



New South Wales Government
Independent Planning Commission

TRANSCRIPT OF MEETING

RE: DINAWAN SOLAR FARM (SSD-50725959)

STAKEHOLDER MEETING

PANEL: SUELLEN FITZGERALD (Chair)
SIMON SMITH

OFFICE OF THE IPC: TAHLIA HUTCHINSON
GEOFF KWOK

STAKEHOLDER: MARK ROWE
(Community Member)

LOCATION: COLEAMBALLY COMMUNITY HALL
KINGFISHER AVENUE, COLEAMBALLY

DATE: 10:00AM – 11:00AM
FRIDAY, 27th FEBRUARY 2026

<THE MEETING COMMENCED

MS SUELLEN FITZGERALD: Good morning, Mr Rowe.

5 **MR MARK ROWE:** Good morning.

MS FITZGERALD: Before we begin, I'd like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land that we're gathered on, the Wiradjuri people, and pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

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We're meeting today to discuss the state significant development application for the Dinawan Solar Farm, that one project. I'm Suellen Fitzgerald, the Panel Chair, and this is my fellow commissioner, Simon Smith, and you've met Tahlia Hutchinson and Geoff Kwok, our officers from the Independent Planning Commission.

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In the interests of openness and transparency, the meeting will be recorded, and a full transcript of today's meeting will be available on the Commission's website in a couple of days' time.

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Tahlia is my timekeeper here, so she'll give me – start waving at me at the 1-minute mark before you finish.

MR SIMON SMITH: The 9-minute mark.

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MS FITZGERALD: The 9-minute mark, that's right. And then you've got another minute to finish, Mr Rowe. But can I just say, we'll be looking closely at all submissions after this session as well too, so anything you forget, you can add in that submission. Over to you.

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MR ROWE: Okay. Well, thank you for the opportunity. My interest was originally to come to the public meeting to hear what people had to say, but I was still keen to come along, so I thought I'll make a presentation. But I'm not directly affected by the Dinawan. I'm a partner in a property just west of Narrandera, which coincidentally is adjoining a wind farm proposal development. So, I'm interested to learn more about the planning and approval process. But also, all of my working life has been in the Riverina, so I know this area and am interested in this area.

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And just the volume of papers on the website is challenging, so there could well be things in there that I have missed, but some of the things that I would be concerned about are weeds – I didn't see any reference to weed control. And with the number of vehicles that will be moving into the district, it's inevitable that weed will be transported in. It's particularly weeds that with seeds that stick into tyres, like Khaki Weed, Spiny Burr Grass, weeds that can be carried in mud on vehicles like Silverleaf Nightshade – they're probably the biggest three that are of concern for us in our area and I'm sure will be a concern out here as well.

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And once they get established, they're virtually impossible to eradicate. And my concern is who will care, who will be taking notice, who will be doing any weed

control? They're really hard to find. Khaki Weed is really difficult to find and, unless you actually walk the landscape, you usually don't see it. So, who's going to put in the time, who's going to put in the effort? Because it's inevitable they will be brought in.

5 The roads is obviously a big one and that's already surfaced with the transmission
lines. And regional councils, as you would know, are pretty strapped for funding, and
the roads are a big issue for them. So, there needs to be a coordinated funding method
to improve the road infrastructure, because as we know, there's lots of proposals for
10 solar and wind development in the REZ, not all of those are going to get up obviously,
and that's where it's, I imagine, it's difficult to coordinate because they're all at
different stages and they'll have their own journey. Some of them aren't going to make
it. So, I don't know how that can be coordinated, but it should be somehow.

15 But there needs to be some contribution to local government for the damage that's
caused – particularly during the construction, because there will be a massive number
of vehicles moving around. But also, ongoing, you know, some of these roads are just
tracks, basically, and they will be severely damaged either during the dry or during the
wet. And there'll be a lot of pressure on the contractors to meet deadlines, and they'll
20 push through when they shouldn't be, on wet roads, and there will be a lot of damage.
And if the local ratepayers are left to carry the can, that's just not fair.

Fire. The increased fire risk is a huge concern, and that – just accessing a solar farm
with fire trucks/fire vehicles is going to be challenging. But also, water – water storage
is a big issue in this landscape, particularly in a dry year. And I note that the
25 Murrumbidgee Council submission did call for some 20,000-litre tanks, I think, at the
entrance points. But I would say, with respect, that that's not adequate, that's only four
or five trucks. I think there needs to be proper RFS-approved water storages, so much
larger steel, 100,000 litres minimum, that sort of scale, strategically located in suitable
areas so that there is good water. Because you need lots of water in a grass fire,
30 basically.

Probably a minor one, but something that will be inevitable will be roadkill. Just with
the sheer number of vehicles around, there will be injured wildlife, and who's going to
look after those, who's going to destroy the injured. Is that burden going to be left to
35 the local landholders to have to deal with? Will there be staff who will have authority
to be able to put animals out of their misery – has that been thought about? I don't
know.

Insurance. And this is probably out of your scope, but I would be concerned about an
40 adjoining landholder who could be slashing firebreaks or slashing tracks through his
stock in a big season. You probably haven't seen a big season out here, but you can get
grass up to as high as you can walk in a big year. And if he or she inadvertently starts a
fire which moves onto the solar farm, causes hundreds of millions of dollars of
damage, landholders typically have 10 to 20 million public liability insurance. What's
45 going to happen to the difference? Is someone going to come looking for the difference
and are they going to lose their property because they can't find that sort of money?
Will there be any protection for that sort of risk? Because it seems a big risk.

MR SMITH: Yes.

MR ROWE: That's about all I have. Thank you.

5 **MS FITZGERALD:** Have you got questions, Simon?

10 **MR SMITH:** I do have a question, yes. I'd like to go back to weeds. So, you mentioned that the method of transport of weed seed could be through attachment to the tyres or in the mud that's on the vehicle. So, thinking about they could do to help reduce the risk of weeds taking ... Would it be about managing the risk of seeds coming off on their own site, or are you also worried about the weeds being disturbed just by traffic too?

15 **MR ROWE:** Bringing the weeds in to the site.

20 **MR SMITH:** What I mean is, you can imagine measures to, you know, look regularly for weeds around the areas where vehicles go on site, and to control them if they're detected. But I can't – I'm interested in your advice on whether the seeds are just going to fall off from vehicles coming a long way away on the roadside, all the way to the site, or are they more likely to come off when you get onto the gravel?

MR ROWE: Well, you can't control what happens along the roads.

25 **MR SMITH:** No. But it certainly could be done on the site.

MR ROWE: Yes, exactly.

30 **MR SMITH:** So, like a program of supervision around disturbed areas to look for weeds and to eradicate them.

MR ROWE: Yes. Because even though they'll only be leasing the site, the landholder might be an absentee, he might not care what's going on, on the property once he's leased it to the solar farm.

35 **MR SMITH:** Yes.

MR ROWE: But if nobody is monitoring the seed, the weeds, it's never going to be brought in.

40 **MR SMITH:** That's right. And can you just remind me the names of the weeds you mentioned. You said Khaki Weed.

MR ROWE: Khaki.

45 **MR SMITH:** Yes.

MR ROWE: And Spiny Burr Grass.

MR SMITH: Yes.

MR ROWE: Silver Leaf Nightshade. I don't have the scientific names, sorry.

5 **MR SMITH:** That's all right.

MS FITZGERALD: No, no, that's fine.

10 **MR SMITH:** Silver-leafed, was it?

MS FITZGERALD: Silver-Leafed Nightshade, yes.

MR SMITH: Nightshade.

15 **MS FITZGERALD:** Yes.

MR ROWE: They're just spreading really, really badly over our way, and it's inevitable that they will be brought in, unfortunately.

20 **MS FITZGERALD:** Yes.

MR SMITH: Okay.

25 **MS FITZGERALD:** A further question, Simon?

MR SMITH: No. They're all good points, thank you.

30 **MS FITZGERALD:** I wanted to ask about your comment on the difficulty of getting access for firefighting to solar farms. Were you talking about the way they're laid out – is that what you were talking about?

35 **MR ROWE:** Yes. And I'm not an expert in this field; you'd need to talk to the RFS. But I'm in our local fire brigade and I would be very, very reluctant to drive down a row of solar panels because I wouldn't be able to turn around, so there would be a concern that I could get trapped in there. And that would be a, yes, huge safety risk.

MS FITZGERALD: Right.

40 **MR ROWE:** So, whether the fire brigade would be willing to go onto the site, I don't know, that'd be up to the local brigade or the RFS to decide what appropriate strategy is. But hopefully, the solar farm would keep the vegetation in check, you know, it's in their own interest obviously to keep it in check, and that could help reduce the hazard for sure. But in a big year, in a big season, if they're going to graze it, for instance, they might physically not have enough stock to be able to keep the grass down.

45 **MS FITZGERALD:** Right. And your proposal for this bigger water storage capacity, is that again another of these coordinated concepts where that would be available for a number of different developments. Is that what you had in mind?

MR ROWE: I guess that's the tricky one, isn't it? Because some of those developments might not go ahead.

5 **MS FITZGERALD:** Yes.

MR ROWE: So, that's really difficult –

10 **MR SMITH:** But you were saying that a 20,000-litre tank as discussed is not sufficient to fight a big fire.

MR ROWE: No.

15 **MR SMITH:** And you think that there should be more.

20 **MR ROWE:** Yes, yes, yes. And in the scheme of the cost of the solar farm, it would be chicken feed. To put some decent size, even if it's just this one farm, put in four or five of these big 100,000-litre tanks. I don't know if you've been to Jerilderie, but Jerilderie has an RFS established air strip just on the west side of town with tanks and infrastructure set up there. So, something like those sort of tanks would be what should be considered, I think, and they wouldn't cost squillions. Yes, they'd be a bit more than a poly –

25 **MR SMITH:** But these would be for filling trucks.

MR ROWE: Yes.

30 **MS FITZGERALD:** Yes. Great. Well, Mr Rowe, if there's nothing further this morning, we've hit the 9-and-a-half-minute mark. Beautifully timed. I'm going to make a closing statement, starting with thank you for participating and for coming in this morning. If you'd like to add anything to the points that you've made this morning to us, you're welcome to make a further written submission through the portal on our website or emailing Geoff or Tahlia. And the deadline for that is midnight on Sunday the 8th of March for that further written submission.

35 **MR ROWE:** Okay.

MS FITZGERALD: So, thank you for your time this morning.

40 **MR ROWE:** Thank you.

MR SMITH: Thanks.

>THE MEETING CONCLUDED