



**New South Wales Government**  
Independent Planning Commission

## **TRANSCRIPT OF MEETING**

RE: TALLAWANG SOLAR FARM (SSD-23700028)

### **PUBLIC MEETING**

PANEL:

TERRY BAILEY (CHAIR)  
SHELLEY PENN  
ALISON MCCABE

OFFICE OF THE IPC:

TAHLIA HUTCHINSON  
GEOFF KWOK

SPEAKERS:

ANDREW DOUGLAS (Tallawang Solar Hybrid)  
BRIAN THOMSON (Porosity Services)  
RICK CAMPBELL  
KATHRYN REYNOLDS  
DENNIS ARMSTRONG (Individual and Save Our Surroundings)  
MARGARET ARMSTRONG  
GRANT PIPER (National Rational Energy Network)  
BRADLEY BLISS (Wellington Valley Wiradjuri Aboriginal Corporation)  
ALISON CAIRNS  
RAFE CHAMPION  
BILL STINSON  
STAN MOORE  
IVAN KENNEDY

ALAN MORAN (Individual and Save Our Surroundings)

LYNETTE LABLACK (Individual and Save Our Surroundings)

CAROLYN EMMS (Rainforest Reserves Australia)

RAMILA CHANISHEFF (Australian Uyghur Women's Association)

AIDAN MORRISON (Centre for Independent Studies)

MANFRED FAHR (Potentia Energy)

MALINDA FACEY (Umwelt)

LOCATION:

GULGONG MEMORIAL HALL  
112 HERBERT STREET, GULGONG

DATE:

10:00AM – 12:30PM  
THURSDAY, 28<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2025

**<THE MEETING COMMENCED**

5 **MR TERRY BAILEY:** Good morning and welcome to the Independent Planning Commission’s public meeting into the State Significant Development Application for the Tallawang Solar Farm (SSD-23700028). I’m speaking to you today from Wiradjuri land and I acknowledge the traditional owners of all the countries from which we’re meeting today. I pay my respects to Elders past and present and to the Elders from other communities who may be participating today.

10 I’m Terry Bailey and I’m the Chair of this Panel. Joining me are my fellow commissioners, Shelley Penn and Alison McCabe. Panel members have made conflict of interest disclosures, and the Chair of the Commission has determined that there are no actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest. A copy of that decision document is available on our website.

15 We have a limited and specific role at the end of the planning process. We decide if an application should go ahead, and if so, on what conditions. With regard to projects such as this one that are located in already designated Renewable Energy Zones, the Commission must consider government policy.

20 We consider the Department’s Assessment Report, the application, your written and oral submissions, and other materials that the Planning Law requires us to consider. All of these materials are either already publicly available or will be made available on our website.

25 In making a decision in this case, the Commission must obey all relevant laws and consider all applicable policies and the public interest. We’re obliged to consider public submissions and that is the purpose of today.

30 We want to hear from you what you think about the merits of this application. It’s not a forum for submissions on whether you like or approve of the Applicant, the laws we must obey, or the policies we must consider.

35 The application has already been assessed by the Department on our behalf. Many of you have already participated in the Department’s processes, and we thank you for your participation. There is no need to repeat your previous submissions; they are all available to us for our consideration. The Applicant and the Department have considered your submissions and taken them into account in the application and assessment and conditions we are considering today.

40 But today we want to hear your response to the Department’s assessment, recommendation and the recommended conditions. Even if your submission today objects to the application being approved at all, we encourage you to tell us whether any of your concerns could be addressed either wholly or partly by the imposition of conditions. Your consideration of alternatives does not in any way compromise your submission, and it enables the Panel to consider all options.

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We will shortly proceed to hear from our registered speakers. While we will endeavour to stick to our published schedule, this will be dependent on the registered speakers being ready to present at their allocated time. Please keep an eye out for the person speaking before you on the published list, so that people can be ready.

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I'll introduce each speaker when it's their turn to present to the Panel. Everyone has been advised in advance how long they have to speak. A bell will sound when a speaker has one minute remaining. And a second bell will sound when a speaker's time has expired.

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To ensure everyone receives their fair share of time, I will enforce timekeeping rules. Extensions may be granted on a case-by-case basis by the Panel Chair, however, in the interests of fairness to other registered speakers, any extension may not be granted.

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If you have a copy of your speaking notes or additional material to support your presentation, it would be appreciated if you would provide a copy to the Commission. Please note any information given to the Commission may be made public. The Commission's Privacy Statement governs its approach to managing your information and is available on the Commission's website.

20

Just for housekeeping purposes, I just wanted to advise the women's toilets are in the back corner of the hall and the men's toilets are behind us in this corner. In the case of an emergency, please evacuate the building via the exits on the right-hand side, so out through.

25

Firstly, to begin, we will hear from the Applicant, who we've asked to provide an overview of the project and discuss any changes to the application since public exhibition. And then at the conclusion of the public meeting, the Panel Chair, I will outline some of the key concerns raised by our speakers and may call on the Applicant to answer any questions or respond to any issues raised during the public meeting.

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So, I now invite the Applicant to provide details on changes to the application since public exhibition. Thank you, Andrew.

35

**MR ANDREW DOUGLAS:** Yes, that's good, thank you. Good morning, all, and thank you, commissioners. Our next slide please.

40

Today I want to share how we've responded to feedback during the planning process and also hear directly from the community. Potentia Energy acquired the solar from RES in 2024, and Potentia is now the developer, with RES supporting the handover. If approved, Potentia will build and operate the project.

45

With us today are three people from Potentia, including Manfred, who is the Project Manager, along with two of my colleagues from RES and our planning advisor. After this meeting, you're welcome to speak with us about any concerns, and some of my colleagues will also help answer questions during this meeting.

Next slide please. Tallawang Solar Farm will generate 500 megawatts of solar power. It will also include a 1,000 megawatt-hour battery connected to the new CWO REZ transmission network. Construction will take three years. The project will operate for 35 years, starting in early 2027.

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Next slide please. The project has gone through four phases of design, each shaped by community impact, environmental studies, and agency feedback. Even before lodging the Scoping Report Phase 1, we took proactive steps. Visual impact. We added a 500-metre buffer from the highway to reduce views from properties in the southwest.

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Biodiversity. We retained most of the woodland, focused on cleared land, and avoided the high-order waterways. Traffic concerns. We moved the main access to Castlereagh Highway to avoid local roads, that being Puggoon Road. We also advised neighbours about the shared benefits scheme. So, the initial design of commitments shaped the project from the outset.

15

In phases 2 to 4, refinements during and after the EIS. In relation to visual impact, neighbours were concerned about views from nearby properties and whether landscaping would be effective. In response, we removed the northern substation, reducing visual impact for properties in the northeast. We shifted the laydown area to give greater separation from southwest neighbours. We also developed a more detailed landscape plan in consultation with the local Landcare group, and that was in response to submissions raised regarding adjoining solar farms where the landscaping had failed to establish.

20

In relation to biodiversity, concerns were raised about fencing blocking animal movement and barbed wire harming fauna, and general biodiversity issues. In response, we created a 3-kilometre wildlife corridor and removed barbed wire to minimise risks. So, the corridor is a significant initiative. It would have been far easier for the fence line to follow the perimeter of the solar farm. But instead, we've created 3 kilometres – instead we've created 3 kilometres of fence line either side of the corridor, and you can see the corridor on the plan, represented by the green squiggly line in the northern section of the solar farm running east to west.

25

We've also kept more than a hundred hectares of woodland and grassland, over 93% of the total, and we've avoided over 5 hectares of threatened ecological communities by carefully designing the access track to the accommodation camp. We also explored stewardship agreements with local and host landowners for offsets. And what we actually found is within 1.5 kilometres of the site, there was plenty of PCT 281 and 81, which is required for our ecosystem credits, and so supports the notion of local offsets, which is ideally what we're looking to provide.

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Traffic and safety. Concerns were raised about construction traffic and safety near the access. In response, we relocated the access 200 metres south of Jenkins Lane and redesigned the highway entrance with long turning lanes.

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Accommodation pressures. The community was concerned about impacts on short-term rentals, tourism and services. In response, we proposed a 400-bed temporary

workers camp, with common areas and medical support. It is designed to be self-sufficient, reducing pressure on local housing and services.

We also protected heritage by avoiding pads, increased the buffer around the 1870s hut to 30 metres, and increased on-site water storage to 100,000 litres.

So, we've responded to concerns at every stage of the project.

Next slide please. So, sheep grazing. There were concerns about farmland being taken out of production, and animal welfare. In response, the site is mainly used for sheep and cattle grazing. The solar farm will continue to support sheep grazing during operations. Design measures include underground cabling to remove hazards, wide row spacing for easy movement, and tracker systems that prevent animals from being trapped. After decommissioning, the land will go back to farming.

Next slide please. So, community benefits include: each year we provide 425,000 to the Council through the VPA, supporting community initiatives. The REZ access fee will fund local health, education and infrastructure, and a 30-year partnership with Wellington Valley Wiradjuri Corporation. Annual contributions for 15 neighbouring landowners over 30 years; this ensures those closest to the project share directly in its benefits.

Community engagement. Since March 2021, we've been meeting with the community. We've recorded over 1,400 interactions. Going forward, and subject to approval, we are committed to ongoing engagement with the community and authorities. The Applicant will maintain a community complaints line. We are subject to strict conditions, including noise and biodiversity monitoring, vegetation clearing, and offsets.

So, to wrap up, the project aligns with state and national energy policy. It will help cut pollution, reduce emissions. It will bring last benefits, new infrastructure, jobs, and opportunities for the region. We appreciate some concerns still remain, and we welcome ongoing participation. Thank you and I look forward to the discussion ahead.

**MR BAILEY:** Thank you. Please take a seat and we'll move into the next speakers. If there are any questions that arise, we'll do those at the end of the meeting. Thank you.

I'll just invite Brian Thomson.

**MR BRIAN THOMSON:** Okay, thank you. Thank you to the New South Wales Government, IPC for the opportunity to have my say today. My name is Brian Thomson, and I support this project. I am one of the four landowners where the project will be located and fully acknowledge that my family and I will benefit directly and financially from this project.

I do have concerns about the lack of legislation for renewable projects to have money in trust to pay for the decommissioning at the end of the life. However, I do understand

that this is out of the scope of this report and the reason why we're here today. Where I just want to give some solid reasons as to why I support this project.

5 I've always been a supporter of renewable energy. I actually changed our house electricity supplier about three years to one that supplied 100% renewable power generation. I'm a big-picture person. I'm optimistic and I have a scientific background, so I like factual evidence booked up with data. Such is the fact that the world temperatures are increasing by 0.2 degrees Celsius every decade. Or that the Arctic sea ice is declining at 12% per decade.

10 Carbon dioxide, as we know, is a greenhouse gas, it is like a thickening blanket, and it's keeping our warmth in. And that is why I support projects that help reduce our carbon emissions. And it's one of the most viable options today, and I stress that word "today", is solar, because it takes less than three years to become carbon neutral.

15 So, over 30 years, this project – 35 years that this project plans to run – the world is a better place, right. Cleaner energy, less carbon dioxide, and a better Earth for our kids and our grandkids. My observations are that if you don't accept climate change, then you're very unlikely to support a renewable energy project. But once you accept the need for renewable energy, then it really boils down to where, when and who does these projects.

20 I think this project at Tallawang is a good spot, and here's my reasons why. Location-wise, it is a great spot; 10 kilometres from Gulgong, far enough to not affect the township or the many smaller block owners. But close enough for workers to be able to access town and its facilities easily.

25 Regarding our property, Maida Vale, the agricultural productivity isn't fantastic; ourselves and the previous owners of 80 years only ever were able to run cattle and some forage crops. Most of the soil are pretty light, sandy, sometimes gravelly topsoil over a spewy clay from 30 centimetres depth. Unfortunately, we don't have cropping country on our property. On our 250 hectares, we can run about 80 cows and calves in an average season, which equates to about 6 to 7 DSE per hectare. Good country runs more like 10.

30 The manager of a nearby solar facility claims they run 20% more sheep under the panels than their neighbours, due to more shade, less wind, more feed due to increased water infiltration, even after heavy dews. You might have noticed that the constant green pick at the highly visible Wellington solar facility in the last dry spell as I did too.

35 So, we're not losing agricultural productivity, as was one of – as was many of the claims in the claims against the project. We're actually increasing it. I know Barnaby doesn't like calling these "farms". For me, Maida Vale becomes a power generating, water harvesting, protected sheep farm.

40 The other consideration of where to put panels is ideally out of sight. And the developers here have given, I think Andrew's just talked about the things that I was

also going to talk about, but I want to reiterate those. Firstly, they're not developing any panels within 500 metres of the Castlereagh Highway. This was actually at our request, as the landowner. Slightly mad, as we are foregoing significant revenue for the 90 hectares of the land that is not being developed. But at least I can have a clear  
5 conscious, knowing that our neighbours are not going to be having panels 150 metres from their homes.

Secondly, they are going to plant tree lines adjacent to the panels to further reduce visual impact. And thirdly, as Andrew had mentioned, there is a shared benefits  
10 scheme for those who have any visual impact or loss of land value.

While I'm singing the praises of Potentia, yes, they've complied with Council requests to build an accommodation camp to take the heat out of housing shortages during construction. And they are taking a community-minded approach – and this is the bit I like about Potentia. I know they have already donated to two local health  
15 organisations, and they have met with local schools and regional industry bodies to see how they can contribute to make a positive long-term impact to the region, other than the 420 jobs that they're going to produce during construction, and up to 7 to maybe as many 15 full-time jobs afterwards. At the moment, that land only employs somewhere  
20 between 2 and 3 full-time staff per week, by my calculations.

If you're lucky enough to have met Andrew or Manfred from Potentia, you'll understand that this company is genuine and they're doing the right thing, and we should welcome them.

The New South Wales Government's Benefit Sharing Guideline of \$850 per megawatt, as Andrew said, is going to contribute \$425,000 a year to Mid-West Regional Council. Over 35 years, that's \$15 million coming into the community. If you add up all 10 projects in the current pipeline for the Central-West REZ, that's  
30 \$4 million a year, that equates to at least \$120 million over the next 30 years. This annual revenue stream will provide great opportunities to the residents and groups within this region.

Wrapping up, we need renewable projects like this one, and we need them now. This project is in the right location, and it's being considerate to the landowners and neighbours, and it will contribute significantly to this community.

**MR BAILEY:** Thank you, Brian. We're over time.

**MR THOMSON:** Do you want me to finish?

**MR BAILEY:** Yes, very quickly, please.

**MR THOMSON:** Yes. And we've got the right company to do the job. So, unless there is a good reason to not proceed with this project, then I implore the IPC to approve this one. I hope they can also ensure that other renewable projects like this are being developed by companies with a similar conscientious model to ensure that the benefits are felt for our generation and the next. Thank you.

**MR BAILEY:** Thank you. We now invite Rick Campbell.

5 **MR RICK CAMPBELL:** And thank you for the opportunity to speak. Time restricts this presentation to one topic, and that topic is the fire risk posed by the Tallawang Solar Farm.

10 When AEMO assessed the suitability of the CWO REZ for renewable energy projects, they determined that this zone has a fire rating of E. That rating is the worst possible on scale from A to E. All electrical infrastructure, including renewable energy projects and associated powerlines, poses a fire risk. How devastating that can be is demonstrated by the Victorian Black Saturday bushfires of 2009. Six of the 11 major fires on that day were started by powerlines. Of the 173 deaths recorded, 159 of those deaths were attributed to the six powerline fires.

15 But the planning authorities, when designating the CWO REZ as suitable for renewable energy projects, have chosen to ignore this risk. This decision becomes even more alarming when the predictions of climate change are considered. That is, the extreme weather events that precipitated the Victorian fires will become much more commonplace. It would seem that the authorities are prepared to put the lives and property of the residents of the CWO REZ at risk in an attempt to combat that very risk. How clever is that.

20 More specifically to the Tallawang Solar Farm. There is a vague reference to a Fire Management Plan. Drill down and this appears to be dependent on the possibility of grazing, mowing, a practice itself that can cause fires, and the provision of a 10-metre border perimeter around the site. The latter would be ineffective against a full-blown fire, which can spot up to 200 metres ahead of the fire front. All these strategies are utilised by local landholders but provide no guarantee of success.

25 The real problem with the Tallawang Solar Farm is that all the electrical components and wiring provide the potential for multiple sources of ignition. And once a fire starts in a solar farm, it is too dangerous for fire crews to access it. This is due to a combination of chain-wire perimeter fencing, confined access between the solar panel rows, the risk of electrocution, and the presence of toxic fumes. Even the use of aerial water bombing will be compromised in that the solar panels will provide fielding to much of the burning vegetation.

30 The above problems were aptly illustrated with the Beryl Solar Farm fire in April 2023. Fire crews attended but could only park outside the solar farm boundary, in preparation for the escape of the fire. Luckily on this occasion, there was a wind change and the fire self-extinguished.

35 What also must be considered is the location (excuse me) and site of the Tallawang Solar Farm. The worst fires are driven by hot northwesterly winds. The Tallawang Solar Farm is 1,300 hectares in area and located only 8 kilometres northwest of Gulgong township.

In conclusion, I refer to section 6-13-3-2 of the EIS bushfire assessment. The Tallawang Solar Farm should also be designed and maintained so that it will not serve as a bushfire threat to the surrounding threat. By its very design, location and size, the Tallawang Solar Farm does not and cannot comply with this condition. Thank you.

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**MR BAILEY:** Thank you for your presentation. Thank you. We now invite Kathryn Reynolds.

**MS KATHRYN REYNOLDS:** Thank you for the opportunity to address the Panel today. Unlike our friends in regional Victoria, we at least get a public meeting in New South Wales where we can attempt better outcomes.

The Panel, the Proponent and the land hosts are in attendance here today because their attendance is monetised. We are here because we care for our land, our environment, our homes, our community, and our businesses. I note the Panel's expertise in urban design, architectural design, urban planning and executive leadership roles in government departments. And I cannot help but be somewhat sceptical about whether you truly understand the impact of this project, particularly when looking at the cumulative impacts of all the projects in this community.

20

Have you been to Wellington and seen the existing solar there? Does it look to you like it's good for the environment, the native flora and fauna, the residents who have to look at it from their homes, or even the poor unfortunate sheep that are forced to graze in this unnatural environment which has created an artificial heat effect?

25

I have given you a map from another project in this community that might give you some idea as to the wind, solar and BESS in this region. Like all developer information, this map is incomplete. When all these projects are built, the solar around Wellington will look minor compared to what is planned here.

30

In summary, there are 15 solar projects with BESS, 8 wind projects, 3 BESS, 1 pumped hydro, and the transmission with monster substations, all within 45 kilometres of this project.

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The solar contains Mavis, Tallawang, Stubbo, Beryl, Yulang, Narragamba, Birriwa, Avonside, Cobra, Dapper, Sandy Creek, Dunedoo, Wollar, Puggoon and Mayfair.

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The wind – Barneys Reef, Valley of the Winds, Liverpool Range, Orana, Uungula, Spicers Creek, Bodangora, Burendong, and Piambong.

40

BESS – Bellambi Heights, Beryl, and Birriwa's just made their BESS even bigger.

Pumped hydro – Yarrabin.

45

It's quite possible that I've left off some here that I'm not aware of. Currently, our rural environment is a natural and rural one where stock and native birds and animals can take shelter amongst trees. Now, the New South Wales Government plans to change this to an industrial environment littered with cement, gravel, solar panels,

towers, turbines, quarries, multiple accommodation camps, transmission lines, substations, shipping containers of batteries.

5 How is this good for the environment? How does this preserve native flora and fauna?  
This is an unprecedented change to what is now a rural and natural environment. The scale of this transformation has never been contemplated before anywhere in the world. Will this be the biggest environmental and financial disaster in our history?

10 Yet the cumulative impact study has not been completed for this area. Could the Panel please address the Warrumbungle Council's submission to IPC – I note that's in the portal. This project contributes to the cumulative impact on the residents in the area, whether they reside within the lines of the Mid-Western or the Warrumbungle Council.

15 Of the cumulative impacts not addressed, I would like to include fire, evidence from Beryl's solar fires demonstrates a lack of resources and procedures on site to manage fire. The heat island effect of millions of solar panels – are there any studies on this?

20 Heavy vehicle accidents. During the construction of Stubbo Solar, there were three truck rollovers in a period of six weeks. This reportedly resulted in Stubbo Solar banning the delivery of B-double and A-double truck loads and reverting back to semi-trailers being used to deliver the panels from port.

25 The contracted transport company couldn't be trusted to deliver those larger loads. Semi-trailers carry less load, therefore there were more trucks on the road. There's a lack of procedure for the cleanup of the solar panels damaged. At the time of those three B-double rollovers, the EPA and the NSW Transport were not interested.

30 Diesel consumption. During the construction of Wollar Solar, just one contractor was reportedly using 8,000 litres of diesel per week. Our farmers, particularly during sowing and harvest, require regular diesel deliveries. Will they find this service is no longer available in a timely way because of the demands of the projects in this area?

35 Insurance premiums. Can anybody tell us what our insurance premiums are going to be when we can no longer be protected against fire?

40 Roadworks. We are currently witnessing extensive road repairs to intersections on the Golden Highway that do not require any work at all. This work is being undertaken solely for the benefit of private, usually foreign, developers, such as Potentia, 100% foreign. Meanwhile, roadworks that should be taken are ignored.

45 Contamination from eroding panels, fire-damaged panels and hail-damaged panels. In summary, I note that the Department of Planning are not here today. Have they ever visited the site or have they given away that part of their job? From our experience, with recent Independent Planning Commission panels, it seems that the Panel today will send their draft report to the Planning Department, and the Department will then direct the final outcome.

5 If the IPC's Panel outcome is against the wishes of the Department of Planning, they will trot out the IEAPET. Note that our Chair today is also a member of the IEAPET. We're all aware that after the Hills of Gold decision, the focus of the IEAPET is the developer's bottom line, not the environment, nor the community. I am guessing the IEAPET doesn't have much work these days now the IPC's draft decision has to be ratified by the Department of Planning prior to finalisation. Thank you.

10 **MR BAILEY:** Thank you for your representation, and I just note your comments, many of your comments continue to be part of the [unintelligible 00:47:28] discussions of the Panel. But I would note that there is absolute independence for the Independent Planning Commission in the decision making that it takes, and it's not as you've described in terms of that being the role and responsibility of the Department of Planning.

15 **MS REYNOLDS:** That's the evidence that we have seen so far.

20 **MR BAILEY:** I just need to remind that there is absolute independence for the Independent Planning Commission in its decision taking. It's not for – respectfully, not for debate, but to ensure on the record, the independence of the Planning Commission. So, thank you again.

We'd like to invite Dennis Armstrong.

25 **MR DENNIS ARMSTRONG:** Yes, okay. Yes. Good morning, Panel. I'll get straight in my presentations. I and several of my neighbours are directly affected by the Tallawang proposal. Yet we are not included in the identified non-associated residences. We request that the Commission rectifies these omissions. Solutions are required.

30 The recommended conditions of B33 (Fire study), B37 (Work camp) and the Assessment (visual cumulative impacts) are inadequate.

35 Slide 1, please. That's not right. Anyway. I think that's ... Right. Slide 1. Okay. I've just got the right slide. Thank you. Large, uncontrolled bushfires and grassfires occur frequently and at any time. Beryl Solar was just saved by calling on all available resources within 30 kilometres or more.

40 You can see this photograph here – that's a fire just at Beryl. Just above that is Beryl Solar Farm, and you can see all the – across that road, you can see all the start of the solar farm with the panels there. Uncontrolled fires have occurred in and near built solar works and even on the proposed Tallawang site in recent years.

45 Slide 2, please. This is the Beryl Solar Works, starting to burn, that was just taken from my place.

Slide 3, please. Reportedly, 18 hectares of panel and wiring were damaged. And an estimated damage bill of many millions of dollars.

5 Slide 4, please. From my house, I watched part of the Tallawang site burn for hours. Note how visible the site is and will be from the infrastructure on it. You can see the line of fire there, beyond that fire is the rest of the hill. Now, the assessment said this is mainly flat land – it's not. I can see that hill for about 13 kilometres in fact, from my place and my neighbours' places, we can see 20 kilometres in every direction.

10 Note how visible the site is and will be with infrastructure on it. That cannot be screened. Those trees you see in the foreground are actually Puggoon Road. That's Puggoon Road. That's already screened and yet we can see plenty of the land that will have 5-metre panels plus infrastructure on it.

15 Skip slide 5, please. Okay, skip that, please. Okay. This is the Stubbo, which I can also – Stubbo, it's just recently been built, I can also see from my property. Stubbo – and I'm only 1 kilometre outside of town, by the way. Stubbo had an out-of-control grassfire this year, clearly visible from our homes, I took that photograph from my place. All these fires occurred in benign conditions. But what happens when conditions favour catastrophic fires such as the 2017 Sir Ivan fire, also known as the Leadville-Dunedoo fire.

20 Slide 7, please. This is what it looks like. Panel, please read the coroner's report for this particular fire. Five-hundred square kilometres of land was destroyed. Houses destroyed. Thousands of animals killed. And it took a month to finally declare that the fire was out. But in one day, that fire was travelling at 12 kilometres an hour. So, if a fire starts at Tallawang, we have half-an-hour to vacate this town. But not just this town, we've got to vacate all of the work camps around here as well, not of just the 25 400 people on Tallawang, but the proposed 7,000 people that are supposed to be housed around work camps here just north of Gulgong.

30 Next slide, please. Next slide. Okay. This is what that fire front looks like. A fire front that took under 30 minutes to travel 6 kilometres, the distance that Tallawang is from my property, or less, Beryl and other approved projects are from me and the Gulgong township.

35 Next slide. It's not just me saying this. It's our fire people. If you can read that – which I can't, because I haven't got in front of me, but I think it says – can somebody read that out, because I can't read it from here? Yes.

40 Okay. Gulgong Fire Station. They say, "Fix our fire service. Under-funded, under-resourced, under-valued." [Unintelligible 00:53:23] fire-fighting volunteers, falling numbers every year. In fact, right throughout New South Wales, they're falling every year. And we're putting more and more risk within kilometres of us. And each of these other solar farms are even going to be closer than Tallawang.

45 Okay. Let's see what I get up to. Next slide. Anyway. No mitigation will stop such fires. The best option is don't build the Tallawang works. The next best is to relocate away from heavily built-up residential areas, maybe central Australia or something like that. Okay.

Next slide, please, the BC one. Thanks. So, this is from our RFS. Grassfires kill. We will lose lives. If Tallawang goes ahead along with the cumulative effect of all the others, we will lose lives at some stage in the future.

5 Next one, thanks. Okay. My next topic is around the landscape and the views. Yes, it's a bit difficult when you've got two presentations to do in five minutes.

10 Anyway. Next slide, please. This is a bit of landscape that we and the visitors see. This is what it looks like – you can see from probably about 20 k. I shot this from Puggoon Road.

Next one, please. This is a shot from Puggoon Road, the site which runs along the boundary of the Tallawang site, towards the city, towards the town.

15 Next shot, please. Next. This is a close-up. You can see all the houses that I've been talking about, my house and the neighbours' houses are in the foreground there. We're in direct line of sight, yet we've not been addressed by this project at all. Beyond that, you can see our lookout with the towers there, that's the Flirtation Lookout.

20 Next one, thanks. Which one is that ... Oh, this is taken again from my place. This is Stubbo. This is what it actually looks like when they're built. You can see the infrastructure there. This is what we've talked about – industrialisation of our landscape, that's what we see. You can see there the two towers from the transmission lines. You can see all the sea of panels, and you can also see the infrastructure that stands out like anything, day and night, because it's lit up at night.

25 Next, please. We want Gulgong to stay a place people want to continue to live here, move here or visit our unique historical town and glorious landscapes and wildlife. Okay. I'll go to the next shot probably, please.

30 **MR BAILEY:** We need to ... If you can just conclude up please, Dennis.

**MR ARMSTRONG:** Sorry?

35 **MR BAILEY:** If you could conclude your presentation, please. We're well over.

**MR ARMSTRONG:** Okay. Probably one minute, this is a shorter one, but there's only four slides. Can I have the next slide, thanks. Okay. This is a map of the area. We're within that little circle that you see there of partly orange, just that middle strip is a hundred square kilometres, we can see all of that from our town and from our property, that I've been talking about.

40 There's 15 projects there. But none of the projects have our consent to be built, that is they do not have social licence to proceed. For example, Beryl Solar, 100% objections. Gulgong Solar, 425 objections (over 90%). The Western Regional Planning Panel agreed, 4 nil. Burrundulla Solar, over 1,100 objections (over 90%), and Western Regional Panel agreed 5 nil, and the Land and Environment Court also upheld the

45

community's position. Stubbo Solar, over 90% objected. Every project has 90% or more objections and virtually no support.

5 **MR BAILEY:** Thank you, Dennis. I think that's material you can submit and that we will look at. Is there any concluding statement?

**MR ARMSTRONG:** No, thank you.

10 **MR BAILEY:** Thank you, Dennis.

**UNKNOWN SPEAKER:** Can the slides be bigger? We can't see the slides up there. Can we have the slides take the whole screen, because we'd actually all have to go up there and stand in front of it to see the slides. A lot of people put a lot of effort into it, and we can't see it. Thank you.

15 **MR BAILEY:** We'd invite Margaret Armstrong.

**UNKNOWN SPEAKER:** Can't read it.

20 **MS MARGARET ARMSTRONG:** No. Is it possible to enlarge that?

**MR BAILEY:** We will.

25 **MS ARMSTRONG:** Really, that's the main part of my presentation, is the actual slide, the slides themselves.

**MR BAILEY:** We apologise for people that can't see, but these slides will be made available on our site as well.

30 **MS ARMSTRONG:** Well, this first slide, and I just wanted to raise, it doesn't seem to be discussed much in any of these presentations, is that Australia's total arable land area is just 4.1% of the total land area of Australia, 4.1% is arable land. And that comes from the World Bank, so it's not something I just made up.

35 Next slide, please. Here's an example of what I'm coming from. The dark green area is the cropping or arable land, the 4% I was discussing. The lighter green is grazing modified pastures such as this Tallawang site. And the grey area is – that's also, in Australia, classified as agricultural land, when in fact it's just grazing native  
40 vegetation. So, it's not – none of it's controlled by farmer, that's just where animals are sent out to graze on native vegetation.

45 So, we're getting up to 6%, including the modified grazing pastures. We have a total of about 6% of agricultural land in Australia, and that takes in the 4% of arable land as well. And if you just have a look at that map, if you put an overlay of renewable energy plans, they would fit exactly over where our arable land is, our agricultural land is. And it just makes no sense – none of this – Tallawang is part of that, and there's no place for this infrastructure on agricultural land.

5 Next slide, please. It's also in direct – Tallawang along with all the projects that are going ahead – are in direct contravention of the Paris Agreement. I bring to your attention Article 2B of the Paris Agreement: “Increasing the ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and foster climate resilience and low greenhouse gas emissions development,” which of course means wind, solar and batteries. But it ends, “in a manner that does not threaten food production.” So, does that say to you, that this infrastructure belongs on our 4% arable land?

10 Next slide, please. I'm not sure what that one is, I can't read it from here.

**UNKNOWN SPEAKER:** Neither can I.

**UNKNOWN SPEAKER:** Nobody can. It's just unacceptable.

15 **MR BAILEY:** If you like, I'll just clarify that the slides came in a portrait view which make it complicated. But Margaret, I'll read those three dot-points for you, just to assist in your presentation.

20 **MS ARMSTRONG:** Well, I can see now, it's about local biodiversity. The whole pretence of this is supposed to be for us to have cleaner, greener air, and to save the wildlife. Now, you look at the cumulative effect of these – as just discussed by Kathryn, the number of projects that are going on in the area, just at Tallawang alone is 13 square kilometres, or 1,300 hectares. Stubbo, 1,800 hectares. We're getting up to 50 square kilometres just in the projects that exist or have been approved.

25 We had a – next slide, please. Oh, that's a picture of – that's actually a picture we took ourselves from up at Tallawang. They don't talk about them, but there's actually wedge-tailed eagles up there, which are protected. The actual, the high-tension wire there, there's a nest up in those towers. So, there's wedge-tailed eagles in the area.

30 Next slide, please. We've counted over 70 species of creatures on our property, including frogs.

35 Next slide, please. We also – this is holding up my time. That's a list of the bats. We had a bat study done on our 6-hectare property and we've had two bat studies done. One identified 11 different species of bats on our property, and the second one identified 9 different species of bats on our 6-hectare property. How many animals are being destroyed by these projects? We've seen, we've witnessed the site preparation. They come in and just set fire to the entire site first, and then they bulldoze it down to the bare earth. Where are these creatures living? We've got kangaroos and echidnas.

40 Next slide, please. Kangaroos and echidnas and all manner of – turtles – all manner of frogs and massive numbers of birds, 25 different species were identified by the Bird Atlas.

45 Anyway, I have to conclude here, 5 minutes just isn't long enough really, you've just put pressure on us. So, do you want the top one up there with animals and native

wildlife? Or do you want the bottom one where it's just nothing but solar panels?  
Thank you.

**MR BAILEY:** Thank you. Thank you, Margaret. We invite Grant Piper.

5

**MR GRANT PIPER:** G'day, everybody, welcome to the town that was on the \$10 note. My presentation refers mostly to B46 in the conditions of consent (rehabilitation and decommissioning and contamination).

10

First slide. Second slide, thanks. Right. That's the Tallawang site we're familiar with, and there's the water courses. As you can see, there's numerous water courses running off that land into the Tallawang Creek to the north, and it's also surrounded.

15

Next slide. 870, and now 1,000, and we know about that, it's reasonable grazing and farming land, it's been productive for many, many, many years, and it's going under solar for 38, and then it's to be returned to agricultural. There's also the local bores and groundwater as well as the runoff to the creeks and streams. But the contamination from panels, the BESS and the infrastructure is not even mentioned anywhere that I can see in the documentation. There's no consideration of the contamination caused by the infrastructure itself.

20

25

So, next slide. So, if you look at 500 megawatt of panels, you're looking at 350 tonne of aluminium, 34 tonne copper, 385-odd kilograms of silver, lead, nickel, tin, zinc, and no data on the cadmium, tellurium, selenium and indium, and I think some of that's coming later on. Not including the cabling or the supporting structures, the galvanised iron and steel, as well as the transmission that's needed to connect it to the rest of the grid.

30

Next slide. Problems we have with the contamination. Spontaneous glass breakage from the PVC magazine there. Increased incidence of tempered glass shattering without impact have been documented. And that allows water ingress and further corrosion and leaching.

35

Next slide. Weather-related damage. Again, not addressed anywhere in the documentation I can see – from hail, wind, storms, and they've exceeded modelling expectations, the good ole models, 300%. And each breakage again becomes a point for leaching of chemicals.

40

Next slide. The long-term storage degradation. These things degrade in storage as well, and if they're being stored improperly, you get further contamination.

45

Next slide. UV-induced degradation. Research from Fraunhofer in Germany found that standard accelerated UV testing equivalent to roughly one year of European sunlight, really in the current testing methods may under-represent or mischaracterise real-world degradation patterns. So, they tested it for one year in European sunlight, so obviously that's not very relevant to Australia for 35 years of operation in the field.

5 Next slide. Another document, heavy metals, cadmium, copper, arsenic, mercury, lead, zinc, nickel that leach out, affects soil quality, and be taken into crops, entering the food chain. And later on, the decomposition of materials utilised in solar panels poses a potential risk. So again, I'm, like Margaret said, we're not making this stuff up – it's out there in the literature, and if you go looking, you find it, but it's not addressed at any point in the Proponent's documentation, or the Department.

10 Next slide. In a field study of a 750-kilowatt array in New York, they measured soils directly beneath the panels and compared them to soils 100 feet away. They found selenium concentrations 97% higher beneath the panels. Lithium was elevated by 386%, strontium 86%, nickel by 37%, and barium by 61%.

15 Next slide. In Italy, they did a similar study for seven years and they found substantial lasting changes in the soil chemistry, higher pH and electrical conductivity, reduced water holding capacity and soil temperature, 61% loss of organic carbon, 50% reduction in total nitrogen, and lower microbial activity and stripe patterns of soil degradation across the installation. And this is meant to be saving the planet.

20 Next slide. And this country, they say, is going to be returned to farmland.

25 Next slide. As far as I know, Beryl Solar's had two fires, I think someone said three, since 2019 when it became operational. Stubbo had the fire that was mentioned earlier, in 2025. And I thought it was two semi's crashed, but it was three carrying panels. And they were broken, it rained after one of those accidents at the site, but there's no knowledge of who did the cleanup or where the panels were disposed of. And I wonder is anyone monitoring contamination for any of these projects.

30 Next slide. Table B4 in the conditions in the service water risk assessment makes no mention of probably contamination from panels or BESS at all. It's mainly concerned – next slide – so there it is, a bit hard to see, but on the left, the lower – next slide. Sorry. Stormwater. All they're worried about basically is the runoff containing sediment and detritus, but no chemicals or leaching of any agents out of the panels.

35 Next slide. Firefighting. Go ahead. Next slide. RFS guidance barely addresses large solar and BESS. There's no real guidelines for how to fight it except shower the BESS with water to keep it cool, if you can get close enough, and don't let runoff into ground or water ways. And looking at the Tallawang site, you can see that's going to be near impossible. And the Bushfire and Emergency Plans are yet to be developed.

40 Next one. Disposable hazards. So, once these things are decommissioned, they're put into landfill, the problem doesn't stop. You're still going to get leaching into the soil, it has to go somewhere.

45 Next. And they're all the references.

Next. So, both the Proponent and DPHI exhibit flippant disregard to the contamination. They don't even mention it or acknowledge it. And that's, in their words, "you must grind it up and eat it" is their approach, which obviously we disagree with, and it's

unprofessional and disingenuous to make those sorts of statements, or ignore the risk completely. Ignoring it doesn't make it go away, and we all are aware of PFAS and asbestos examples, that should inform our decision making now for the future, but they don't, and I consider that on the point of negligent.

5

So, next please. Conditions of consent, I think you need baseline soil and water testing done. A lot of that's been done now, prior to construction. Annual repeat testing through the life of the project. Thorough testing after decommissioning and removal of infrastructure and all raw data of that testing immediately publicly available without any restriction. And significant fines for any level of contamination above baseline, because the Proponent and DPFI currently imply that none will occur. And that's just simply not true. Thank you.

10

**MR BAILEY:** Thank you, Grant. Thank you for your representation, Grant. We'll call Bradley Bliss.

15

**MR BRADLEY BLISS:** Thank you. Thank you. So, the developer previously been RES Group Australia and now Potentia, have consulted with Wellington Valley Wiradjuri Aboriginal Corporation and discussed environmental, heritage and visual concerns and negotiated some outcomes.

20

The Tallawang Solar Project has temporary on-site worker accommodation as part of the project design, which meets all current DPI, SSD requirements, and accommodating the majority of the workforce expected to be involved in the project.

25

For the Tallawang Solar Farm, we have no concerns around threatened species, endangered flora or fauna. There are flora and fauna out there, but there are no endangered species.

30

The project has other financial benefits to the property owners who are trying to drought-proof their own properties and livelihoods. This allows them to better graze under the panel, which we can see at Wellington, because I come from there, and I know the farmers who own those properties. And they have increased lambing and have better outcomes for their stock.

35

All that money that comes into these farmers is spent locally. So, you're trying to hamper the local farmers in trying to get this project stopped.

40

So, on behalf of Wellington Valley and the [unintelligible 01:13:42] clan descendants, of which I personally am one, we urge that this Independent Planning Commission approve this much-needed solar project to assist in the reaching the national net zero target and reducing and securing our ongoing power generation.

45

There are other projects out there, especially within this district, that are still coming up for approval, that are more contentious and in your face than this one. Because this one has been pushed further and further away from public view. These other ones are of greater concern and are located on prime agricultural lands, unlike this project.

I've walked that ground, I've been to my knees in mud, and it comes from about 30 centimetres down. It's grazing land, not actual arable land. Thank you.

5 **MR BAILEY:** Thank you, Bradley, for your presentation. I just ask that we be respectful to each of the speakers. It's the Panel's intent that we hear from all of the speakers, and if we end up with interventions during the meeting, I will suspend the meeting.

10 That actually does bring us to a formal break in the proceedings. So, we've got a break of just over 10 minutes, and we will be reconvening for the next speaker commencing at 11:20. So, we've got a formal break in proceedings now. Thank you.

**[Morning break from 01:15:20 to 01:34:24]**

15 **UNKNOWN SPEAKER:** Okay, thank you everybody. If we could all take our seats, we'll be starting up again in a couple of minutes. Thank you.

**[Audio gap from 01:34:36 to 01:36:07]**

20 **MR BAILEY:** Thank you everybody for returning, and welcome back. We now – I just want to explain an additional speaker who's come onto our program. And just the background to this is that they did email in time, but the email was blocked through the system and has only come in after the formal timing. So, they don't formally appear on the run sheet but did want to invite Ms Cairns to present. Thank you.

25 So, for all other speakers listening in, we will be a few minutes – back that five minutes to allow for the additional speaker. Thank you.

30 **MS ALISON CAIRNS:** Please have a look at a map of Gulgong area. Where does it lie? Have a look on a big map, not a screen. Muswellbrook to the right. Lithgow to the left. Stop this nonsense and irresponsible renewable energy transition costing, costing, costing our nation, our people, our environments, and oh dear God, they will harm the lands of the Murray Darling Basin food production catchments unless, unless, unless they are stopped.

35 "They" being gov.au and newsouthwales.gov.au. Complicit in threat to catchments, catchments, catchments, Murray Darling Basin, our Australian food production catchments supporting every Australian. Note. Use rooftops only now from now for all solar developments because, Aussies, blackouts will be more than usual, you see.

40 AAAEEE who is about starts with a C, ends in an A, and is a threat to the nation absolutely. Wake up, Australians, you are being had. You are being had. You are being had. Basically, the scam, yes, the scam, yes, the scam is fooling most Australians. Importing goods from the cheap, cheap, cheap labour nations. Hmm. Those  
45 Australians include the politicians, gov.au, nswgov.au, all and every council taking money not theirs to spend on not needs.

Stop the nonsense, someone. We try, “we” being those who protest renewables in upon our precious, precious lands, waterways and communities rural. Including our precious farmlands, for God’s sake.

5 Worse, it gets in upon lands, waterways and communities rural, Australian and world  
note, the worse it gets daily as renewable energy projects get approved by nobody but  
gov.au. I demand an immediate moratorium on all solar farm and BESS developments  
now. That includes Tallawang Solar Project on Wiradjuri country. Dear oh dear. Who  
will assist my request? Who will? Who? Who? Who will? Who? Who? Nobody.  
10 Hmm. I wonder why.

Trump gets it. LABOR don’t. Won’t. There is no such thing as net zero, climate  
change, clean energy, green energy. Concepts made up, they are. Profit reasons only.  
Trade goods too from Australia, hey, trade from, to, to, to, then over to, over to, to  
15 then, to and then and over to then, back to Aus. Offshore the view. How dare you all.

Stop supporting, stop exporting coal, hey, keep it here for us to use for essentials only.  
Net zero is a scam, unachievable, of course. Shame on you all. Wake up. Hurry up.  
Next eight generations consider, please. I demand an immediate moratorium on all  
20 solar farm and BESS developments in New South Wales immediately, including  
Tallawang Solar.

One brand new, low emissions coal-fired power station in Muswellbrook will be  
enough to power southern New South Wales will. Cease and desist AI now, and I  
25 mean everybody here as Australians, except the military, of course.

Rooftops only for all solar now from now in New South Wales. I demand, I demand, I  
demand. At least we will have backup, Aussies. Never use those lithium-ion batteries,  
Aussies. How dare you if you do. When alternatives exist that are not polluting world  
30 environments. Note. World environments. Note. Shame on you all supporting a  
renewable energy transition when we could easily exist in New South Wales using  
three, and only three, brand new low-emissions coal-fired power stations built where  
current sites are or have been for obvious reasons.

35 Cease and desist all further processing of Tallawang Solar Project, I demand now.  
Time we stopped this nonsense, and it is. Our food is important, isn’t it? I do wonder  
what you people eat, I do. Nobody should ever deliberately set out to harm and cause  
loss to precious, precious farmlands our next eight generations need. Free of  
renewables from now. Keep the money onshore. Help Aussies and do so or we pay,  
40 and we’ll never stop paying a high price for a scam. I demand cease and desist  
immediately. Macquarie catchments are sacred. Wiradjuri, where are you protecting  
them? Wiradjuri, eh? Lands, waterways and communities, where’s the great –

45 **MR BAILEY:** Thank you, Ms Cairns.

**MS CAIRNS:** Have I finished?

**MR BAILEY:** You’re over time, yes.

5 **MS CAIRNS:** All right, I'll just finish this sentence. Land, waterways and communities west of the Great Divide are sacred, you see, always were, always will be. Hmm, what is going on in upon the sacred lands named Australia by British, British, British, those filthy bastards still here today, worsening toxicity in upon lands, waterways, sacred Murray Darling Basin.

10 **MR BAILEY:** Thank you, Ms Cairns, for your representation. We now invite Rafe Champion.

**MR RAFE CHAMPION:** Thank you. And I think the previous speaker must have been reading the briefing notes and emails I've been sending out for the last five years, but I'll say it more soberly.

15 So, over the last two or three decades, trillions of dollars, 5, 10, 15, who could count, have been spent on wind and solar and ancillary services. The result of this incredible expenditure is more expensive power, which is going to get a lot more expensive. Less reliable power. And there'll be certainly blackouts regularly if one more coal station closes. And a third thing. The environmental damage, the wreckage. It must exceed  
20 surely the worst natural disasters that have gone on during this period.

Cost, reliability, and the environment. Terrible trifecta of damage. Now, it's been made possible by failing to observe phenomenon of wind and droughts, periods of winds up to three days and nights to next to no wind across the whole of southeastern Australia.  
25 No wind drought warnings from the meteorologists. No checking on the reliability of the wind by the wind farmers. Dirt farmers are alert to droughts. Wind farmers never checked. So, it won't work, it can't work. It's as simple as A-B-C.

30 A. The grid has to have continuous input. Like a farmyard fence. If it's not continuous, it's not a fence. Gaps, can't get out. Gaps in the wind and solar supply overnight, the lights go out.

The second thing. Continuity is violated. Wind and solar input violated on nights with little or no wind. And thirdly, no prospect of the grid-scale storage required to ride  
35 through those droughts.

40 So, there you have it. It can't work, won't work, it's cost our industries, it's costing household budgets, it's costing environment. Where will it end? And I'll just leave you with a reminder of Margaret Armstrong's passionate entreaty to remember Article 2 of the Paris Accord. A lot of this saving the planet it has to be done without losing food-producing land.

45 **MR BAILEY:** Thank you, Rafe. At this point, just to let the room know. The balance of the presentations will all be coming online, so we'll be hearing those coming through the system. And in that sense, we now invite Bill Stinson. Should be coming through the speaker system. Thank you, Bill, you're welcome to present for your five minutes.

**MR BILL STINSON:** Good morning to you and good morning community members, thank you for the opportunity. The particular issue that I would like to address is the rehabilitation and the decommissioning and demolitions.

5 Now, the Applicant submits at 3.6 it does seek to recycle and dismantle and decommission infrastructure and equipment if feasible and practicable. In 2024, the NSW Department of Planning on its website provided a downloadable Excel spreadsheet which is no longer available, to enable calculations of the end-of-life definition of demolition estimates for solar projects and wind projects.

10 You know, I've looked at the calculation for a 500-megawatt solar project, and NSW Planning put the cost per megawatt at \$234,000. So, that means that based on their calculation, the decommissioning and demolition of the Tallawang Solar Farm would be \$117 million. At 4% inflation per year, that's \$246 million. So, the question I ask is, 15 how is the committee or the approval going to ensure that the money is available for the decommissioning and demolition of this project?

I've written out a submission which I will provide to you. I also note that on the Environmental Impact Statement at 3.6, there's only two paragraphs which relate to 20 that decommissioning and demolition.

The other point I would make is that when Council requires a development application, they ask the applicant, if there's demolition, to provide a Waste Management Plan. That Waste Management Plan details all of the items that are going to be part of that 25 demolition, the quantity of those particular items, and also to note where those items were going to be disposed of. So, again I ask the question, why can't this be provided as part of the approval and also why can't a rehabilitation bond also be provided as part of any approval?

30 Thank you for your time.

**MR BAILEY:** Thank you, Bill, for your representation. Again, moving, staying over the phone, we invite Stan Moore.

35 **MR STAN MOORE:** Yes, hello?

**MR BAILEY:** Welcome, Stan. You're welcome to make your presentation. Thank you.

40 **MR MOORE:** Okay, thank you. That was a little bit quicker than I thought, so here we go. Can you hear me properly now?

**MR BAILEY:** We can, Stan.

45 **MR MOORE:** Oh, okay. I've got a little bit of feedback occurring. I'm talking in an echo chamber. Is there anything you can do about that?

**MR BAILEY:** We can't control that at our end, Stan, but we've got good reception of your voice at our end.

5 **MR MOORE:** Okay, all right. I'll battle on, because I'm speaking and then I'm hearing myself. Look, thanks for the opportunity. I want to raise two issues, and I feel that the Commission should take them into account.

10 One is the likelihood of contamination under solar panels, and the future impact. I know in the past the Commission or commissioners have looked at the issue of contamination and in one reply the Commission said that "more robust evidence is required." And what I took that as effectively to overturn the position that the Planning Department takes based on information they've received from NSW EPA. And that information was based on 24-hour submersion tests of panels and the findings were that they did not leak.

15 I provided the Commission a while ago a copy of research done by the Institute of Photovoltaics and the Research Centre scope at the University of Stuttgart. And they found that just about all solar panels will leach, and leach all of their effective contents. So, that can be – that could have a large impact on soils.

20 That has been challenged by two scientists who work for First Solar, which is a company that produces modules. Anyway, they go with the situation that NSW EPA use that, oh, no, they don't leach, they do short-term tests. Well, the University of Stuttgart people have done further work on this and they have found that the long-term impacts here is that the panels do leach and therefore pose a future risk to the soil, and therefore would require significant remediation, some of which is probably not possible to do.

30 I am not suggesting that I read out all of that at the moment, but I do plan to put a copy of that paper to the Commission in a submission, because the evidence now is very robust and it should be taken into account. To back that up, there's work coming out of Ohio at the moment, in the US, and its findings are that agricultural soils under solar arrays are already showing measurable changes, including increased levels of metals linked to long-term environmental and health impacts. It isn't just theory, they said, it's happening in the dirt right now.

40 So, what we need to have is real-world measurements of working solar farms and to look at the impact on these soils. And some of it is quite disturbing. For instance, there's also monitoring work going on in Italy which says that the soil below photovoltaics are showing substantial changes in the soil chemistry and biology. So, I think it's very important that this be taken into account, because to say that they do not impact on the safety or the soil, that they don't leach, is not correct. So, I'll be sending you through some stuff on that.

45 And finally, to wrap up, the issue of decommissioning and remediation. Remediation becomes very important if the solar panels are leaching. And my question to the Commission is, what assurances and who is responsible for the decommissioning and remediation at the end of life? This is something that seems to be hidden in documents

somewhere, but neighbours have no idea of who is going to be responsible for cleaning up the mess.

5 **MR BAILEY:** Thank you, Stan. I just – I do just ...

**MR IVAN KENNEDY:** I'm not by telephone. I'm here.

10 **MR BAILEY:** Okay, sorry, I'll just. I do acknowledge, Stan, your question to the Panel around decommissioning and remediation, and just again note it's one of those areas of consideration that we've got at the moment.

Moving on, just on our agenda ... I think we're moving on, that Ivan Kennedy is here in person. So, thank you, Ivan.

15 **MR KENNEDY:** I did notify yesterday that I'd be here. I've been through Gulgong many times on my way out to Nevertire and Warren to do work for the cotton industry, research work. I'm a Professor at the University of Sydney. I stopped teaching students 12 years ago and took up climate science, which I can do freely without money, as long as I've got good superannuation.

20 I've got real concerns, and I'm just going to start my watch, this has got to be a five-minute mile. Normally, I would take a couple of weeks of lectures. But most submissions about the lack of due diligence in Australia and in the world to do with risk research. No risk research has been done. I've made submissions to climate committees, the hearings, and I've got a parliamentary privilege for some of my submissions. Why has that happened? Normally farmers will do research, they pay a levy to get the research done before they introduce new technology. We're introducing all of this technology without any research in Australia, a hot, dry country. Very different from a lot of – from Germany.

30 I have concern about the environmental toxicity of the solar panels. This is one of my main points. The second is the futility of renewable energy as an effective solution to climate change. The research that my research team has done in the last six, and published in the last six years, indicates that CO<sub>2</sub> is actually coming out of the ocean. Why is this? Because the surface ocean is warming, precipitating calcium carbonate, which acidifies the ocean and releases CO<sub>2</sub> from bicarbonate.

35 The same will happen in alkaline soils. Anything we do to acidify the soil like grow crops; farmers know that they acidify the soil and have to use limestone. But as a result of that, there will be CO<sub>2</sub> going to the atmosphere from those processes. So, we have to understand how these are happening.

40 So, the two risks I've identified. Turbulent drying downwind of the wake in wind farms that dry out the landscape. That comes from one of our peer-reviewed papers. The second is the heavy metal toxicity from solar panels. I didn't click my watch, unfortunately. How much time have I got left?

45 **UNKNOWN SPEAKER:** You've got about one minute to go.

**MR KENNEDY:** One minute to go. So, there's absolutely no way I can cover all of the topics, but I will be putting in a submission, I'm still drafting it, because I've only got involved in this one in the last few days.

5

But all reference – but I have many references that support the science of what I'm saying about these two risks which have not been properly assessed. Risk management and research should be employed to give clear scientific consequences that we predict.

10

The previous two speakers have already talked – the previous speakers have already talked about the toxicity from the panels. I estimate there will be about 30 tonnes of silver in the Tallawang Solar Farm, and that will leach out in a 30-year period to a certain extent. If 1% of it leaches out, it will destroy biological life in the top layer of the soil. So, you won't be able to rehabilitate it.

15

To me, this lack of diligence means this is potentially a new tragedy of the commons where those who benefit now financially and in other ways do so at the expense of everyone else in the future. And I'll be spending the rest of my academic career promoting this message, trying to get the right research done before we take these huge risks with the human future. I'll stop at that point.

20

**MR BAILEY:** Thank you, Ivan, for your presentation. We look forward to receiving your submission and I'll summarise that a little later. Thank you.

25

We are a few minutes ahead and I think we're looking to capture – we've got our next speaker online. So, our next presenter is Alan Moran who is filling in for John Clarke – John Clarke couldn't be available today and has asked Alan to present on his behalf. So, we might move online if we can. There we go. Thank you, Alan. You're welcome to begin your presentation.

30

**MR ALAN MORAN:** Thanks, Chairman. The proposed project is supposed to provide benefits of about \$760 million to the area and cleaner energy within an identified REZ. I'll confine my comments largely to these economic matters.

35

These REZ's are supposed to play a vital role in delivering affordable energy generation to help prepare the states for the expected retirement of the thermal power stations over future decades. The government has also indicated that the REZ's will unlock a significant pipeline, maybe \$20 billion of investment in large-scale renewable energy and storage.

40

In fact, the project is fundamentally designed not to provide cheaper electricity, and the investment, as others might induce, would have negative impacts on the New South Wales and Australian economies. Even though governments parade notions that wind and solar are the cheapest form of energy, they know this to be untrue. That's why they continue to mandate subsidies for these sources, subsidies that were first portrayed in 2005 as a leg-up for an infant industry that would soon stand on its own two feet. Twenty years on, there's no sign of this happening. Indeed, the subsidies to make it happen are presently running at about \$16 billion a year.

45

5 The key Commonwealth schemes are the absurdly named Capacity Investment Scheme which is basically for anything other than capacity. And under this is about \$85 billion wind and solar supplies being forward purchased at prices that are actually not revealed. And it also has the billion-dollar-a-year safeguard mechanism under which the largest 226 entities are obliged to reduce their emissions by 30% per year, and that scheme is forcing de-industrialisation.

10 All this is predicated on grounds that we must decarbonise to prevent climate change, but it is unclear that any significant climate change is occurring as a result of human-induced emissions. The notion that CO<sub>2</sub> is a cause of dangerous warming has long been discredited by the world's most respected scientists and is now becoming the official US Government line, with the Department of Energy publishing five extremely well-credentialed people – John Christy, Judith Curry, Steven Koonin, Rust McKittrick, 15 Roy Spencer – in their report which is titled, “A Critical Review of Impacts of Greenhouse Gas Emissions on the Climate in the US.” And it includes, and I quote, “Extreme convective storms, hurricanes, tornadoes, floods and droughts exhibit considerable natural variability, but long-term increases are not detected.”

20 But even if there were a danger of human-induced climate change from CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, Australia with 1% of the total can do nothing about it. Indeed, now that President Trump has reneged on US measures to conform with the Paris Climate Agreement, the remaining countries like the EU, UK, Canada, Korea, ostensibly taking 25 emission reduction seriously, account for less than a quarter of the total global emissions. And even collectively, would have a very modest effect.

30 The notion in the report that 190 countries are signed on to decarbonise is a total illusion. And assertions that food production is threatened unless Australia and other countries take economy-crippling measures to abate emissions is fallacious. Far from facing a crisis, world food production increased by 50% over the past 20 years and is set to continue rising.

35 Now, part of the \$60 billion a year cost that I alluded to, involves new transmission lines, like the REZ's, but because renewables are diffused and intermittent, they require much more transmission. A couple of years ago, Australia's transmission network was valued at about \$23 billion. Now we're planning to spend \$100 billion for the brave new world of wind and solar.

40 And moreover, these weather-dependent plants are not readily controllable. And unlike coal and gas and hydro, they simply stop when the sun goes in, or the wind stops. And their absence of grid inertia brought about blackouts here, in South Australia and Broken Hill and in Spain, Chile and Texas over the last couple of years.

45 Daniel Westerman, the AEMO operator, has revealed that the number of interventions to stave these has exploded from 6 in 2016 to 1,800 last year, and all of these involve costs on users.

5 The project, if it were to proceed, will always require subsidy to provide a return to the investors, is a form of electricity that is inherently unreliable and which because of its subsidy will force the closure of more flexible and reliable sources. And far from being cleaner, the project involves toxic chemicals and metals which will eventually need to be cleaned up, and it's unclear that a bond will be posted to ensure the project incurs the cost of this.

10 I'll just say the proposal will be deleterious to the Australian economy and should not proceed. Thank you.

15 **MR BAILEY:** Thanks Alan, for your presentation. I'm just going to call a couple of minutes break. We're just having some technical issues, to make sure that we can keep connecting with people externally. So, bear with us while we do some technical follow-up.

**[Break from 02:08:15 to 02:11:48]**

20 **MR BAILEY:** Thank you everybody for your patience. We have the technology back up and running. And again, thanks to those in the room for their patience, particularly thanks to those online for their patience as well.

25 We will now go to our next speaker. And just to let know that while we've had that slight delay, it won't affect the allocation of time to the speakers. So, I'll pass to Lynette LaBlack who is five minutes for your presentation. Thank you. Thank you. You're on, Lynette, and we have your slide up.

Are you there, Lynette?

30 **MS LYNETTE LABLACK:** Yes. The delay is ridiculous. Can you hear me?

**UNKNOWN SPEAKER:** She needs to come closer to the phone.

35 **MR BAILEY:** Sorry Lynette, are you in a position to get closer to the microphone on your phone, please? We can hear you at a distance.

**MS LABLACK:** I am.

**MR BAILEY:** That's better. Thank you.

40 **MS LABLACK:** Okay. Can you hear me okay?

**MR BAILEY:** That's good. Thank you.

45 **MS LABLACK:** Okay. Whilst the Independent Planning Commission sent dictates on Tuesday advising us to send/submit that are factually accurate or [unintelligible 02:13:30], also saying the Commission is a statutory body exercising significant powers that affect people's lives and does not tolerate unacceptable conduct. Also

telling us, “Please do not engage in any threatening, abusive, defamatory or disrespectful conduct.”

5 In response to these statements, it is essential and would be a very welcome change if the Planning Commission actually abided by their own rules when assessing Tallawang solar electric generating works. I believe irresponsible predator prioritising rubber stamping of the Department’s [unintelligible 02:14:13] industrial solar, wind and battery swindle batteries by the Planning Commission are unacceptable conduct that cannot be tolerated, as they have shown a lack of care that demonstrates reckless  
10 disregard for the safety or lives of others, which is so great it appears to be the conscious violation of other people’s rights to safety.

15 These approvals have never been factually accurate, deliberately threaten our lives, our livelihoods and that of our children and grandchildren, are an unconscionable abuse of nature, food producers, rural communities, critical energy infrastructure, and Australian sovereignty. And totally affect us, the Australian people, as we are callously sacrificed to their renewable cult [unintelligible 02:15:03] impacts, and net zero [unintelligible 02:15:06] poverty, solely for predatory vested interest benefit.

20 Like the feisty [unintelligible 02:15:14] at the Bush Summit in Wagga yesterday said, “We have had a gutful of fudged decision-making powers, being forced to bear the monumentally tragic, totally illogical, inevitable, irreversible, toxic burden of these evil plans, that will poison our life-sustaining land and vital water systems forever.”

25 It’s no wonder that twice as many farmers are committing suicide than ordinary people. Developer, Potentia, just stated that this plan abides by the NSW Government’s policies. However, as renewables are the asbestos of the future, is there actually a NSW Government policy to deliberately poison our food-growing land and vital water sources around Gulgong and in rural New South Wales? It appears so.

30 Instead of poisoning us, [unintelligible 02:16:15] developers, as admitted previously by the [unintelligible 02:16:22] conflict of interest planner and environmental assessment officer back in 2020, during dodgy Greener Solar’s Glenella stitch-up, the complicit planning panel needs to get honest for once and factually independently  
35 assess and appropriately reject this CCP sabotaging Tallawang nightmare and its poisonous [unintelligible 02:16:45]. As shown in these slides.

40 I did want to begin with a totally black slide, just to show the poverty that Tallawang Solar is going to generate. No power, all night, every night, 365 days of the year. With a pathetic average capacity factor of less than 20%. That’s not reliable, affordable [unintelligible 02:17:17]. Neither is it clean or genuinely sustainable.

45 And as you can see in the hail-damaged solar photos, it’s pretty clear that this is not clean or sustainable and will poison our land and vital water sources. Lots of damage, these are the photos at the bottom with the windstorm-damaged photos are from this year in Victoria in February. Dennis has done a good job of the fire photos, which I’ve also included with the toxic smoke coming from the inverters. All of this smoke is

going to be full of toxic heavy metal materials and PFAS spewing out all over our land.

5 And in one of these, in this advisory note from the CSIRO, there's not even any extinguisher that they actually – that will put out a lithium battery fire that they will verify and recommend. So, it's highly irresponsible that they are doing this. And I would actually just like to note – hang on, I've got another ... Sorry, I'm just having ...

10 **MR BAILEY:** Just a reminder, Lynette, just a reminder, Lynette, that we're now over time. So, if you could conclude.

15 **MS LABLACK:** Well, look, I would like to just mention the problems, I don't know if you can see the photos that are talking about them on the slavery issue. But it's pretty clear that the government is aware that all of these developments are actually contaminating and they're also very unethical, because they're based on slave labour supply chains.

20 And yet it seems that the government are in cahoots with all of these poisonous and unethical developments. Because lately, we've actually seen Barangaroo, and NSW Government itself, has a deal with unethical Trina solar panels, the user of which is CleanPeak Energy, and it says that they've entered into an agreement with NSW Government that guarantees Barangaroo makes carbon neutral until at least 2050 with a \$48 million landmark deal.

25 So, it appears that, you know, this is all about the money. We've just seen Barnaby Joyce apparently was offered \$600,000 to end his fight to appeal net zero. So, it's pretty [unintelligible 02:20:16] that the NSW Government keeps rolling out the money.

30 And also today, notably, the Mid-Western Council is actually absent, when the Mid-Western Council has previously objected to this plan and they objected on the grounds that there's no upfront decommissioning bond and there's no proof that this land will ever be returned to its inherent capability. So, they know their shire is going to be  
35 poisoned by these plans, but somehow they think \$15 million is going to fix it over 35 years. Well ...

40 **MR BAILEY:** Thank you, Lynette. We're well over time. I do ask that you do provide the further details in your presentation/representation through the submissions process, which runs through until Thursday next week. Thank you for your presentation. Our next presenter is Carolyn Emms. So, we've got Carolyn – you're online, so you're welcome to commence your presentation. Thank you.

45 **MS CAROLYN EMMS:** Thank you, and thank you for having me today. There seems to be a big echo, so I'll try and ignore it, it's hard to hear myself. Anyway.

**MR BAILEY:** Just so you're aware, Carolyn, you're being heard clearly in the room, and there's nothing we can do about that echo at your end. But you are being heard clearly in the room.

5 **MS EMMS:** Okay, thank you. Thank you. Look, we're obviously Rainforest Reserves Australia, we're very concerned about the rapid rollouts of these renewable energy transition which we, our research is showing has nothing to do with addressing climate change. In fact, it's the opposite – it's making it worse. We're watching collapsed ecosystems in north Queensland and the Great Dividing Range. This, to us, unless  
10 there is some change of heart, we are looking at an absolute extinction of wildlife of over 20 species.

So, now let's go back to this solar proposal. First of all, it's actually not a farm. We're regenerative farmers on a personal level, but today I still represent Rainforest Reserves  
15 Australia. But on our farm, it is connected because we've planted rainforest connections, and our farming community and conservation groups have all planted thousands of trees every year on our farms. So, we are very passionate about water, water quality, rivers, and future generations.

20 So, basically, I'm asking you, the Panel, is there an ethics committee when these get approved? Where's the ethics when there is so much destruction to community values, division? Because this is what's happening in our region.

Going back to this, there is a possibility of – and I think it's well known now – that the  
25 heat island effect and thermal belts can be caused by these solar projects. It's what is known as a heat island effect. This is well known now. That where the materials used in the solar panels and infrastructure absorb and reflect heat, raising temperatures in the surrounding area. This can lead to changes in the local micro climate such as shifts in wind patterns or rainfall. This is what's happening in our areas in north Queensland.  
30 So, we've actually got some solar places and by gee, it's about 5 degrees hotter than before we had this, and trees do play a role in cooling down these real farms, and they're going to be removed.

35 So, I'd like that to be addressed. I'd like the ethics side of it to be addressed when it causes loss of biodiversity. When birds fly into these panels, they get confused, they think it's a pool of water, there's well evidence, I'm happy to provide all that evidence to you.

40 So, we found out about this for when we were really concerned about Chalumbin. That was refused. The reason Chalumbin was refused was purely because of environmental harm. So, at least there were some ethics involved in that.

45 But now, we're being surrounded by groups, vested interests, and environmental so-called conservation groups that are now circling around north Queensland. And we believe it's going to have a massive impact on our regions and throughout Australia.

So, New South Wales, we've sent you videos of New South Wales mapping. And of course, there's been an acceleration of approvals. What I would like to ask the Panel is,

how many of these get approved, and how many don't, and what's the ratio? And are ethics about slavery, environmental impacts, water quality impacts to the river – are they considered? Because we're very concerned.

5 Impact on groundwater surface, for instance, the construction and operation of solar complexes can lead to soil compaction, increased runoff and water contamination. These impacts threaten nearby water courses and aquatic ecosystems. The inclusion of large-scale battery storage also introduces additional risks of chemical leakage, with the potential to pollute groundwater and surface water sources.

10 Then of course we've got the cumulative environmental impacts. So, this area is looking to be a tsunami of infrastructure of industrial renewable electricity, not real power.

15 **MR BAILEY:** Thank you. Thank you, Carolyn, I just note that you're over the five minutes, so if you could just summarise and conclude, please.

20 **MS EMMS:** Oh well, we are opposed to this rapid rollout of fast-tracked renewables. This project is very significant because it's going to impact community values, the environment, water quality, and we do not consent to this project as a conservation group.

25 **MR BAILEY:** Thank you for your representation. We'll move to our next speaker, Ramila Chanisheff.

**MS RAMILA CHANISHEFF:** Good morning.

**MR BAILEY:** Good morning. Welcome. And you're open to commence your presentation, thank you.

30 **MS CHANISHEFF:** Thank you very much for having me. My name is Ramila, and – can everyone hear me? I can hear an echo.

35 **MR BAILEY:** We can hear you very well, Ramila. If your phone is on speaker, that will be giving you a feedback loop, but there is no echo at our end.

**MS CHANISHEFF:** Okay, wonderful, I'll take it off of speaker then.

40 **MR BAILEY:** Thank you.

**MS CHANISHEFF:** Thank you very much. Thank you very much for this opportunity. My name is Ramila. I am an Uyghur Australian, I am the President of the Australian Uyghur Women's Association. We have been lobbying the government and industries in regards to Uyghur forced labour, or Uyghur, as most of you might know. In 2017, there have been credible evidence that over 380 concentrate camps came up in Xinjiang Uyghur region, where millions of Uyghurs were taken into these camps for simply being Uyghurs. And then with the credible evidence, we have also noted that forced labour has been state-sanctioned by the Chinese Communist Regime in the area.

5 Now, with these state-sanctioned forced labour, Uyghurs were sent into labour camps that mine products, mine minerals, make products that have been saturating our markets here in Australia. Especially in the field of solar panels, over 46% of the polysilicon is mined and made in part or in raw products or in whole that make the solar panels that have been hitting our shores here. Now, this is an urgent matter and anything that comes from China that is made in the Xinjiang region is at high risk of using Uyghur forced labour.

10 Now, with audits that these industries do to ensure that there's no Uyghur forced labour or any kind of slave labour in their supply chain only goes up to Tier 1. They are not able to safely to do audits beyond Tier 1. If these products could be audited safely and are not made by Uyghur forced labour, then this could be considered. However, we have noted that all industries who are doing supply chain audits are not  
15 able to do so safely beyond Tier 1.

20 Now, with know that New South Wales does have an Anti-Slavery Commissioner and there are strong recommendations that industries take extreme caution when they are doing supply chain audits, and being able to prove that these products are not made by Uyghur forced labour. But there is also strong evidence, credible evidence out there, that Uyghurs are being used and abused and exploited not only for their labour but for their very being. They are being ethnically cleansed, genocided in the region.

25 We do not hear of this information in Australia or anywhere in the world, but there are laws in place in America, in the UK, and the EU to ensure that any products that are made by Uyghur forced labour do not enter their shores. However, Australia is facing, is becoming a dumping ground where products that do not enter these countries who have legislations in place, Australia seems to be a dumping ground for it, and we are accepting it without any question.

30 So, my plea to you and your committee and to everyone who is listening here, is that supply chains that come from China are high risk of using Uyghur forced labour, and with the monopoly of the solar panels in the industry with worldwide, with China monopolising, the majority of solar panel productions and sellings, this is  
35 incomprehensible that Australia should be bringing any solar panels and/or products from the region. Thank you.

40 **MR BAILEY:** Thank you, Ramila, for your presentation. We'll now move to Aidan Morrison.

**MR AIDAN MORRISON:** Hello.

**MR BAILEY:** Hello, Aidan. Welcome. We'll commence your time now, but you can be heard clearly in the room.

45 **MR MORRISON:** Thank you very much. Thanks, it's a great opportunity to present here on behalf of the Centre for Independent Studies regarding this solar farm proposal.

5 What I'd like to speak to is a question about the public interest. I think it is well and truly established that it's a mandatory consideration for the IPC, they do consider the public interest. The Environmental Planning and Assessment Act of 1979 lists the public interest as matter for consideration in section 4.1518(e) and furthermore, the objects of that Act are listed in 1.3 and include "to promote the social and economic welfare of the community are, under (a) and also (c) to promote the orderly and economic use of the development of the land."

10 It is worthwhile noting that in the actual Environmental Impact Statement that's produced by the Proponents, there are extensive references to the development of affordable electricity that are mentioned a large number of times and of being the intention of this project and the policies which it contributes to, to produce more affordable and low-cost electricity. However, in the IPC's Assessment Report, there is  
15 no mention of the word "affordable" and there is no claim that this project will push electricity prices down.

20 What I'd like to point out is that it is important for the IPC to consider what is the public interest, and it is not the same thing as to say that it merely complies with government policy. To presume that government policy automatically fulfils the public interest is to assume that there can be never any bad policy made. This, I think, is not correct. What the IPC must do is actually consider whether this project and the policies that it's being advanced under, are still capable of being in the public interest.

25 I'd like to point out that one of the key policies is the New South Wales Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap that's given effect by the Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act of 2020, recently updated. In the second reading speech for introducing the Electricity Investment Infrastructure Act in 2020, the Minister Matt Kean makes a number of explicit claims about how it is in the interest of New South Wales, and that  
30 is includes statements such as, "By acting now to monetise our electricity infrastructure, we can avoid price rises and maintain a reliable system."

35 He also says that "New South Wales has some of the best energy resources in the world. Our state is in a unique position to take advantage of these energy resources to give our local businesses and industries the competitive advantage that comes from having low-cost energy." He also says, "It is expected to save households an average of \$130 per year and small businesses around \$430 per year, after accounting for the costs of new schemes for transmission generation and storage."

40 So, my conclusion is that it is absolutely clear from the intention of the policies that this proposal is being advanced under, and is being claimed to be consistent with, that lower electricity prices and a competitiveness in industry and the benefits to households from having lower electricity prices is a core method by which the public interest is meant to be served through the achievement of this Act. However, I would  
45 like to point out that there is no way that this particular intent of lowering electricity prices can be served through the prosecution of the current policy and the development of the New South Wales Roadmap as planned.

5 I'd like to point out that in the latest default market offer produced by the electricity retailer, New South Wales residential customers of increases between 8.3 and 9.7% – this is significantly above forecast inflation and it's significantly higher than other customers in southeast Queensland and South Australia. I'd also like to point out that on page 111 of the DMO, it's stated that "the determined New South Wales Roadmap cost increases and higher transmission costs are also contributing to increases."

10 I'd like to point out that the planned cost of the Central West-Orana Renewable Energy Zone, which this project is going to be a part of, was expected to be \$650 million under the 2020 ISP, which is the document that would have been relevant and thought of being enforced at the time the Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act was put into place. And latest estimates conclude that this is now about \$4.5 billion, and this does not include system security remediation charges or the cost of finance.

15 I'd also like to point out that overall, the latest CSIRO report makes statements that have the cost of integrated renewables up as high as \$176, and that this benchmark would be the most relevant if realistic capacity factors were considered as opposed to the highest assessed across all the things that CSIRO have surveyed.

20 Therefore, I would suggest there's no way that now the public interest can truly be served by pursuing projects that are consistent with the roadmap, because there is no way that the roadmap can actually have a chance at pushing down energy costs, which is the key method by which the public interest was meant to be served through the advancement of this project. Thank you.

25 **MR BAILEY:** Thank you, Aidan, for your presentation. And I think, and I will check the transcript, I think there was a reference to the EIS being done by the Department and the Assessment Report being prepared by the Office of the Independent Planning Commission. Just to clarify, and I think that's what I heard, but I will check the transcript. But just to be clear, the EIS is prepared by the Proponent, the Assessment Report is prepared by the Department. And we take those and a range of other matters into consideration just when we're doing our work.

30 **MR MORRISON:** That is correct. I may have misspoken, but I do understand the Proponent prepared the EIS, and the Department prepared the Assessment Report for the IPC's consideration.

35 **MR BAILEY:** Yes. So, I'll just – I may have misheard as well, but just to make sure that we're all clear on that, and we will check. So, thank you for your presentation, Aidan.

40 That concludes the presentations for today's meeting. What I will do is invite Andrew Douglas back from the Proponent. So, inviting Andrew back to speak, an opportunity to just make a statement in response to what we've heard today. And certainly, there are a couple of questions still from the Commission, from the Panel, that we will touch on as well. So, welcome, Andrew, to come forward.

45 Yes, yes, that's fine.

5 **MR DOUGLAS:** Yes, that's fine. Thank you, commissioners, and thank you to everyone who has spoken today. We value the time and passion the community has brought to the process and want to respond briefly to some of the main issues raised today.

10 In relation to agriculture and land use, I want to point out that it's Category 1 land, it's highly disturbed farmland. We did provide some facts and figures in the EIS in relation to the percentage of impact on farmland within Mid-Western Regional Council and the wider area, and the figure was minuscule in the bigger picture.

In relation to biodiversity, over 93% of the woodland and grassland will be retained.

15 In relation to offsets, only 6.3 hectares of threatened ecological communities require offsetting. And that's roughly 1% of the site, a thousand-hectare site. Ecosystem credits are modest, 403 in total across three PCTs. Species credits are very low, we're looking at 77 for bat species, linked to a small 1.9 hectare creek-lined patch. And 13 for bluegrass, assigned only because of a 0.9 hectare roadside strip that wasn't surveyed directly.

20 In relation to decommissioning, recycling will be a priority. Partners like Reclaim and Veolia target 95% under the Solar Stewardship Scheme. I note in relation to decommissioning, there was a figure mentioned that was \$100 million. The actual figure that we provided is \$8.4 million based on the spreadsheet that the speaker referred to. We'll also be producing a detailed plan to be prepared within three years of the operation starting, under the conditions, at year 15 and within two years of decommissioning.

30 In relation to bushfire and safety, the solar farm and camp are not in a bushfire-prone land. Mitigation is guided by a three-phase approach. The design stage, we have asset protection zones around key infrastructure. We have the 10-metre zone around the perimeter of the site, and we have 10 metres between solar arrays. We also have dispersed liquid-cooled batteries to reduce fire risk. We then have detection and suppression systems, sprinkler systems for rapid response, and we also have 100,000-litre fire tank on site.

35 And then finally, emergency planning and response. And there will be site-specific plans approved by state fire authorities post consent.

40 I might just touch on subsidies briefly, which was another point raised. I mean, renewables were a sunrise industry and did need support in the early days to compete with fossil fuels. And the renewable energy target was introduced in 2001, and it did give the industry an early push, and retailers had to buy renewable energy certificates or face penalties, so the cost fell on them, not the taxpayer. So, technically, it wasn't really a subsidy.

45 But by around 2017, renewables were on equal terms with coal and gas, and since then they've moved ahead. The national target of 33,000 gigawatt-hours was met in 2019,

which meant certificate demand collapsed, leaving little or no value in the market since. And today, solar and wind are the cheapest form of new power in Australia, and large-scale solar no longer relies on subsidies.

5 **MR BAILEY:** Thank you.

**MR DOUGLAS:** The scheme ends in 2030, so this proposal will not benefit at all from subsidies. Manfred, do you want to have a word in relation to contamination, just mentioned ...

10

**MR MANFRED FAHR:** Thank you. Manfred Fahr, Potentia Energy. Thank you, community, for being here and raising your concerns with us. Thank you, commissioners. Thank you for pointing out the contamination related to thin film technology on solar modules. The project will not be using this kind of technology, it will be crystalline silicon, avoiding those issues you mentioned there. Thank you.

15

**MR DOUGLAS:** Thank you. That's all from us.

20

**MR BAILEY:** I'm just turning to fellow commissioners to see if there are any follow-up questions.

25

**MS SHELLEY PENN:** I've got a detail one that's not really come up today, it's just a question that I might just take advantage of you being there, Andrew. Which is just a follow up, we asked you some questions on notice to which you've responded, and that's all available publicly. It was just a question we asked around water cartage and truck movements, and the response addresses that for us during construction of the solar farm and during operation of the temporary workers accommodation.

30

I just wanted to clarify around operation of the solar farm as well, whether water use, for example, irrigation of vegetation or cooling, or whether there's any cartage related to that and what/how they would be managed. It was around vehicle movements. And if you need to respond to that after this, that's fine, of course, if you need to check the numbers. But it was just that the answer talked about construction and operation of the solar farm and operation of the accommodation, but not operation of the solar farm.

35

**MR DOUGLAS:** Sorry, in terms of water required during the operation of the solar farm?

40

**MS PENN:** And cartage. It was specifically around truck/vehicular movements during operation of the solar farm, to water, specifically.

45

**MR DOUGLAS:** Yes, I guess we were mainly concerned during the construction period.

**MS PENN:** Yes.

**MR DOUGLAS:** And that sort of further detail will be provided as part of our management plans addressing water during operation. So, we might sort of take that on

notice. We have done quite a lot of work in relation to assessing the water requirements during construction and operation, and we have looked at a number of water sourcing strategies that limit the need to actually supply water from Ulan Water or Windemere or wherever it may be. There's the potential for on-site bores, there's on-site dams and there is a number of measures we can do to reduce water usage. And I think that will come out in the management plans.

**MR BAILEY:** Will do. And just for people present, it might be a clarification in terms of some understanding on notice, Andrew, and for people in the audience, that will be published on our website, any response.

**MS ALISON MCCABE:** Yes, I'm just picking up on the issue of fire and fire risk which we heard a lot about today and were shown some quite specific examples within this particular area. Is there any avenue for kind of exchange of information between different providers? So, we heard about the Beryl Solar Farm, and I'm just wondering whether there were any lessons able to be learned from that, in terms of risk management and things that may or may not need to occur on these types of facilities?

Just, as I said, it's a very particular example we saw, and a very real one for the community. So, just wondering what opportunities there were to, one, know about the facts and the circumstances of that situation, and whether there's anything that can be picked up from it. And take it on notice if you're not aware of the specific facts.

**MR DOUGLAS:** No, yes, definitely we can, we speak with other developers, and that information is potentially available. Incidentally, RES has an asset management business and has been involved in Beryl Solar Farm. So, we have good connections in obviously our own business asset protection, the asset management business, so we'll be able to pass on useful information to Manfred to address that specific issue at Beryl Solar Farm.

**MR BAILEY:** Thank you. I just wanted to raise a matter that hasn't been raised today, but the opportunity, so we received the Mid-Western Council's post-stakeholder meeting with the Mid-West Council, and they advised in response to a question on notice and it's published on the Planning Commission's website, that there is a koala record on BioNet from a sighting in 2023.

So, noting the amended Biodiversity Assessment Report from 2024, August 2024, it states "there were no sightings or evidence of koala presence during the surveys, and further notes a review of BioNet reveals no records." So, we've received from Council a record of a sighting in 2023 and I did want to get some understanding of that difference of view between the assessment, the BDAR, the Biodiversity Assessment Report, and Council's provision.

So, given the technical specificity, you may want to take that on notice, but what I'm curious to know and the Panel is certainly curious to know is how was this sighting, which was provided by Council treated in the amended BDAR, or how should it be treated?

**MR DOUGLAS:** Malinda, I might pass that over to you.

**MS MALINDA FACEY:** This is when it's not useful to be short. We'll take that one on notice, thanks.

5

**MR BAILEY:** Okay, thank you. Just for your background and awareness, if you go onto the IPC site and the published information, the response to questions on notice from Council identifies the report, the sighting, and we just need to understand that inconsistency – what I'd see at the moment as an inconsistency. So, that'd be good if you could take that on notice, thanks.

10

**MS FACEY:** Absolutely, thanks.

**MR BAILEY:** Alison?

15

**MS MCCABE:** I think that's it.

**MR BAILEY:** Shelley?

20

**MS PENN:** No, not from me.

**MR BAILEY:** Okay. Thank you.

**MR DOUGLAS:** Thank you.

25

**UNKNOWN SPEAKER:** Can I speak for a second?

**MR BAILEY:** Sorry, no, we ...

30

**UNKNOWN SPEAKER:** I know I'm not – because I thought it might have been brought up, but ... I'm thinking about that turnaround in village they've built down there for the workers.

35

**MR BAILEY:** Sorry, sorry, sorry, we might have a discussion after the meeting, and the team have already indicated that they would be available. But I just wanted to keep the meeting within its format.

**UNKNOWN SPEAKER:** [Unintelligible 02:52:14]

40

**MR BAILEY:** And we'll take the opportunity at the end of the meeting to come across and have that discussion. But I'll do that at the end of the meeting, because I wanted to ... So, thank you, because that brings us to the end of this public meeting into the Tallawang Solar Farm, so that SSD development 23700028.

45

And we've heard several concerns expressed very clearly today and there are many areas that require further and deep consideration by the Panel. Non-comprehensive, in my view, from what we've heard today, but did say that we would indicate.

I did want to touch on the cumulative impact we've heard very, very clearly, and that is a context that we've heard very clearly.

5 We've also heard very clearly, concerns around social services impacts. We've heard concerns around waste management, site contamination, and the risk research component. We've heard concerns around landscape impact, visual impacts, industrialisation in the landscape context.

10 Fire risk has been clearly articulated, and we've heard clean up post fire. And the impact on services, including the resourcing through RFS for those concerns.

15 We've also heard concerns around level of economic benefits, both locally and more broadly in energy pricing concerns. We've heard concerns around loss of agricultural land. We've heard concerns around decommissioning and remediation of the site. We've heard concerns around vehicle movements and accidents. We've heard concerns around supply chains, including exploitation.

20 There are, and we recognise, a broad suite of concerns that have been raised and we've heard today, and I want to thank the community for sharing those.

25 Thank you to everyone who has participated in the process. Shelley Penn, Alison McCabe and I have appreciated your input deeply. Just a reminder that it's not too late to have your say in this application. Instructions on how to make a written application, a written submission can be found on the "case" page website through the Independent Planning Commission. And this includes using the "make a submission" button on the "case management" page or via email or post.

30 The deadline for written submissions and comments is 5 p.m. next Thursday the 4th of September. And in the interests of openness and transparency, we will be making a full transcript of this public meeting available on our website in the next few days.

35 And at the time of determination, the Commission will publish its Statement of Reasons for Decisions, which will outline how the Panel took the community's views into consideration as part of that broad suite of information that forms our decision-making process.

40 Finally, a quick thank you to my fellow commissioners, Shelley and Alison. Thank you to all those who have been here with us at Gulgong. I also wanted to thank all those that have stayed online. From us at the Commission, thank you and please enjoy the rest of your day.

You need to talk to the team to get some clarifications.

**>THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 02:56:53**