we say. And, properly, their concluding remark is the variability was generally not captured in any of the project EISs. On page 39, there’s also an article about the Royalla Solar Farm. The next page, there are some images of other solar developments and how they do have glint and glare, despite what we’re told. 15 The next page, we talk about noise and noise assessment. All I’ll say on this is – you can read this at your leisure – as for noise levels, even the developers state not to rely on the data in the report. So, in other words, it’s meaningless. So how can that be 20 used in an assessment when they even qualify that it means nothing? And from the original EIS the noise mitigation has been reduced.

They’ve had – the next slide – there you will see the areas that were marked – they’re red Xs. They were all going to have either the ..... walls around them. Now, ..... be 25 fixed, and I did some research into that, because they say that – this is just generally, because people don’t pay for the more effective noise – you know, less noise. It’s cost prohibitive. And you can see why they wouldn’t normally have to use these: because they’re not normally in places where there’s a high lot of residents. The next slide - - -

30 PROF LIPMAN: Sorry, Dianne. I’m sorry to interrupt here, but you’re substantially over time.

35 MS BURGESS: Okay.

PROF LIPMAN: Can you please wind up for us?

40 MS BURGESS: All right. I’ll just get to my summary document. You can read it any time because it’s my submission and I’ll be putting it in.

PROF LIPMAN: Yes. Please do.

45 MS BURGESS: Okay. Summary. Page 78. Overall, nothing has been improved for us, despite what’s been said. There is definitely bias, and it’s not towards the community, it’s against the community. And you can read through all of those, I ..... any particular. Many reasons ..... mental and physical health problems because of this. The local community overwhelmingly objected.

Consultation, which I have heard both people talk about how well they've done consultation, you'll see in our presentation that we've got – I think about five or six pages – a log of consultations. There's been nothing from the developers. They have totally ignored the community. All consultations with the department have  
5 been initiated by the SSAG. We were that distressed with the lack of progress or trying to find out where this project was up to, we went to our local member and we even met with the Minister for Planning, and he couldn't stop apologising for the way we've been treated.

10 Now, I think when you've been through our document, you'll see that we have many grounds that dispute what you've been told by the developer and the DPIE, and that this development is just totally unsuitable for this area. Given that in other projects it seems to matter if the local community doesn't agree with them being there, in this  
15 instance, we just feel like because we've been very vocal, we've pushed the department because we're trying to – we want to know what's going on, we very much feel like we've been taken to task for rocking the boat, and that's it.

PROF LIPMAN: Thanks, Dianne. I quite understand. Thank you very much for your presentation. Could you put Mark on for us now, please?

20

MS BURGESS: Yes.

PROF LIPMAN: Our next speaker is Mark Burgess. Thank you, Dianne.

25 MS BURGESS: Okay. Bye.

MR BURGESS: Mark Burgess here. Hello?

PROF LIPMAN: Mark, hello. You have 15 minutes. I believe you're talking on  
30 behalf of the Sutton and District Community Association.

MR BURGESS: I am, Commissioner. And I'm not sure, because we've, as I've said, unfortunately lost our internet connection out here, I'm not sure if anything's going to go up for you guys to have a look at. I sent in a submission, which will be a  
35 submission, but I'm happy to just talk through it and people can have the opportunity to read it post today, if that makes sense.

PROF LIPMAN: That would be excellent. Yes, thank you.

40 MR BURGESS: All right. Okay. So the key issues that we've raised in that submission relate to traffic, bushfire prevention, and community consultation. Can I just say, firstly, I've heard all of the presenters this morning and nothing has been said today that alleviates any of the concerns we have about those three particular issues. The whole issue around traffic, as Dianne said earlier, was the number one  
45 issue raised by the local community, by a longshot, and our whole presentation, our whole submission is all predicated on ensuring the safety of all the road users in and around Sutton and, of course, the preservation of the use and enjoyment of the

village of Sutton itself. We believe that the RTS and the conditions that are going to be applied, or have been recommended by the DPIE, don't go far enough and they need to make major changes to the current traffic proposals.

5 The biggest issue is the route through the village, and I'll just take you through some of those issues. There are four key things we say: the traffic counts relied on by the developers are outdated, they're calculated on misleading assumptions that are not reflective of the current traffic situation; the use of that route renders the village unsafe; heavy vehicle traffic along the proposed route will discourage visitors to  
10 Sutton and impact on the village atmosphere and commercial hub, and; the roads along the proposed route are chronically ill-equipped to deal with the traffic. So, our basic submission is that the development should not be approved. In fact, we believe it would be irresponsible to approve the development until such time as a Sutton village bypass has been completed or an alternate suitable route for development  
15 traffic can be identified and agreed upon. And I'll just expand on those issues about the traffic counts, et cetera.

In the response to submissions – the EIS, sorry – relied on traffic data from Yass Valley Council from about 2008 to 2016, and the EIS suggested – sorry, the response  
20 to submissions that the data remained relevant to the project. What we would say is much has changed in and around Sutton in the time between 2018 and today that makes a – that needs to be reviewed. Sutton Road itself, and you Commissioners probably travelled that route to come when you did your site visit, it's the main arterial road from Queanbeyan and South Canberra to areas such as Murrumbateman  
25 and Yass and other areas in the Yass Valley and Upper Lachlan Shire area. It's heavily impacted because of limitations on the Barton Highway, so a lot more traffic is coming through here. It's also become quite a busy thoroughfare because even traffic that's heading to the south coast via the Kings Highway comes along Murrumbateman Road and generally along Sutton Road through Sutton village and  
30 out through Queanbeyan and onto the coast.

Sutton and Gundaroo I consider dormitory suburbs of Canberra and, of course, they're growing dramatically. There are new developments taking place in Sutton – in and around Sutton. There are developments taking place further off to the .....  
35 there are also further developments, which is putting more pressure on our local roads. So, in 2019 the local community conducted a number of traffic counts themselves to verify our concerns, and we weren't satisfied with the use of the annual daily traffic counts, which was used in the EIS, because we believe they're misleading, and the council agreed with that in documentation we have from them.

40 So just as an example, we conducted traffic counts in areas that had been used in the EIS. They picked an area of Sutton Road and Bywong Street, which is near the school and preschool. Traffic counts there, the average daily traffic counts between the 5<sup>th</sup> of May 2016 to the 25<sup>th</sup> of May 2016 showed 3,133 vehicle movements per  
45 day, being 130 movements, on average, an hour. We conducted a count there on Thursday the 30<sup>th</sup> of May between 2pm and 6pm and we had 1,688 vehicles alone on that day, which was 422 movements an hour. The same applied when we did counts

on Sutton Road, south of Tallagandra Lane. The ones in the EIS showed 121 movements an hour; our manual traffic count showed 360, and on another day, 365 movements on average an hour. So all of those traffic counts, the manual ones, are three times more than the actual developer showed in the EIS and were relied upon  
5 by the DPIE.

The other issue, then, came that people talked about ..... restrict the traffic during school zone hours. That's one way of doing it, but that actually then puts more pressure on other times and, in fact, what happens here is during those times, just  
10 outside of the school hours, is when most of the school buses come and they actually interchange at Sutton School for the school children heading off to Queanbeyan and Canberra. So, in fact, you're going to put more potential development traffic on the road during the times when those school buses are going to be there.

The route itself, and in the submission we've given you, there's a map of the village, the route itself through the village passes the primary school, the Country Bumpkins preschool, the bakery, the pony club, the newly planned IGA store, all the recreation areas and sporting fields, the tennis courts, the oval, children's playground, et cetera. They're all within 200 to 300 metres of one another and they all front Bywong,  
15 Victoria, and Camp streets, which run through the village where all of this development traffic will go. There's no designated pedestrian crossings or footpaths in the area. There's a footpath planned for Victoria Street from the northern end of Bywong Street, which you'll see on maps when you get them. That only allows the schoolchildren to go down and use the sporting fields, but at present there's no other  
20 footpath existing or planned in the village to allow for the ..... to safely cross any of the roads. So, putting all of the development traffic through at the same time is actually going to be a significant danger to the community.

The other issue – there's another map there we've shown. There's also 12 power lines that cross that short distance of road to the residents, and they've been pulled  
30 down many times before by trucks that are oversized. We've put a number of photos in our submission which clearly indicate the close proximity of these trucks to the school, the preschool, the bakery. The difficulty that large trucks have traversing the 90-degree bends – in fact, there's a photo there that's a common occurrence, where  
35 the trucks have to cross the double unbroken lines to actually traverse the roadway through the village, which is, in itself, a significant danger.

What's happened since the EIS is the post office has also moved further along Camp Street, so now Camp Street has become very much a walking thoroughfare for a lot  
40 of people. They go down and use the sporting fields for children, the playgrounds, the tennis courts, then walk to the post office along Camp Street, but Camp Street itself has got no footpaths. It's got drainage ditches on either side. Anyone going to the post office wheeling a pram or with young children is almost forced to walk on the verge of the road or, in fact, potentially wheel a pram on the road. It's just highly  
45 unsatisfactory for that to be a route. The DPIEs condition says "minimal potential for traffic to conflict with school and bus zones" et cetera. We say it's meaningless and will just cause more problems.

If you're not going to let the traffic come through – the major development traffic come through during the school zone times, then where are they going to layover? On the side of either Sutton Road or somewhere else? There is no provision for that anywhere, and on the southern side of the federal highway, where these trucks will  
5 exit, it is, in fact, not even Yass Valley Council, it's Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council, and I certainly know no conversations have taken place with them about layover areas for trucks, so the whole thing is very short-sighted.

10 The issue of coordinated shuttle buses – there is no detail about how that might take place and where, in fact, you would park 200 workers' cars to allow them to actually use the shuttle bus. I notice, also, that the condition doesn't say they will use the shuttle bus. It says "will encourage them to do it". So what happens if many of those people don't? That just adds extra traffic through the village. And the EIS  
15 acknowledges the safety risks associated with the additional project-related traffic and the potential for accidents to occur, et cetera, but they don't say anything more about it than that.

We also noticed in the Rocky Hill case, Dr Lawrence, for the Minister, criticised the social impact assessment around traffic, saying that it did not provide any local data  
20 on current accident rates or local black spots, or assess the risk and cost of any increase in accidents due to the project. None of that has taken place in respect of the Springdale project, yet they're expecting you, the IPC, to approve it, and they'll sort all these things out afterwards. We say that's not satisfactory.

25 The area is really in very close proximity, as you know, to the ACT, with 350,000-odd people. It's frequented by pushbike riders and motorcycle riders. The bakery in Sutton has become a real focal point for the area. Those people will all be put at risk by being on the same roads at the same time as development traffic.

30 The roads along the route are chronically ill-equipped to deal with the traffic. They all have to go over – and you, Commissioners, would have gone over this – McLaughlin Creek causeway. It was built about 50 years ago by volunteer labour. Trucks cannot cross that causeway without crossing the unbroken lines. In fact, you get two cars across, but anything bigger than cars, or just a car with a trailer or horse  
35 float, have to give way. They have to give way to larger vehicles, or we have to, you know, one from one end and one from the other. So imagine how that's going to be when you're putting, potentially, 70 heavy extra vehicles through a day. Every one of those vehicles will have to cross double unbroken lines to traverse that causeway. It's a very dangerous situation.

40 So we say that you can't improve these roads quickly. The problem is they're as they are, unless we had a bypass that would take you out of the Sutton village. The development of a traffic management plan to bring those trucks through the village, I think, would be interesting, to say the least, to expect the department to ..... Yass  
45 Valley Council ..... traffic management plan that would require heavy vehicles to constantly cross unbroken lines to traverse that bridge. I think it would leave everybody vulnerable, should something actually happen and a serious accident

occur and, in fact, unfortunately, loss of life. So that's what we've talked about in our submission.

5 If you felt compelled that you had to approve, if you felt that overwhelmingly the evidence here was to approve this development, we don't support that. The Sutton community, itself, should at least have a role in any traffic management plan to make sure it's appropriate. We don't think it should be done, but we suggest that should happen. And Yass Valley Council should prepare a preliminary design for a Sutton village bypass, and the developer should have to sign up to a contributions plan to actually assist in funding that bypass. But, having said that, we don't believe that there is a – that it's suitable to travel through the village, and you really should be ensuring the developer and the DPIE find another, suitable route to get their products on site.

15 Very quickly: the issue around the fire. I know you've already raised the issue about the 20,000-litre static water tank. The last major fire in this area was fought predominantly – certainly, by the Rural Fire Service and ACT Fire Service, but predominantly by aerial firefighting, which actually has to get access to local dams. We note that most of the dams on this site will be filled in to make way for solar arrays, which will mean that other resident's dams will need to be used for aerial firefighting provisions, and we believe that a fire and emergency services plan should be developed before any approval is given, because that is a major concern for residents. Predominant north-west winds in the high fire season would blow a fire from that area straight onto Sutton village.

25 There is another major issue around fire, and that relates to neighbour's insurance. So a fire starts on a neighbour's property and goes through the solar development, are those properties sufficiently covered for public liability? We would suggest probably not. And if the solar development was wiped out, that would certainly wipe out that neighbouring person as well, I think.

30 The consultation has been virtually poor or non-existent. The developers and the DPIE have had numerous opportunities to engage with the community to provide information through our monthly publication, the Sutton Chatter, through its Facebook page, through The Gundaroo Gazette's monthly publication. The last we heard from the developers was in August 2018 until 7 April 2020, when we got an email saying that RES had taken over the development. It's just not right, and we've suggested in our submission that such blatant disregard of local community should not be allowed to go unchallenged by the IPC.

40 Finally, as I said, our submission is we believe – we don't support the IPC approving the development with conditions when many of the conditions, which the community has great concerns about, have to be negotiated and resolved post-approval. So we believe that those key issues, particularly around traffic and fire, should take place before approval and they should take place with appropriate community consultation, which hasn't taken place today.

PROF LIPMAN: Thank you very much, Mark, for that. We'll move, now, to the next speaker, who is Edith Graham. Edith, you have five minutes. Is Edith there?

5 MS GRAHAM: Yes, I'm here. Sorry, I've just managed to do something to my screen. Let me just get my video started.

PROF LIPMAN: There we go.

10 MS GRAHAM: I can't seem to find myself. There we are. Hello. Good afternoon, everybody and thank you very much for changing the meeting date from the original date in December. My family and I live on Tallagandra Lane – there we are, excellent – and we are fundamentally opposed to the solar project. It is important to note that we are not opposed to solar and environmental energy efficiency; the RES project is completely the right project in completely the wrong place. The cost of  
15 this project is being borne by the residents of Tallagandra Lane in a number of ways, and I'll address those together with some of the statements made by Nicole and Steve this morning.

20 Firstly, reasonable community impacts. The road, based on information provided, and I know Mark just addressed some of these, additionally, as we've all developed our things independently, that's where we're going to have some overview and some crossing over. Based on the information provided by Nicole, I've done some tallying. 60 hours per week of truck usage for 10 months equals 2,400 hours of truck movements on Tallagandra Lane. Assuming there are 75 truck movements per day,  
25 as was originally advised, this is 22,500 truck impacts on Tallagandra Lane, and obviously on Sutton village, as well. I'm on Tallagandra Lane, so this is where we come into it. Twenty-two thousand. Can I just say that again? 22,000 truck impacts on Tallagandra Lane by this industrial development on our road. There are no details on any frequency of road upgrades or maintenance. Added to this the money that is  
30 being provided to the Yass Valley Council who, quite frankly, have a history of minimal road maintenance on Tallagandra Lane, does not go towards sealing on the dirt road.

35 So I see that we are being asked to bear the cost of this project with no benefit to us whatsoever. The solar does not benefit us. The impacts of the development directly impact us, our families, and our cars, and there is no benefit to us in this. We get to wear the cost of this. I am not seeing any positive community impacts to the residents on Tallagandra Lane, or any mitigation to the effects of the construction of this industrial project.

40 Steve has mentioned a number of times the social benefits to the region. The impact of that stops there. There have never been any details of whatever social benefits to the region there are. I am not aware of any, except if you call us all getting together to object to this project, there are no social benefits to this industrial project in a rural  
45 residential area. The community wholeheartedly object to this project.

I'm going to move now to my view of the environmental impacts. Steve mentioned that this area is an ISP designated area. I believe that was primarily for wind and not for solar. We are windy: there is no doubt about that. We have planted thousands of trees on our property to mitigate the wind. We are a high wind area. It's sunny  
5 sometimes, but you know what? The wind, this is where we're designated. It's not designated as a solar area. It's misleading to say that the ISP supports that when are a wind area and not a solar area.

The environmental corridors. I dispute the notion that the corridors run north-south.  
10 We cut off half of our farm from an east-west perspective as part of the Greater Gorooyaroo Project with Greening Australia. So we're on R16, if you need to know where I am, if you can look at that. So we have here is solar. The part that we cut off is here, perpendicular to where they are. The Greater Gorooyaroo Project starts in Mulligans Flat on the edge of Canberra. It runs directly through, over here,  
15 which is where the project would be. Fencing it off doesn't make any difference because native animals actually go through any fences, so they completely disturb the corridors established by the Greater Gorooyaroo Project.

In terms of the tree planting there, I'll actually go on directly through that. We had  
20 Greening Australia seed 15 kilometres of trees on our land and we blocked them off for five years, so it's been about eight years now, and now we're seeing some of the trees. In terms of visual mitigation and them saying they're going to plant seedlings, I would dispute that they would be there in a three-year period, and that is based on absolute personal experience of that.

25 We had the Murrumbidgee catchment authority when we first moved here in 2005. We did two lots of tree plantings of 1,500 trees. This is an unmitigated disaster and did not succeed. They planted in a drought period and we have just come out of a drought period. Unless there is an absolutely dedicated watering program to this,  
30 those trees will not succeed. A dismissive, "You know, it'll be that person's thing to deal with" means that they are not taking this seriously. Those trees will not be developed in time enough for any visual mitigation.

I ..... two main things I want to say. 470 acres with 300,000 panels; let's really think  
35 about that. 300,000 solar panels across the road down here. The impact on the community is large, the impact on the environment is large, we have had no discussion on the impact of the glare of these 300,000 panels on any of the flora, any of the birdlife. There has never been a project of this size. Any indications on the environmental impact are assumed. They don't know. We don't know the  
40 environmental impact of this project.

I'm going to tidy up. At the end of the day, this industrial project has been located where it has a lower cost base for the developer, utilising existing infrastructure. It has ready-made market with Canberra, looking at 100 per cent renewables. It seems  
45 acceptable to the developers that the local community wear the cost of this project to save money. There are widescale, completely acceptable areas in Western New

South Wales approved by the government that do not have the same impact on local residents as this, and they are part of designated solar zones. This area is not.

5 This plant site has been based on economics with no substantial consideration of the human cost. High tension powerlines nearby allow for lower cost of connection to the developer. The proximity to Hume Federal Highway reduces transport costs during the build. Proximity to Canberra reduces the cost of bringing in outside workers. This is not about the most appropriate area; this is about reducing costs for people who want to make a great deal of money at the expense of the local  
10 community. That's all I can say: this is about money. They have a dismissive attitude towards the community. They say whatever they need to say, pop it in the bin over there, let's get this through, and let's make some money. It's not about Sutton, it's not about Tallagandra Lane, it's .....

15 PROF LIPMAN: Thank you very much, Edith.

MS GRAHAM: Thank you. Gee, I got a lot of words out there.

20 PROF LIPMAN: Thank you.

MS GRAHAM: Thank you.

25 PROF LIPMAN: Our next speaker is Peter Gillett. Hello, Peter. You have 15 minutes. Sorry, 10 minutes. I beg your pardon.

30 MR GILLETT: Thank you. Thank you for the opportunity to address the meeting. I'm identified in the EIS as receptor number 1. It is my belief renewable energy will, in the near future, become the predominant source of electricity generation. As large-scale battery technology advances, solar will become one of the main generators of dispatchable power. If I am correct, based on available technology, we will need a considerable number of large-scale facilities such as this to realise that goal. These facilities will generate power for not just 30 years, but possibly the next 100 years or more.

35 With this in mind, is it best planning practice to have these facilities randomly spread across Australia with their location determined simply by the availability of a willing landowner and some spare capacity in the local grid? With the rapid advances in battery technology, it will be necessary for multiple facilities of this size to be in close proximity of each other to utilise the battery and other developing  
40 infrastructures that they will require. This will also facilitate the ongoing construction works required to keep these facilities up to modern standards and efficiencies. This area is not an appropriate hub for multiple large-scale facilities of this type.

45 The developer's EIS has identified the numerous geographical and environmental constraints this site presents. The site is undulating, parts are flood prone, there are Aboriginal significant sites, and Golden Moth habitat, as well as 35 close proximity

residential receptors, some whose homes are within 100 metres of the facility's boundaries. The site doesn't even have its own potable or general water supply. All water will be trucked in, as Steve mentioned earlier on.

5 The developer has offered proposals and plans to mitigate these numerous constraints, however, this does not mean this is the most suitable location for this type of large-scale commercial facility. In fact, the New South Wales government has identified areas in the state suitable for multiple facilities of this type. AEMO has in the past raised concerns regarding the amount of uncontrolled generation into  
10 the grid by these large-scale renewables and the large uptake of rooftop solar systems. A facility of this size will surely take up the identified spare capacity in our local grid. This capacity should be left for the current and future residents to have the opportunity to receive the direct benefit from installing their own systems. These rooftop systems have little impact on neighbouring properties and don't require  
15 vacant land.

The recent history of this area shows a progression from large-scale farming properties to small hobby farms and lifestyle plots. Yass Council has encouraged people to move to the area by improving and supporting these subdivisions. The  
20 council's development focus is currently between West Canberra and Yass where, in conjunction with the ACT government, they are developing Ginninderry: a development of high-density, low-cost housing only accessible through Canberra, targeting Canberra's first home buyers.

25 Our area, although one day it will probably be utilised for high-density housing, being on the Melbourne-Sydney-Brisbane transport corridor, is currently sought out by second and third home buyers, with properties being sold for \$2 million to \$3 million not uncommon. With the council's focus in other areas, this has led to a diminishing supply of stock, which, in turn, is pushing up the demand and price for  
30 properties in our area. This increased demand will ensure the continued development of our area and secure the future of the facilities in our surrounding townships. The proposed development is not the best use of the land and will only support the depopulation of the area, threatening the viability of these townships.

35 Due to the current impact of COVID-19, state governments around Australia area seeking to stimulate their economies. The construction cost for this development is purported to be in the vicinity of – sorry, I thought it was 140, but they've stated \$120 million. This development will deliver a considerable economic boost to any economy. If approved, this development will be one of the largest if not the largest  
40 stimulus to be injected into Canberra's economy. Very few New South Wales ratepayers, other than the landowner, will financially benefit from this development.

There are a few civil construction sub-contracting firms in the area that could be considered for various construction works packages through the construction phase,  
45 however, they, as I do, with my residential building company, source our direct labour and subcontractors from Canberra. We have, in the past, employed people from surrounding areas of New South Wales, however, with the population of Yass

being around 18,000, Queanbeyan being around 40,000 and Canberra being 460,000, the bulk of our labour resources are Canberra ratepayers.

5 As well as labour, the majority of the materials, other than the prime cost items  
required for the construction of the project, will be sourced from Canberra. All the  
services, repairs, fuel, and even the cost of disposal of the construction waste from  
the development will be injected into Canberra's economy. Canberra's industrial  
area of Mitchell is the closest to the development, being within 15 kilometres of the  
site. Bunnings, in Canberra's town centre of Gungahlin is within 11. Due to their  
10 proximity to the site, it is obvious these are the businesses that will be utilised and  
benefit from the development. I believe approving this development in its present  
location, 3.5 kilometres from Canberra, would be a lost opportunity to inject a major  
stimulus into the New South Wales economy and deliver the maximum benefit to the  
ratepayers of New South Wales.

15 Prior to the purchase of our block in 1999, my wife and I engaged a solicitor and  
began our due diligence. We identified any encumbrances, covenants or easements  
that were attached to the block and we dealt with them to our satisfaction. We  
investigated the recent history of the area and found the surrounding areas of  
20 Murrumbateman, Gundaroo, and Sutton to be townships where the larger properties  
surrounding them were being subdivided to create smaller hobby farms and lifestyle  
blocks. The demand for these blocks was high, as they seemed to have sold quickly.  
Our property had been part of Westmead Park, a large property at the time, being  
sold off by its own into smaller blocks. This confirmed to us the findings of our  
25 investigation. This development continued after our purchase with one of our  
neighbouring properties, Kia Ora, being subdivided and sold off as smaller blocks, as  
well.

30 The commercial development in the surrounding area happened in the areas of  
tourism, wine growing, and rural recreational activities. There were signs of quarries  
in the area, but they seemed to have been unused for some time. There was no large-  
scale commercial development of any kind. The findings of our investigation, added  
to our block's close proximity to Canberra, reassured us that this type of  
development would continue into the foreseeable future. Why would you use this  
35 area for large-scale commercial development when Canberra, five kilometres away,  
has three industrial areas, two of which still had ample capacity for expansion?

I believe it is completely unreasonable to have expected us to consider a large-scale  
commercial development being build 100 metres from our house at the time we  
40 purchased our block. We had no chance to make any design or siting decisions at the  
time of building our home to minimise the effect, to our amenity, a development of  
this type would have. As it now has shown, our home is sited in the worse possible  
place on our block. Every aspect of our amenity will be impacted by the  
development.

45 If this development is to proceed, I strongly request conditions be placed on the  
approval for the developer to mitigate 100 per cent the visual, acoustic, and lighting

impact the development will have on our amenity from all areas of our property and Tallagandra Lane and pay for any legal services and reasonable time we may spend dealing with any actions relating to the development throughout its construction and operational life.

5

The development will create an unacceptable risk to the security of our property. I have 45 years' experience working in the building industry, 35 of those years working on large-scale construction projects. I am more than aware of the difficulty in both protecting your own equipment and protecting other's equipment from your own transient and temporary staff. I understand you cannot include provisions in the development's approval to stop people from breaking the law, however, we request a permanent security fence to our approval be erected along our adjoining boundary to go some way to protecting our property's contents and our equipment. I am aware there will be a construction site perimeter fence, however, these do not provide any level of security. Their only function is to keep the public from entering the site. These conditions will need to be unequivocal so as to minimise the time spent negotiating the interpretation and compliance of any approval conditions.

10

15

20

Approval by the affected landowner of the developer's compliance with such conditions should be a pre-requisite to the issuing of any construction certificate required to start the works. In addition, if the developer cannot comply with all or any of the approval conditions, an agreed financial compensation package would need to be put in place with the affected landowners. This also would be a pre-requisite to the issuing of any construction certificate required to start the works.

25

In closing, I do not believe this site has any unique characteristics that make it suitable for this type of facility over the numerous sites presently identified in New South Wales as being suitable. Thank you.

30

PROF LIPMAN: Thank you very much for that, Peter. Our next speaker will be Derek Quirke. Derek, you have five minutes.

MR QUIRKE: Can you see that presentation?

35

PROF LIPMAN: Yes. It's fairly small. If you can enlarge it, that would be great. That's it.

MR QUIRKE: I'm not sure how. I might get the technical guys to do it.

40

PROF LIPMAN: Yes, go ahead. That's fine.

MR QUIRKE: Excellent.

PROF LIPMAN: Yes.

45

MR QUIRKE: I won't take up much time, because all the themes that I was going to talk about have been well and truly covered by our previous speakers. Virtually,

we've heard radio silence since we all submitted our objections back in August 2018, and this was a concern, especially when the proposed meeting was dropped on us before Christmas. It seems like it's about to get rushed through, but as far as I can tell, around the core of the proposal, the developer really hasn't covered off on a lot of community concerns and objections. Of course, my key objections are the loss of amenities to local residents and there's no New South Wales – there's no regional benefits to New South Wales residents, as explained.

So, just quickly, and we've been through this before, the landholder is probably the only local beneficiary. The ACT residents are the big winners, however, we, as local residents, will bear virtually all the costs. Being on Tallagandra Lane, the bitumen component of that, we will experience complete loss of amenity, as 75 plus truck movements, low-loaders, B-Doubles, concrete trucks, you name it, go within 40 metres of our door. We've always had – we've already had previous experience of this, because in the same area, we've got a problem with illegal dumping of Canberra's solid fill, which involves a range of B-Doubles, lots of brake noise, and poor safety conditions.

MR HUTTON: Mr Quirke, are you aware of your reference number? Your R number in terms of residence. Are you able to let us know what that is?

MR QUIRKE: No, I'm sorry. We're on the corner of Tallagandra Lane and Mulligans Flat Road.

MR HUTTON: Thank you.

MR QUIRKE: So we're actually in an S. I've actually counted them, there's about 25 different gear changes as trucks go around our corner. So as everyone else has identified, long-term loss of amenity, the residents in the area, the dust and noise during the investment phase will be significant. I'm surprised at the lack of buffer zones in the proposal to sort of mitigate the impact of – the visual impact of the PV panels.

In terms of benefit, we all know that the majority of equipment and labour will be imported from the region. Labour force, when it's brought in, will be accommodated in the ACT, so no local benefits there. There's minimal full-time benefits in the ..... phase anyway. I think they've got to have five workers in a shed. And as Peter Gillett observed, any inputs that need to be purchased locally will be purchased out of the ACT. So, essentially, just like dumping of solid fill, this is essentially ACT outsourcing a land use that's not acceptable to its own residents.

So this is not about renewable energy, but it's about land use guidelines. As previous people have said, subdivisions have been made and purchased on the basis of an understanding of how that land is going to be used, and this is clearly not rural or residential. This is why I tried to think about what a good development like this should look like. It should be not in a rural residential area, so primarily rural, and it should be adjacent to a major arterial – a major highway for heavy vehicle access.

There are a large number of good examples there, I've got on the screen, which show the installation is actually right next to a major highway and sort of doesn't involve a 10-kilometre haul through a village. Also, with networks these days, there's no requirement to be close to the customer in the ACT. Thank you for your attention.

5

PROF LIPMAN: Thank you, Derek, for your presentation.

MR QUIRKE: Thank you.

10 PROF LIPMAN: The Commission will now move to a lunch break, and we will resume the meeting at 1.30 pm.

**RECORDING SUSPENDED** [12.45 pm]

15

**RECORDING RESUMED** [1.41 pm]

20 PROF LIPMAN: Good afternoon and welcome to the afternoon session of the public meeting on Springdale Solar Farm. Our first speakers this afternoon are Sue and George Hardwicke, or Andy Hardwicke. You have 15 minutes between you.

25 MS S. HARDWICKE: Thank you. I feel deeply impassioned to speak on behalf of those who have no voice. The eagle represents many things to me; its grandeur cannot be fathomed or described. Throughout the course of this solar battle, I've experienced what can only be described as supernatural events, in regard to the eagle. It has appeared soaring overhead or over our farm each time we have been  
30 challenged with meeting the solar reps. Our first encounter was when we were trepidatiously heading to the Sutton Hall for our meeting with Renew. As we drove down East Tallagandra Lane, Andy spotted an eagle feeding on the side of the road. We stopped and it flew and landed on the fence next to us and remained there for a time, and then it flew off. It was amazing and I knew it was a sign.

35 Another extraordinary encounter was the day that the IPC came out to view the site. I was outside on our hill, surveying the land, as I often do. I was praying and as I was standing on the cleared area of our hill, with the greatest view of the proposed development, I noticed something profound. A bird that had been waiting on the branch of a dead tree nearby took flight again and came towards me. As I prayed,  
40 the bird circled above me. And as my volume increased, it came in closer. It wasn't deterred by the loudness of my voice. I believe it was a Little eagle. When the Little eagle disappeared, I looked out and all the cars involved with the IPC meeting were coming back along Tintinhull Road.

45 The Little eagle is listed as a vulnerable species. One reason for this listing is the reduction of habitat quality or diversity. The main threats to the species are the destruction and degradation of its foraging and breeding habitat, causing it to come

into competition with the Wedge-tailed eagle, which is not necessarily a predator of the Little eagle unless there is competition for habitat and prey. The typical habitat for the Little eagle includes hillsides where there is a mixture of wooded and open areas, or wooded farmland along watercourses. I promised that I would fight for the  
5 vulnerable Little eagle and all the eagles and other inhabitants of this land that cannot speak for themselves.

What an absolute crime to rob them of their space, their homes, their habitats, all because man decides that this is an opportunistic location to destroy what has always  
10 existed and call it saving the planet. How can man's heart become so hardened by selfishness, greed and materialism that they neglect to hear, see or perceive the indescribable diversity of our flourishing pastures that boast of bounty. And I've just written a poem. I called it 'Fragile Flight', that I'd like to share:

15       *The eagle, the king of the sky, surveyed the land from on high,  
riding the currents with effortless glide.  
How could you know what it had spied?  
And yet, with dizzying speed it approached the Earth,  
Pursuing its prey for all it is worth.*  
20       *Joy fills my heart at the sight of such strength and might.  
A fearless challenge as it revels in the build-up of a storm as dark as midnight.  
Catching the currents to rise above what threatens the land,  
I wonder if it knows what man's heart has planned?  
Surely it could not, for this is its space.*  
25       *Faithful to the area; its home, its place.  
What would the outcome be?  
For man's selfishness could never see.  
What repercussions could befall the most regal of birds?  
My heart is shattered; it is beyond all words.*  
30       *What will happen if its domain is invaded,  
and it was confronted by endless glare that never faded?  
How could man compromise the life of all our feathered friends,  
Claiming it to be progress, keeping up with trends,  
rescuing the planet from certain demise.*  
35       *Really?  
You're putting in danger what inhabits the skies.  
Stealing their homes and altering their space,  
Confused by glare and a false shimmering lake,  
They disappear without a trace.*  
40       *We've watched the pelicans fly that path.  
How tragic would it be for them to mistake those panels for a giant bath?  
This is the course that the migrating birds always take.  
Please don't confuse them by thinking they have somehow made a mistake.  
There has to be something inside of man greater than money and a greedy*  
45       *plan.  
There has to be something that will somehow open their eyes, to see what is out  
there and what inhabits our skies.*

*What hope is there if man is left to impose and nature becomes bereft and industrial damage grows?*

Thank you.

5

PROF LIPMAN: Yes.

MR HARDWICKE: Hi. Thank you for allowing me to speak. I just want to add a PowerPoint of just some of the photos from around our area. Let me just see if I can get this right. Is that coming through?

10

PROF LIPMAN: Not yet.

MR HARDWICKE: Sorry. I need – now I need to share presentation or something, don't I, I think? Share screen. Is that coming through now?

15

PROF LIPMAN: Not so far.

MR HARDWICKE: Great. It's not there. Okay. Share, here we go.

20

PROF LIPMAN: It looks like he's getting there now.

MR HUTTON: So we can see a file directory now, so that's a good sign.

25

PROF LIPMAN: Perhaps - - -

MR HARDWICKE: Can you see that now?

PROF LIPMAN: No, we've just got a folder of files.

30

MR HARDWICKE: Okay.

MR HUTTON: Yes. I think if you double-click on the file that you want to show, that should come through.

35

MR HARDWICKE: Okay.

MR HUTTON: There we go. We can - - -

40

PROF LIPMAN: That's it. It's – it's there.

MR HARDWICKE: All right. Okay, all right. Look, I'm just – it's just going to screen some photos while I share. Look, thank you for allowing me to speak. Although I do not regard this as a public meeting, as many of my neighbours have been excluded from the process due to their age, in their 70s and 80s, and the Government's COVID-19 policies. We were promised a public meeting and I feel this meeting reinforces the discrepancy between the community and DPIE and RES.

45

Sutton Solar Action Group's first public meeting in Sutton to counter the Springdale Solar Power Station proposal led to approximately 100 local Sutton residents joining together in Sutton Hall. What a shame we could not have a true public meeting now, to express how the whole community feels, not just those who are tech-savvy.

5

Although we are so close to the city of Canberra, we still live in the country and face common challenges and also enjoy close community. The solar power station proposal has placed additional stress on the community, with some giving up initially. Particularly when small farmers and retired residents are faced with \$150 million development and meetings with high-powered solicitors and engineers. Other residents have banded together against the injustice, whether it is facing fires, flooding of local roads like Tallagandra Lane in 2020, injured animals, dumping of rubbish, thieves breaking into properties, stolen cars being dumped and torched or our landscape being ruined by a proposal for inappropriate development and use of farming land.

Sutton residents, including myself, had to endure the stress and anxiety of this Springdale proposal since 2017. This has caused fractures in the community and ongoing disputes with neighbours. Personally, I've had to endure the effects of prolonged stress, disturbed sleep, appetite changes, effects on physical health, with times of anxiety and depression. The same symptoms have been evident in some of my neighbours. I worked in mental health for 20 years, and although I'm retired, I'm currently registered with AHPRA as part of the COVID-19 response, so I am competent to see the signs. The Sutton community has had to battle the Department's bias towards the – from the – towards the developer. I recognise that both of the Commissioners have approved large-scale solar power stations. How many large-scale solar proposals have been rejected by the IPC?

I hope this is not a rubber stamp exercise, as we experienced from our treatment from both Renew Estate, RES and the DPIE. This proposal is like a mining company that came onto my land around 1970, drilling and testing for mineral deposits. We were unable to stop them because the laws at the time gave them free access. Later, the laws were changed so that mining companies had to get permission from landowners. Solar power stations are enjoying similar freedoms as the speculative miners did in the 1970s. We now have speculative solar power station developers. Renew Estate, a group of solicitors in Sydney, in conjunction with local solar business, started this process with an ex-smash repairer who had purchased large areas of land in the area. The Springdale proposal, we were told in September 2017 by the developer, would be started in approximately June 2018. After a long wait, the EIS was finally posted and the community had their chance to repudiate some of the lies and misconceptions that had been presented by the developer.

We then had a long wait, with no contact from the developer. The Department then told us that Renew Estate were doing additional studies, which was apparently untrue. As a result, the residents of Sutton were left in limbo. We felt like a lot of speculators; if the easy money became hard due to community opposition, then they may just give up and concentrate on other developments. The process of approval

should be taken to the Ombudsman, as the developer was allowed to sit on the Springdale proposal and the Department took no action. This issue was raised with the Minister, who then pressed the Department. As a result, the proposal was sold off to RES. RES is also speculating that they can gain approval in an area that is  
5 plainly not an ideal position for an industrial solar power station.

The local landowners are against it. The wider Sutton community is against it. The Yass shire is – is against it, so please stop it. Unfortunately, the Commissioners were not able to see the site from my land and home, as I overlook the whole of the  
10 proposed Springdale site. That's R5, I think. I can see the wind farms on the hills near Collector in the distance. I look over the hills near Goulburn and the hills of Lake George and Macs Reef Road towards the coast. I can see Canberra's Black Mountain tower and the beacon on Mount Ainslie flashes in my bathroom window at night. Living in the country, you look at a wider perspective. Cars stopping on the  
15 road, a couple of kilometres away. Smoke in the distance means quickly checking the Fires Near Me app. It is a shame that the Springdale proposal has limited its visual to two kilometres, while the visual amenity should be as far as the eye can see.

As the development is located in a valley and despite Renew Estate's photographs  
20 being taken to try and minimise the impact of the development, it cannot be hidden by trees, even if they do grow for the 35 years of the development. This is because of the location in a valley on undulating land, with surrounding houses and properties overlooking the development. Certain areas cannot be hidden, as trees and shrubs cannot be planted because of the Golden Sun Moth habitat. Other areas, such as the  
25 huge substation, can't be hidden because of their location near powerlines. Tallagandra Lane travels from the hills down through the valley, with development on both sides of the road, and then taken up the hill and out of the development. As a result, the huge development cannot be adequately screened. These should not be allowed to be built in this area.

30 I will see an eyesore. So will my neighbours both near and far. We will also see it travelling on Tintinhull Road and Tallagandra Lane. The traffic on Tallagandra Lane has increased dramatically over the past few years, with tourism to wineries, cat and dog boarding kennels, the horse arena and many other local businesses. Since the  
35 amount of land required to get a building permit reduced from 80 hectares to 40 hectares, there's been an increase in house building in the area. My two sons, the sixth generation on the land, are planning to build on the property and they're now part-owners of the block of land directly opposite the proposed Springdale site. They started the process of subdivision after a year of silence from Renew Estate. They  
40 have plans drawn up by an architect, but are now awaiting the result of the Springdale proposal before submitting them to council. This proposal should be quashed, as it is in a poor location.

45 Glare. If I can see lights on the far hills, I will be seeing the glare of the solar plant and the other aspects of the industrial site. One of the engineers from Renew Estate stated that the reflection will be equivalent to the reflection from a body of water. What is the difference in glare from paddocks to solar panels? RES would have the

exact percentage of reflection from each panel and could provide the exact angles and places the glare will affect, using computer modelling on topographic maps of the area. What is the glare of solar panels to flights, tourists driving Tallagandra Lane and also for local residents? It is unfortunate the Government doesn't have the  
5 independent studies, rather than those paid for by the developer, which are inherently biased.

The disastrous fires of 2019/20 summer brought no – brought to attention the incredible destruction bushfires cause. Although much of the Sutton area was spared  
10 because of the severe drought in seasons, such as the Commissioners are aware, the amount of fuel to burn is immense. In January 2003, a large fire swept through parts of Canberra, killing – killing four people and destroying 488 houses. Not far away from – from us. In February 2017, a grassfire in Carwoola destroyed 11 homes. It was – it was – the fire was started when two workers for the company Advanced  
15 Plumbing and Drains were using a power cutter, which sent sparks into nearby grass at Carwoola property. I recently started a small fire while cutting steel on a cleared area. Whilst I had taken precautions, with the fire tank 20 metres away with a water pump and hose, the small fire was quickly extinguished.

The Hassalls and other residents along Tintinhull Road may face the same dilemma as the residents of Mallacoota faced in 2020, being trapped with one exit of a fire – if a fire starts on the – in the south. In the past, I've been a voluntary firefighter for the Sutton brigade and have cut through farm fences to access a fire and escape when winds changed. Cutting through a 2.2 metre chain wire fence is far more difficult  
20 and potentially life threatening. In 2017, after above-average rain in 2016, we had fuel levels similar to – this is – I'm sorry, I'm – this – anyway. Within minutes, this fire that started – within minutes, the fire had gone one kilometre. Another neighbour later reported sitting down to a cup of tea and seeing smoke and fire go around his house. The fire eventually was put out after travelling approximately 10  
25 kilometres, with the assistance of large firefighting planes, helicopters and many New South Wales and ACT brigades.  
30

In 1979 – in 1979, I had experience having my family and my own property totally burnt out from an electrical fuse falling from a power pole into dry grass, and  
35 fighting the fire in the ACT on our own property, then taking shelter in my brother's home, filled with smoke, while the fire front passed. If approval is given despite policies and procedures, commercial contractors are not always going to take the necessary precautions required to prevent fires occurring, and the consequence of this risk is potentially catastrophic. If for some unknown reason the development is  
40 approved, then a manned fire tender should be permanently onsite for the whole of the construction period, to protect the Sutton area.

Like a lot of speculative enterprises, they are based on minimal expenditure with maximum profits to the investors. Inadequate planning for this proposal is evident,  
45 with much of the detail depending on whether approval is obtained. An industrial area in a rural landscape provides a precedent for further industrial development, which is counter to the Yass Shire Council's development plans. This land is within

the five kilometre buffer zone for the ACT that the Yass Council was trying to implement to stop development.

PROF LIPMAN: Excuse me, Andy.

5

MR HARDWICKE: Bird life, prolific around the area.

PROF LIPMAN: Andy, you're nearly three minutes over time. Could you wind up, please?

10

MR HARDWICKE: Okay. Let me put – some of the other things I was going to talk about was like, the hail that destroyed 44,500 cars, the fog that's been – that's part of the landscape. The consultation problems, screening trees. One of my hobbies has been planting trees and I – and I know how hard it is to grow them.

15 Microclimate. The – my neighbour, Les, who has a – a – he has an arboretum of rare and exotic conifers. He's worried by the effect of heat gain, particularly when we have heatwave conditions similar to earlier this week. Compensation, what a joke. Many local residents have been overcome by the size of the development and the thought that the proposed development was inevitable. Other local residents have  
20 not taken up the 30 pieces of silver offered by Renew or RES, as it was grossly inadequate and we believe that the proposed site is in a wrong location and it should be fought to the end. The value of the land in the area is increasing each year, as evident by the increase in valuation for rates. I'm not sure what loss of value to landowners would be from the development, if this proceeds. RES would like to say  
25 it is minimal, so to prevent adequate compensation to landowners and the local community.

Personally, the change of landscape to me - - -

30 PROF LIPMAN: Excuse me.

MR HARDWICKE: - - - will devalue my property - - -

PROF LIPMAN: Andy, I'm sorry to interrupt but we are getting out of time.

35

MR HARDWICKE: Just - - -

PROF LIPMAN: So if you could just finish off, please.

40 MR HARDWICKE: - - - 30 seconds more.

PROF LIPMAN: Okay.

45 MR HARDWICKE: First, a change of the land – what I see from my loungeroom. I have enjoyed the visual aspect from a child, walking in the paddocks with my grandfather. Please reject this proposal. Just because there is a company with money to invest, powerlines and a willing landowner, doesn't make it right to

override local landowners, the Sutton community and the Yass Shire Council, and many other reasons that make Springdale the wrong location. I ask the Commissioners to let justice prevail and quash this proposal. Thank you very much. Sorry.

5

PROF LIPMAN: Thank you very much, Andy.

MR HARDWICKE: Okay, thank you.

10 PROF LIPMAN: Our next speaker is Mark O'Shea.

MR M. O'SHEA: Good afternoon. Along with my wife, we own land adjoining the proposed solar development. The proposed development adjoins our full 1.4 kilometre west-facing boundary and approximately two kilometres of our north-

15 facing boundary. In March 2003, my wife and I stretched ourselves financially, to buy this property. It was to be our super nest egg. Even 17 years ago, this area was viewed as rural residential. Since then, many more homes have been constructed, to take advantage of the lifestyle this area offers. Not in my wildest dreams 17 years ago, did I ever consider an industrial development of – of this could be a possibility.

20

Now I wish to focus on several points I commented on in my August 2018 submission, which has been mentioned before, and in – two and a-half years ago. The first of these comments is bushfire hazards. This proposed development will be located in the middle of a rural residential area which suffers from bushfires, as

25 recently as three years ago. I wonder how the Hassall family and others, who live at the end of Tintinhull Road, will be able to safely escape if the proposed development should catch fire. That's if we were being positioned on both sides of Tintinhull Road. Who will be liable if people should be injured or even die in this situation? Still on fire hazards, what is the consequence if a fire should start on my or other

30 adjoining properties, and destroy this proposed development?

Will RES, in this case, seek compensation from the adjoining property owner? A big ask, if the development has to be cleared and then reinstated. And of course, there will be the loss of income to be considered. I request a legal clause in any approval

35 stating the offending neighbour will not be sued for compensation in this situation. We could be talking some hundreds of millions of dollars. My second comment regards setting a precedent should this proposal be approved. I suggest further such developments or similar will then be approved in this current-pristine area. Perhaps my neighbour on my southern boundary, who has two sets of powerlines running

40 across his property, and myself, will be able to amalgamate our properties and propose an even larger solar development than the one we are discussing today.

My third comment regards the impact on the value of surrounding properties to this proposed solar development. The previous Renew Estate representatives suggested

45 to me nearby property values would not be affected. I strongly disagreed with them. Common sense tells us all that the presence of this solar development will severely impact the value and appreciation of the surrounding properties in the years to come.

I wish just to give a quick example, of Northcove Road at Long Beach, a completely different address. Northcove Road runs parallel to, and approximately 50 metres from the cliff face. The houses located between the road and the cliff face have wonderful ocean views. The houses on the opposite side of Northcove Road do not  
5 have ocean views. These houses without the ocean views sell for approximately 50 per cent of the price of the houses with ocean views. I now suggest this will have – this development will have a similar effect to the prices of properties near the proposed solar development.

10 I ask you to consider a simple scenario. In this example, there are two 100 acre blocks of land for sale. One block has views of 350,000 solar panels. The other block several kilometres away has pristine rural views. Which block would sell for the higher price? I request a condition of this approval is that all surrounding  
15 properties be financially compensated by the developer. In conclusion, I wish to again state that my wife and I are supporters of solar energy generation, but the location of this proposed development is completely unsuitable. It is even located in a valley, where on many winter's days, the fog does not lift until after midday. I suggest this type of development should be located in one of three strategic renewable energy zones nominated by the New South Wales State Government.

20 Locating the solar development just across the border from the ACT will offer little benefit to New South Wales. The solar panels' steel framework and inverters, etcetera will be supplied from overseas. Accommodation, food, road base concrete and many other requirements will most likely be sourced from the ACT. Also, one  
25 can assume that the people being employed on the development when it is up and running will live in the ACT and spend their disposable income in the ACT, not in New South Wales. I sincerely hope today is not simply a tick-the-box exercise, and trust the IPC will take notice of the public input, especially those in the immediate area, who will be affected both mentally and financially if this solar development  
30 should be approved. I thank you for your time today.

PROF LIPMAN: Thank you, Mark. Could you just confirm whether you're listed as a receptor and if so, what number was allocated to you?

35 MR O'SHEA: I could be – no, I am not a receptor. That's right, I'm not listed as a receptor. It's quite interesting, because I don't live on the property. I live in Canberra but because I don't have a house on the property, I'm not listed as a receptor. But if you have the map in front of you, do you have that?

40 MR HUTTON: Yes.

PROF LIPMAN: Yes. What is your – what would your address be? Where would you be situated?

45 MR O'SHEA: Now that it's recently changed due to Tintinhull Road being realigned, I am now 44 Tintinhull Road.

PROF LIPMAN: 44 - - -

MR O'SHEA: So is it - - -

5 PROF LIPMAN: So there's no house on the block?

MR O'SHEA: There is no house. There is considerable infrastructure; there is a very big shed with a lot of equipment, there's state of the art cattle yards. There's a bore and truss system, laneways, fences. I've spent hundreds of thousands of dollars  
10 on that place and yes. But in answer to your question, there is no house on this property, but as I said, I bought this with the intention – with my wife – this would be our super nest egg. At this point in time, I could divide that into six 100 acre blocks and – but at this point in time, why would I consider it?

15 PROF LIPMAN: Right.

MR O'SHEA: Who would want to buy land beside 350,000 solar panels, to build a house?

20 PROF LIPMAN: Thanks very much Mark, and thanks for your presentation.

MR O'SHEA: Thank you for your time. Bye-bye.

PROF LIPMAN: Bye. Our next presented is Ron Weston, who has five minutes.  
25

MR R. WESTON: Okay. Can you hear me there?

PROF LIPMAN: Yes, we can.

30 MR WESTON: Okay. Just a little bit difficult, just talking on the mobile phone. So my name's Ron Weston and I own the land adjoining to the northern side of the proposed Springdale industrial site. So I'm also – on that 230 acre, I haven't got a house. I've got a beautiful view of the proposed solar industrial site, but I don't have a house. So I'm not labelled there. But if you – can you just see on your map where  
35 I am? It's – I'm between the P2 and the pine trees, where I adjoin.

PROF LIPMAN: Right.

MR WESTON: Can you see that?  
40

PROF LIPMAN: Yes.

MR HUTTON: Yes.

45 MR WESTON: So I run backwards from there.

MR HUTTON: Yes.

PROF LIPMAN: Thank you.

MR WESTON: Okay. Thank you for the opportunity to put my personal views forward to your committee. After hearing all the proposals, I'm – I'm not going to  
5 take up too much of your time, but I understand my family and my views will have little or no effect on the decision-making process today, but I believe it's important to know there is a personal cost with these types of projects and – and when they don't sit comfortably with the community and neighbours, it's – already – already, this proposal's had an effect on the mental health of parties and long-term friendships  
10 have been lost over it. So I just wanted to make sure people understood it's just not black or white. In a community, such as ours, all those sorts of things – you pay a very large price.

I've owned the land at Browns Lane, Sutton, since 1995. I bought the 230 acres next  
15 to Springdale in 2009 and part of this block was used as a mine, to mine clay for the Canberra Brickworks. At my own expense and labour, I was able to rejuvenate and re-establish the land back to a productive pastoral environment. The government at that time didn't have the processes in place to force the ownership of the mine to rehabilitate the land in an appropriate manner. So you can imagine, my family and I  
20 have a deep connection to this land and the surrounding environment. 350,000 solar panels is an extreme interruption to our environment as we know it. There's no conclusive research to say it will not affect the immediate climate or environment and that's something that I would hope you would take into consideration when assessing this.

25 I've read an enormous amount of research and no one can have any sort of conclusive research to say that it's not going to have an immediate direct impact. So that's something that concerns us very dearly. My objection is clear. I believe this proposal is incorrectly located. You know, I think 47 per cent of the land in  
30 Australia is low or non-productive and this land's quite productive land. The Government has identified preferential zones for solar. This is not one of them. Australia is very flat in topography. This is undulating valley, which – which increases the impact. And I want to just talk on that. From my block, it's like looking at an amphitheatre. I've got a hill which is a perfect house site, and I will be  
35 able to enjoy the 350,000 panels for a long time to come, if this project's approved. I'm – also, I'm employed as a firefighter for the last 36 years, and my personal view is that this proposal will leave a great risk to neighbours and the Sutton township. 350,000 panels have an enormous amount of electrical switching and cabling, which can potentially break down.

40 People can say this is never a problem, but I can tell you I've been to enough fires to tell you everything can break down. Everything has a risk factor. This 350,000 panels just increases this risk tenfold. The – if a fire did start in the facility, the prevailing winds would – would not be – the prevailing winds would have the fire  
45 both in the neighbour's lap and in the Sutton township in a very short time, and this – the prevailing winds would not allow a sufficient time to warn the community or the Sutton village, which is a major concern that came out of the Canberra bushfires. I

believe this will impact on the insurance levies, both when you're looking at liability and recovery to your land. So you can see, there's a personal concern from this and there's a personal side to your – what you're doing.

5 I wish to speak briefly on the screening of the 350,000 solar panels, for the purpose of reducing the visual impact. It seems naïve or - - -

PROF LIPMAN: I'm sorry, Ron. We're – we're out of time. Would you mind winding up your presentation?

10

MR WESTON: Yes, I will. Yes, I've only got – it – look, it seems naïve and misleading for anyone to believe there would be any relief visually, within 10 years. An uninterrupted tree line could only be a dream. So I don't wish to take up any more of your time. I just – I hope that you have the ability to make some sense of  
15 this project, and thanks for your time.

PROF LIPMAN: Thank you, Ron, and feel free to send in your submission - - -

MR WESTON: Yes.

20

PROF LIPMAN: - - - if you didn't manage to finish the presentation.

MR WESTON: Look – yes, I – look, I appreciate it. Thanks a lot.

25 PROF LIPMAN: Thank you. Our next speaker will be Allan Golding, who will speak for five minutes.

MR A. GOLDING: Hello. Thank you, Commissioners. My name is Allan Golding and I live in the rural area adjacent to the ACT, but I'm not directly impacted by the  
30 proposed facility. I previously submitted a written objection in August of 2018. However, my local history dates back to 1968, and more applicably, to the development of properties for the incredibly large population of fringe dwellers occupying rural and rural residential properties in New South Wales, adjacent to the borders of Canberra. During this past 50 years, I have project managed and acted as  
35 agent exclusively in this area of rural property. I am also the dad of Jacqui Hassall, who is scheduled to speak shortly, as I highly-impacted landowner. I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate the voluntary speakers today who have spent incredible hours trying to articulate and defend their beliefs.

40 Firstly, I'll mention the fact that there is 110 objectors and so-called 114 supporters. Those numbers do not portray the truth. Almost all objectors are precise and meaningful about the impacts of this particular project, whereas a large percentage of so-called supporters actually support solar or alternate energy, without being specific to this particular project. I am equally certain that most of the objectors to this  
45 particular project would actually support renewable energy. In a nutshell, as other speakers have said, good project, wrong place. As a 50 year experience conveyancer of rural residential real estate, I have absolutely no doubt that this development will

significantly affect property values on a sliding scale, comparative to the location of the negative factors, whether they be the site itself or the transport routes leading to the site.

5 One of the critical assessment issues has – that has been portrayed wrongly by the developer, is that they talk about the impact on residences, not about the impact on the total acreage owned by the resident owner. Rural residential lifestyle is not restricted to the confines of the home itself. The lifestyle includes all of the acreage, its open spaces and vegetation and the outdoor pursuits that influenced their choice in the first place. And equally important, it has not been mentioned that Yass Valley Council entitles owners to dual occupancy on these rural and rural residential properties. Who has asked affected landowners if they were planning a second home for family members or themselves, or where they planned to put it? And then also doing an assessment to figure the impact on that site.

15 There are little things in official documents that portray often a real meaning. The homes are referred to as R numbers. So why don't we give more meaning to people's lives and home by saying – say, Jacqui and Darren's home and property. We might end up being kinder to each other if we say it often enough. Given that both local and state government have encouraged and permitted rural residential development in the region generally, and also specifically to this particular site, the very fact that this proposal has arrived at this stage is a blight on the reputation of such authority and a definite lack of respect for the good citizens of the area who have purchased and established their homes and lifestyle on past government decisions. I urge this Commission to deny ratification of a poor proposal, in terms of its geographic location.

30 Electricity is transferred at the speed of light with minimal loss from anywhere to anywhere on the eastern seaboard. So let us put this facility not in an easy, showcase location near Canberra and its airport, for VIP visitations, but as speakers have already said; in a place of low habitation, easy and direct highway access, low traffic risk and zero effect on property, economic, social and lifestyle effects. The Government has indeed earmarked such locations and this is not one of them. I thank you very much for the opportunity to speak today.

35 PROF LIPMAN: Thank you very much, Allan. Our next speaker is John Brennan. You have five minutes, John. You are sideways at the moment.

40 MR HUTTON: And muted.

PROF LIPMAN: You need to – that's it.

MR J. BRENNAN: Is that better?

45 MR HUTTON: Yes.

PROF LIPMAN: That's better and you're fine now to go.

MR BRENNAN: Thank you. Thank you. Thanks for the opportunity to speak, and thanks for Allan and Ron for their – their comments. I also would like to object to the proposal. I am an affected neighbour, although I don't actually appear on the DPIE map. I'm directly to the east of the – the largest Golden Sun Moth habitat on the map. I think I – I believe I'm being classified as R13, but I don't actually appear on the DPIE map. I'd just like to say, in terms of the process, as a directly affected member of the community and indeed, a neighbour of the landowner and the development, I've had no consultation whatsoever with – with the landowner, with the previous developer, the current developer, Yass Council or – or the Department, so I'm a little bit concerned, in terms of the process that that should occur when I am so directly affected. My southern boundary will be 250 metres from the nearest array, so I would have thought somebody could have gone to the trouble of contacting.

I would say that like Ron and a number of other people in the area, there are a number of concerns for me personally. The visual impact will be immense. I will see that – those 260,000 panels every day. Just, you know, from my stable, I look out over that whole valley. So there is very little way in which I can be screened. Significantly reduce the value of my property, but to be honest, as I intend to be here till I die, that's – that's of little import. What is – what is more important is the loss of the aesthetic value of my land and my view, which, as Ron said – sorry, Allan said, that's the reason why I bought here in Sutton. A few concerns, again, with the report. I will – I will put in a written representation, and thank you for the opportunity to do so.

Look, I look at the – the haste in which this report seems to have been put together by the Department, and there's some – some anomalies which do not provide me with a lot of faith in the report, as such. It talks about the economic benefits to the area and I think most of the – most of the objectors would say that will be of no particular benefit to the area. The report talks about five operational staff. In another area it talks of 10 operational staff. If we can't get the – the facts that we control correct, it gives me little faith in the rest of the report. The other thing which concerns me straight off is the – I guess, the seriousness of the developer over the last few years. We talked about screening. Ron talked about the vegetative screening. We note there has been absolutely no work with vegetative screening in the last couple of years, so anything that will be done will take years to have any impact for us.

There is no screening to the north. Again, if the developer was serious, they could have planted those trees when they first started. I know the area well. It could well do with some more vegetation, not less. I also am amazed at the – that the Department has signed off on, in terms of the critically endangered species. When I look at the map and when I know the area, to be able to blithely draw lines across the map, in terms of the – the natural habitat is quite amazing. So in – look, in conclusion, I'd just like to say I have strong objections, both in terms of the process, in terms of the proposal and in terms of the likely impact on the natural environment in that beautiful valley which – which we overlook and which we husband over the

years. So thank you very much. I will be putting in a written – a written submission as well. Good afternoon.

MR HUTTON: Thank you.

5

PROF LIPMAN: Thank you very much, John. Our next speakers are Jacqueline and Darren Hassall and together they have 15 minutes.

MS J. HASSALL: Hello. My name is Jacqui Hassall and along with my husband, Darren, we live with our family at our home, Tintinhull Cottage, on 257 Tintinhull Road and we thank you for the opportunity to present our objections and concerns today. We were also called to – by the developer. As neighbours of this proposal, we wish to speak on the impact this has had on us and our family over the past three years, placing our lives and any future plans we had for our property on hold. Our historic home, known as Tintinhull Cottage, was built in 1898 and it is where we have lived for the past 16 years and we would never have imagined it may possibly be located next to a large industrial solar plant. Our home is elevated by seven metres over the proposed site and if this development is approved, we would be overlooking it, like an amphitheatre along our southern boundary and our eastern boundary, even with the proposed screening.

We would be living alongside this, our whole property of 80 acres, which we actively use, and only a few hundred metres from where we sleep. Since moving here in 2005, we have seen an increase of 275 per cent in the value of our home. The whole area of Sutton and where we live is prime rural real estate, and we believe that a solar plant is simply not the best and appropriate use of this land. While waiting for the Springdale Solar development decision to be made, our lives have been put on hold and we ask why this development has been allowed to go on since 2017, and so long. We have put on hold our family plans to extend our three bedroom home that Darren and I and our three children live in, or to build, as we hoped, a new home on a preferred second site that was chosen many years ago on the long – on the side of a hill and overlooking the entire valley.

The preferred house site is at least 12 metres above the proposed development and the tree planting proposed by the developer would never conceal the site from our view, as it would not, as I said, be concealed from our current home. Any plans we have had for our property have all been put on hold, awaiting the decision to be made. The solar development has placed all our future home plans for us on hold. If buying here we knew there was a possibility of a development, we would never have chosen to live here next to an industrial solar plant; 470 acres, nearly two million square metres, eight times the size of Parliament House. Pictures originally taken from our home and property by the first developer, Renew, were not used to show our view. We do not know why this happened. The new developer then changed our classification of high visual to moderate. We provided pictures at the recent onsite meeting with the Commissioners, showing our view from the very sites from and within our home.

Living in our elevated site and in our home, from our main bedroom, we have a completely uninterrupted view of the proposed site. And all the trees on – on the east and south in our garden are deciduous, so in late autumn, winter and early spring, we would have no block from the view. We believe that this location of the proposed  
5 large solar development is both unsuitable and unnecessary and is a sell-out of the direction of 40 years of actively promoting this area as rural residential lifestyle living blocks, with approved subdivision and promoted by a tier of council and government. Large solar developments like this should be held in wide, large, open areas with minimal impact to the surrounding area and neighbours.

10 Electricity can be sent by the flick of the switch on the eastern seaboard, and the New South Wales Government has delivered renewable energy zones, putting the infrastructure in to allow the zones identified to be there for hundreds of years. The Sutton area is not one of these energy zones and is short-sighted. We feel concern  
15 that we will lack security at our home and property with the proposed development and are very concerned about the potential and yet unknown detrimental health impacts of living so close to a solar plant, both short term and long term. We fear for ourselves and for our children every day, about what future health conditions the development – about living so close to the heat island effect, with a massive solar  
20 plant causing temperature increase.

PROF LIPMAN: We can't hear you, Jacqui.

25 MS HASSALL: We are very – can you hear me?

MR HUTTON: Yes.

PROF LIPMAN: Yes.

30 MS HASSALL: We ..... ourselves and our children every day about what future health conditions could develop, about living so close to the heat island effect, with the massive solar plant causing temperature increases. Who can tell us and guarantee that there will be no future health implications to Darren and I and to our children? We are very concerned about the possibility of fire. If a fire started on the proposed  
35 site, how could we escape, with our driveway our only exit? The proposed site would contain electrical switches and a potential source of fire and every day and every night, we will be concerned that we could become trapped if a fire was to start. How will we sleep with our fear and how will our concerns be reassured? There is no permanent water supply to fight a fire on this site and all water would need to be  
40 trucked in. It is not an environmentally suitable site.

We are concerned about how our family will be able to securely drive through the middle of the solar plant, with our driveway at Tintinhull Road going right through the middle of it. The entrance of Tallangandra Lane onto Tintinhull Road is  
45 dangerous, and the possibility of a serious accident occurring is very high. We are concerned with all the – all of the additional solar development traffic, with the large number of trucks from this on our roads, which can barely cope with its local traffic.

What measures are in place to ensure that the chemicals used to clean the panels will not be washed into our dams, impacting our bore water and harming our stock, and what will prevent the dust from the development covering our home and being washed into our drinking water and contaminating it?

5

In closing, we want to raise the issue of compensation and feel that we, along with our neighbours and the community, have not been engaged appropriately by the developer. We are concerned about the failure to engage us and that the developers have failed to offer any reasonable compensation. The developer argued that this will not devalue our property, but we believe it will. And if they argue that we cannot say it will, how can they argue that it will not? Where is there proof? Where did they get that information from? We know ourselves we would not be interested in purchasing a property next to a huge solar plant.

10

15 We ask that compensation should include the special value of the land to Darren, myself and our family, and the loss of current and future land value compensation. Compensation for loss as a result of this disturbance, for the mental stress and the hardship suffered to our whole family, the impact to our health and for the anxiety caused for over three years. Compensation for all and any additional costs my family may experience because of this solar development and for all costs and disadvantages suffered should my family decide that relocation is the only acceptable alternative to remaining next door to an unacceptable neighbour situation. Thank you.

20

25 PROF LIPMAN: Thank you very much. Is Darren Hassall going to speak now, or is that the end of the presentation?

MR D. HASSALL: That's it for now. Thank you very much.

30 PROF LIPMAN: It includes your presentation does it, Darren?

MR HASSALL: Yes, thank you. Yes.

PROF LIPMAN: Yes, thank you.

35

MR HUTTON: Thanks.

PROF LIPMAN: Thank you very much.

40 MR HASSALL: Thank you.

PROF LIPMAN: The next speaker is Sally Wright. You have five minutes, Sally.

45 MS S. WRIGHT: Thank you. On behalf of the Lees family, I thank you for this opportunity to present our objections to the proposed Springdale Solar Farm development. In listening to my neighbours today, and particularly Jacqui, I couldn't help but think of that classic Aussie movie, The Castle. But beyond all the developer

reports, legal arguments and zoning interpretations, there is a genuine human element to this debate, but that is in danger of being overlooked. When community concerns are ignored, a fundamental injustice will prevail. So let me get straight to the point. This proposed development, if given the go ahead, will negatively impact families, their neighbours and the community at large. And I know I speak for many, when I say that our voices must be heard.

I am the daughter of Robert Lees, who has lived all of his 83 years at our family farm, which is situated less than two kilometres from the proposed solar farm. I am also the cousin of Bruce Hall, who owns the land on which the development is planned, and I am the niece of the late Ian Lees, who sold his farm to the residents including Jacqui, whose dwellings adjoin the development area. The land has been in our family for four generations and hopefully many more. It's productive land. It's farming land. It's now residential land, and it's our home. And as reflected in its zoning, this land is not intended for commercial use, including solar energy. The proposed development does not respect the values or opinions of the local community. The plant infrastructure will negatively impact resident's vistas, lifestyles and property values, and the area's dirt road, including the single-lane bridge, do not adequately support the construction traffic of such a large project.

Let me be clear. My family and I and the local community do not object to solar farming. We understand the need to deliver renewable energy zones, where the private sector invests and builds to mitigate climate change. But we do agree with Deputy Premier John Barilaro when he says that renewable energy projects should be located – and I quote:

*Where communities want them and where they are compatible.*

Our objection, then, is the location of the development. A 185 hectare development of this size is simply not appropriate for land with this zoning. The Sutton community know that having solar panels just 90 metres from their houses will impact their vistas, their tranquillity and their financial and emotional wellbeing. I think you have seen that today. They know that no amount of planting will hide 300,000 individual solar modules, and they also know that 20 metres of tree planting along the borders would not solve the problem in three years, as the developer has claimed. To give you some context, my dad planted similar native trees and shrubs 10 years ago and they're currently two metres high. Solar panels are four metres high, and only 50 per cent of those trees planted survived the recent drought. I cannot see how the proposed vegetation can provide adequate remedy.

The scale of the entire proposed site as discussed is enormous. In relative terms, it is almost the same size as Bonner, a suburb of Canberra. It will fundamentally change the character of the area. The recently-adopted Yass Valley Council Local Strategic Planning Statement has as its main goal to build and maintain sustainable communities while retaining the region's natural beauty. This proposal does not comply with that goal, or with the long-term plan for the region, and this is why the Council rejected the development. This development and the supporting

infrastructure created will disrupt local residents for the entire life of the project, and the traffic generated by the 200 workers for 12 months will create significant noise pollution and safety concerns.

5 I'm genuinely concerned for the safety of my parents, who travel on this road daily, and other motorists, including the school bus. This ..... dirt and with the single-lane bridge to where the plant is located. In doing – led by the Sutton Solar Action Group, we've been trying to have our voices heard for years. Our objections are being understood and supported by Yass Council and our local Member, the  
10 Honourable Wendy Tuckerman, and the former-Member Pru Goward. Yet in doing my research for this response and presentation, I was unable to find any independent review of the application. All documentation to date has been commissioned and provided by the developer.

15 Furthermore, the Department's SSD 8703 report is inconsistent with its own New South Wales Electricity and Infrastructure roadmap. This roadmap referencing the New South Wales transmission infrastructure strategy, released in 2018, identified Central West, New England and South West regions as primary locations for renewable energy zones. This makes complete sense, vast plains with low numbers  
20 of residents. Those criteria include commitments to improve local employment. But as discussed, the employment will come – will benefit Canberra residents. They include the compatibility with existing agricultural uses, yet this proposal ignores the fact that this land is rich, productive farming country with residents co-existing. And most importantly, they include the need for local community engagement and  
25 support for projects, yet the majority of our local community does not support this proposal.

When you review the Yass Valley local submissions, 85 oppose and only 22 support it, and the balance of those supporting the project live out of the area, as noted by  
30 other speakers. In short, the Springdale Solar Farm proposal does not meet any of the roadmap's narrow criteria. The proposal does not represent current zoning. It significantly negatively impacts individual residents and the community as a whole and it should not proceed. In The Castle, Darryl Kerrigan famously states that "it's not a house, it's a home". The situations may well differ, but the sentiment remains  
35 the same. It is offensive residents are being offered the option to sell their houses as mitigation. The residents and farmers of Sutton and Gundaroo community should be heard. So thank you. Thank you for listening and allowing us to balance a report submitted today, and as quite frankly, they have been far from independent. Thank you so much for your time today.

40

PROF LIPMAN: Thank you very much, Sally. Our next speaker is William Ginn.

MR W. GINN: Hello, can you hear me okay?

45 PROF LIPMAN: Yes. We can hear you, William. You have 15 minutes.

MR GINN: Okay, thank you. Professor Lipman and Mr Hutton, thank you for allowing me to address you – the IPC today. I represent the 5KM NSW ACT Border Zone Planning Committee, a community organisation set up by ratepayers in New South Wales for the purpose of trying to get better planning outcomes in Yass Valley and for the benefit of the whole community. By now it should be clear to the Commissioners that there is a problem with this development. There is also a problem with the way the Commission has managed the process of assessing the Springdale Solar Farm proposal. The issues of environmental damage and loss of amenity for neighbours has been clearly stated today. That should be enough for the IPC to reconsider its draft decision on the proposal. However, there is a bigger reason why the IPC should terminate this project, as I will outline below.

The IPC's draft approval of Springdale Solar Farm was published on the IPC website on Wednesday. Does the publication of the decision mean that the public input today will not be taken into consideration?

PROF LIPMAN: Sorry, William. Can I just stop you there? The IPC has not issued any draft decision whatsoever. I'm not sure what you're referring to. Could you elaborate, please?

MR GINN: Yes. I have a copy of it. I'll forward it to you later. However, the draft approval has now been removed from the website, I notice. If – and so the question that follows from that is, is this meeting really a box-ticking exercise before rubber stamping the New South Wales Government's support for the project. Also, on Wednesday this week I wrote to the IPC requesting that the meeting be postponed for two weeks. This request was to allow members of the public to prepare their presentations based on the instructions given in Monday's email and also to give people time to digest the copy of the New South Wales Government's report on the Springdale proposal. None of those that have made a submission on the Springdale Solar Farm today are professional planners, so of course, are naturally unfamiliar with the process or where to find relevant documents.

Unlike the Commissioner's army of experts in the IPC and executives and consultants from RES who deal with the IPC for a living, we, the general public – the people that the IPC should be representing – need some assistance in preparing a submission. We should have been given an assessment criterion for the public submissions to the IPC-making process. How does the IPC assess the public input or the New South Wales Government report? Is the assessment subjective or objective? Is the IPC decision-making process based on Commissioner's opinion, or on an objective assessment of the facts presented? The basis of the IPC's decision should be clearly laid out, so that the public can respond accordingly. Professor Lipman, I'm sure your law students would soon revolt if you handed out an assignment that did not have an assessment criterion included with it. Why treat the assessment of public input any different?

So you may be wondering when I'm going to get around to addressing the issues in the New South Wales Government report on the Springdale project. I will, but I

think it's in everyone's interest that the IPC be transparent about its decision-making process and to be seen to act independently of state government. Page 8 of the New South Wales Government report states that this project is a state significant development under section 4.36 of the Planning and Assessment Act 1979. No one  
5 would object to the classification of a 100-megawatt solar power station as state significant. Of course it is. However, only Bruce Hall, the landowner, and perhaps the ACT Government wanting to look green – but not in my backyard – would claim that the location of the Springdale Solar Farm is a vital part of the overall New South Wales Government approach to solar power.

10 RES most likely doesn't care where the solar farm goes. It will generate the same power and profit wherever it is. The cost would most likely be lower if RES put the solar farm in one of the three New South Wales Government designated renewable energy zones at New England, Central West or South West regions of New South  
15 Wales. While the State Government Planning Policy Infrastructure 2007 might apply and override the LEP, as stated in the New South Wales Government report, that policy should not be used as a blunt instrument to override the community and state-approved local environmental plans, just for the sake of profit for the ACT Government and the landowner. The Independent Planning Commission should  
20 show respect for the community's local environmental plan and only agree to override it in extreme circumstances. This is not an extreme circumstance.

The New South Wales Government report on the Springdale proposal carefully steps around the fact that the production of solar energy in this case is not critically  
25 dependent on having it at Springdale. The New South Wales Government report makes lots of unsubstantiated claims, that in many cases, contradicts its own policy. A good example is the South Eastern Tablelands Regional Plan, identifying that peri-urban areas should not be used for purposes that would conflict with "future urban outcomes" and that's what the South Eastern Tablelands Regional Plan states about  
30 the area around Canberra. Clearly the proposed solar farm would present future urban outcomes and therefore conflict with both the New South Wales Government policy and the local environmental plan. The New South Wales Government report – I'm sorry, my apologies there.

35 If the IPC decides that the community concerns are not sufficient to reject the RES proposal and that the location is the only viable place in the state to put this state significant development, then presumably the IPC will approve all other solar farm development applications from landowners in the area. And thus, I can see no reason why you would object to that in the future. Professor Lipman and Mr Hutton, I urge  
40 you to act independently of the New South Wales Government and refuse the solar farm – sorry, the Springdale Solar Farm development application. Refuse it for all the reasons you've heard today, and most importantly, because the benefits of solar power are not dependent on it being located at Springdale. Also, the LEP and community wishes should not be overwritten for the benefit of the ACT Government  
45 and Mr Hall.

State Government may not have the talent or the integrity to do an honest and reasoned assessment of the planning proposal. It is therefore up to the IPC to detect and protect the public interest. The IPC is the last line of defence for the community from poor planning decisions by the State Government. Please respect this authority and stop this development. Thank you for listening to my presentation. A transcript of my presentation will be forwarded to Jane Anderson for inclusion in your public documents.

10 PROF LIPMAN: Thank you, William. Our next speaker is Sam Hardwicke. Sam, you have five minutes. Sam, could you also please outline to us if you are identified as a receptor on the receptor map, so that we can identify your property?

15 MR S. HARDWICKE: Yes, hello. So my – my family property is Spring Flat, which is immediately south of the proposed development.

PROF LIPMAN: Is it listed as – do you have a number for – the receptor number, is it on the map?

20 MR HARDWICKE: 91 Tallagandra Lane.

PROF LIPMAN: So it's not like R1 or R5 or anything like that?

MR HARDWICKE: Sorry, I don't have the map.

25 PROF LIPMAN: The map allocates numbers to the different properties, which is confusing, and I just wonder like, your father, I think, is R5.

MR HARDWICKE: So same property as my father. It's a .....

30 PROF LIPMAN: It's the same property. Right, thank you, Sam.

MR HARDWICKE: No worries. No worries. I've got my screen on share, is that coming through okay?

35 PROF LIPMAN: Yes. It's good, thank you.

MR HARDWICKE: Lovely. I grew up on Spring Flat, our family farm that lies just north of Canberra and borders the proposed development. I'm the sixth generation on the farm and I still pick up my great-grandma's memoirs and read of her experience in the 1920s. She was a single mum, raising a two year old daughter after pneumonia robbed her of her husband and her husband's parents in the space of a week. The site of her old house is just a few hundred metres from the proposed development. She battled floods and droughts, and as testament to her perseverance, we're still working the farm almost 100 years on. It's the land that I was married on and it's the land that I love and I want to share a few photos as we go through this presentation. When school went into lockdown because of COVID-19, the kids and I built a composting toilet atop our hill and it's the site of our future home and

hopefully will see the seventh generation remain on the land in the same way that generations have before.

Alongside supporting the work from the farm, I've been a teacher now for 15 years.  
5 And it's in that time that the thing that has troubled me the most has been witnessing the effects of an imbalance of power. Situations where the big pick on the small or the many pick on the few, only one side of an imbalance of power is making the choice to be in the situation. Only one side of the imbalance of power is losing sleep after the day is done. I want to bring to the forefront the process that has played out  
10 over the last number of years and make you fully aware of the gross imbalance of power that the process presents. A number of people who have spoken today paid – have been paid to do so. They've come to work, done the job they're paid to do, and at the end of the day will go home and enjoy their weekend. They might think of today but they definitely won't be consumed by it.

15 On the other side, there are those here today not because they choose to be here. They're farmers, workers, people who have taken leave for the day so they can go and stand up for their homes, their families, the environment. Their weekend will not be one where they can switch off from the events of today. For the last three and  
20 a-half years, I've watched friends and family, farmers and other locals, become researchers, scientists, fundraisers, advocates. I've watched it consume my parents, their friends and neighbours. The proponents of the development, who are being paid to do so, will say that the site is perfect. It borders high-voltage transmission lines. I know that the same high-voltage lines extend west, to areas where farming  
25 land is flat, not visible to surrounding properties, has already gone through a level of desertification and is devoid of much wildlife. I know this now, but I shouldn't have to.

The proponents of the development are doing the job they're paid to do, so they say  
30 the site because a portion of energy is lost as heat through transmission. I know that through high-voltage lines, the losses are minimal and it's in close proximity to population where voltages are decreased and the majority of energy is lost. I know this now, but I shouldn't have to. The proponents of the development who are doing the job they're being paid to do will say that the site's generation potential makes it  
35 ideal. The Australian Energy Market operating visualisations say otherwise. I know this now, but I shouldn't have to. The proponents of the development who are doing the job they're being paid to do will say that the development is in a central part, thus meeting climate goals set out as part of the Paris Accord. The Paris Accord also saw countries sign up to not only reduce submissions but sequester carbon through the  
40 planting of trees and the sustaining of grasslands. I know this now, but I shouldn't have to.

The proponents of the development who are doing the job they're being paid to do will say that there's plenty of other land for agriculture, and that this allotment is  
45 insignificant. I know that the almost 8 million square kilometres that makes Australia, only 6 per cent of this is suitable for pasture. I know this now, but I shouldn't have to. In education we often talk about the difference between equality

and equity, the process of the same for all pits paid professionals against whoever happens to live in that community. It sees investors and their millions and their army of paid experts take on the farmers of the community and whatever support they can muster. I would liken the experience to my friends and neighbours playing wallabies in a game of football. The imbalance of power is immense.

So how do we shift the current model of equality to a model of equity? A model where the farmers, workers, retirees are given access to the same experts the multinational investors do. A model where the farmers, workers and retirees don't have to reinvent themselves into something they never wanted to be, where paid professionals can make their case. So my plea to you; recognise the imbalance of power in the process that has consumed this community for years, recognise that the fight of this community is not isolated, recognise that as a society, we're making the same errors of doing what we think is best without considering the human toll.

Thanks for the time today.

PROF LIPMAN: Thank you, Sam. That brings us to the end of this electronic public meeting. Thank you to everyone who participated in this process. I'd like to point out that a statement made by one of the speakers today, to the effect that the Independent Planning Commission had made a provisional decision on Springdale and placed it on the IPC website, is entirely unfounded and incorrect. I'm the Chair of this Commission and any decision has to be made by myself and my fellow Commissioner, Andrew Hutton. It has to be signed off by us and we have to review the conditions of consent and sign off on those as well. We have not done so and we certainly would not consider doing so until we had heard the speakers at the public meeting today and received your additional submissions during the week that we have open for submissions.

Our process is entirely transparent and it's clearly set out on the website. All documentation that we receive, all our meetings, are placed on this website. Our decisions are made according to law and we take into account each of the submissions we receive. The – anything on the website that might suggest that any decision had been made could only be construed as a referral to the assessment report by the Department of Industry, Planning and the Environment, which actually refers to the facts of the case and remarks that it is approvable in their opinion. Their opinion has got absolutely no effect on the decision of the Commission, which operates entirely independently. As I said at the outset, we're an independent statutory authority.

I'd like to thank the other speakers today for all the work that they've put into the – preparing the submissions. We were very impressed with the research and the time that the public gave to this and we will be looking at the submissions and any additional written submissions in detail before we reach any decisions on this project. And just a reminder, that in the interests of openness and transparency, a full transcript of today's meeting will be made available on the Commission's website in the next few days. The Commission will be accepting written comments from the public up to 5.00 pm on Friday the 5<sup>th</sup> of February. That's 5.00 pm next Friday. You

can submit your comments using the Have Your Say portal on our website or by email or post.

5 At the time of determination, the Commission will publish the statement of reasons for decision, which will outline how the panel took the community's views into consideration as part of its decision-making process. For now, though, thank you for watching the IPC electronic public meeting on the proposed Springdale Solar Farm. From all of us here at the Commission, enjoy the rest of your day. Good afternoon.

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**RECORDING CONCLUDED**

**[3.00 pm]**