

## TALLAWANG SOLAR FARM IPC PRESENTATION

Thank you. Time restricts this presentation to one topic. And that topic is the fire risk posed by the Tallawang Solar Farm.

When the AEMO assessed the suitability of the CWO-REZ for renewable energy projects they determined that this zone has a bushfire rating of E. That rating is the worst possible on a scale from A to E.

All electrical infrastructure, including renewable energy projects and associated power lines, poses a fire risk. How devastating that can be is demonstrated by the Victorian Black Saturday bushfires of 2009. 6 of the 11 major fires on that day were started by power lines. Of the 173 deaths recorded 159 of those deaths were attributed to the 6 power line fires.

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 threat. How clever is that?

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 10m border perimeter around the site. The latter would be ineffective against a full blown fire, which can spot up to 200m ahead of the fire front. All these strategies are utilised by local landholders but provide no guarantee of success.

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 chainwire 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 shielding to much of the burning vegetation.

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.

What also must be considered is the location and size of the Tallawang Solar Farm. The worst fires are driven by hot north westerly winds. The Tallawang Solar Farm is 1300h in area and located only 8km north west 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 land." By its very design, location and size the Tallawang Solar Farm does not and cannot comply with this condition.

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