



New South Wales Government
Independent Planning Commission

TRANSCRIPT OF MEETING

RE: DINAWAN SOLAR FARM (SSD-50725959)

STAKEHOLDER MEETING

PANEL: SUELLEN FITZGERALD (Chair)
SIMON SMITH

STAKEHOLDER: NOEL HICKS

LOCATION: ZOOM VIDEOCONFERENCE

DATE: 10:00AM – 12:30PM
WEDNESDAY, 4th MARCH 2026

<THE MEETING COMMENCED

MS SUELLEN FITZGERALD: Mr Hicks? Mr Hicks?

5 **MR NOEL HICKS:** Yes, good morning.

MS FITZGERALD: Oh, good morning, Mr Hicks, we can hear you loud and clear, and you can hear us okay?

10 **MR HICKS:** Yes. And you'll have to excuse me because I've got hearing aids in and they're only new and I'm not quite sure what might happen. But anyway, that's another matter.

MS FITZGERALD: Okay. Well, so far, so good, Mr Hicks.

15 **MR HICKS:** Yes.

MS FITZGERALD: Look, before we begin, I'd like to just make a brief opening statement. I'd like to acknowledge that I'm speaking to you from Gadigal land, and I acknowledge the traditional owners of all the lands from which we're virtually meeting today. I'd also like to pay my respects to their Elders past and present.

25 Today we're meeting to discuss the state significant development application for the Dinawan Solar Farm. I'm Suellen Fitzgerald and I'm the Chair of this Panel. Joining me is my fellow commissioner, Simon Smith, and staff members from the office of the Independent Planning Commission here in the room with me.

In the interests of openness and transparency, we're recording this meeting, and a full transcript will be available on the Commission's website in the next couple of days.

30 So, Mr Hicks, I'll give you a one-minute bell. And now, over to you.

MR HICKS: Oh good, thanks very much, Madam Chair, and I appreciate you accepting my submission.

35 I'm mainly concerned about Australia's arable land and especially irrigation there. and just to start off, if I could start, compared to other countries, as you would know, only 4.1% of Australian land mass is arable. It's tiny compared to Afghanistan (12%), China (11.5), the US, similar land area to Australia (16.6%). The world average of 189 countries is 14.5%. We go back to Australia, 4.1%. And out of that, only 5% is under irrigation. It provides 30% of Australia's agricultural production.

45 Now, a large number of the Australian population, and I can understand it, are worried about global warming because they've been indoctrinated, and it may be a fact. In fact, the big trouble is, of course, that if my cat had kittens, it'll be global warming. And it's a real concern, but if people believe that, they believe that.

5 Now, the last thing they should be learning for then, is the covering of the above land with solar industrial complexes. Now, in Australia, the irrigation areas of course have been planned so that they're in areas where they can avoid a lot of flooding, they can avoid all sorts of things. But as in the last couple of months, we can see in our country huge amounts of rain falling or we're in drought. And of course, that limits the amount of things you can grow, or disrupts what is being grown.

10 Now, while I'm a believer in renewable energy, it has its part to play in domestic rooftops or commercial farming, value-adding of primary production, and especially where it's difficult to supply power. But to place these so-called solar industrial complexes, six, on arable land, is very questionable. To allow them on irrigation land is a disgrace. And from reading this application, some of this project is going to be placed on irrigation land.

15 One cannot blame farmers because most of the time, they're price takers and they face a myriad of problems. So, you can't blame them for taking the money, if in a difficult situation, I'd probably do the same. But this would not make it right. And in a former life, I used to talk to a lot of farmers and of course most of them said they were caretakers of the land, and they were going to look after it for generations to come.
20 Well, I don't believe putting a solar industrial complex on arable land is being a caretaker of the land.

25 And, of course, in all of this provision of power, it's rural Australia that's carrying the load, as in everything else, whether it's mining or farming or whatever, it's the rural communities. I don't think a lot of people in capital cities or on the coast would even know where Coleambally or other areas are.

30 Now, local government, for example, is always short of funds, and they're receiving payoffs, and I'm just surprised at the amounts they're being paid. Number one, I would say that a lot of these developments are being heavily subsidised by government, so in effect when they hand over money to local councils or anyone else, it's really taxpayer money that should be paid out by the government, not by private enterprise.

35 And the other thing about it is, which really worries me as an Australian, is that you're destroying what is really our soul, our rural areas, you know, the land that Dorothy Mackellar and Adam Lindsay-Gordon and people like that, and I see these wires going up everywhere and all these extensions going on. It really saddens me, I've got to tell you, I get really upset about it. I don't know if other people do, but it really worries me. Now, this –

40 **MS FITZGERALD:** Mr Hicks, one minute to go, so if you could make your concluding remarks, thank you.

45 **MR HICKS:** Oh, that was very short. What I really worry about, I should talk about it is that the removal is detritus, I mean, no one is going to be, you know, you'll have – no, I won't go into that, but the contracts that are written to get rid of this are not worth the paper written on.

5 And just recycling, the Codrington Farm going 25 years, didn't know when they started how to get rid of the propeller system, and they still don't know how to get rid of them. And there would be no – and I can say this – there will be no wind or solar farms without government subsidies. How much, I don't know. The government doesn't know how much all of this is going to cost us. They're spending money as quickly as they can to make sure that it's all in, but it's a disaster.

10 In a nuclear age, the only one that is going to have a substantial system that can hold up no matter what, is nuclear. And you can have solar if you like or whatever, but, you know, I think this is a disaster for our country, particularly at times we've got housing shortages, we've got inflation, we've got nowhere to store our fuel etc., etc. So, I'm totally opposed to it.

15 **MS FITZGERALD:** Thank you, Mr Hicks.

MR HICKS: Mainly – can I just finish off? Mainly because it's on arable land. Thank you for listening to me.

20 **MS FITZGERALD:** Thank you. You made that point really clearly, thank you for it, and thanks for your time this morning. If you'd like to add some of those other points that you skipped over to us, you're welcome to make a written submission via the submission portal on our website or via email. And the deadline for those submissions is midnight on Sunday the 8th of March. So, we'll look forward to reading your submission, Mr Hicks. Thank you very much for your time.

25 **MR HICKS:** Thank you for listening.

>THE MEETING CONCLUDED