

To: Director – Energy Assessments
Development Assessment
Department of Planning and Environment
Locked Bag 5022
Parramatta NSW 2124

Name: John Forsyth
Address: 9180 “Glenora” New England
HWY Wallabadah NSW 2343
Name of Project: Middlebrook Solar Farm
Application No: SSD-10455

I do not require my details to be withheld.

I declare I have made no reportable political donations in the last two years.

I acknowledge and accept the Department’s disclaimer and declaration.

STATEMENT OF OBJECTION

I object to the proposed Middlebrook Solar Farm development for the below reasons.

I am a farmer and grazier and owner of property on the New England Highway near Wallabadah. I also operate a contract shearing and mustering business I am familiar with the proposed site of the development as I visit friends in the area from time to time and I have mustered cattle on a nearby property.

Agriculture

- As a farmer, I recognise that the proposed development is in an area of prime livestock land.
- The valley's highly productive farming land makes it the wrong place for an industrial development like a solar farm.
- I am concerned that the dust and noise from the project will have detrimental effects on the agricultural output in the area. Traffic and construction noise will increase stress on livestock, reducing meat quality. Dust will affect the health of livestock and plants, and hinder weed control. The Middlebrook area is very dusty even before ground cover is removed and the dust travels for kilometres once disturbed. This dust will spoil all pastures and water related surfaces such as roofs, dams, creeks and water troughs. The district is not serviced by town water and all houses rely on roof water for drinking and other domestic purposes. The scale of this solar farm will greatly pollute household water tanks and troughs and require them to be more frequently cleaned by professionals with appropriate confined space qualifications and equipment. This type of cleaning will cause loss of water in those tanks and troughs and will necessitate the purchase of replacement water if available.
- As a shearer I am concerned about greatly increased wool contamination caused by dust.
- As a sheep farmer, I have purchased sheep from this district. I am concerned at the effects of them drinking dust polluted water and eating abrasive dust covered pasture which increases tooth wear and reduces life expectancy.

Rural setting

- The area is peaceful and highly valued for its rural setting.
- The construction of 750,000 solar panels, plus associated infrastructure (inverters, substation, internal tracks, carparking etc) will substantially detract from the visual value of the area.
- The construction process itself, involving hundreds of workers, vehicles, noise and dust will immeasurably disrupt the peaceful lifestyle of all landholders nearby.

Tamworth water supply

- As a resident of the region I am concerned about the developer's plan to minimise dust by trucking in water, presumably from the Tamworth town supply. I object to this approach as it will increase traffic further on the New England Highway and local dirt roads and put pressure on the Tamworth water supply.
- A reasonable alternative would be to bitumen the two potential access roads – Middlebrook Road and Marsden Park Road.

New England Highway

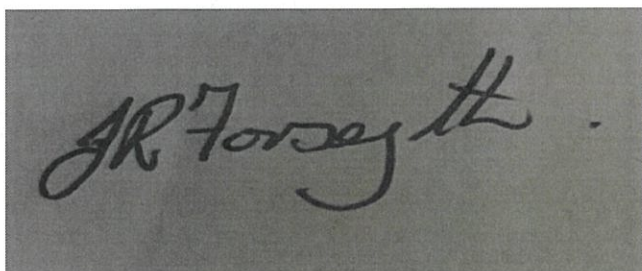
- The substantial increase in traffic on the New England highway will make it less safe and less convenient for people like me who use it regularly to travel to and from Tamworth.
- The EIS notes a big increase in heavy vehicle movements during the construction period which will cause degradation to the road surface.
- The EIS also notes that there will be no proper turnoff lane built to access Middlebrook road, despite the increased traffic being sufficient to warrant it under the AustRoads guidelines.

Mental health

- The proposed changes will significantly impact local farmers, affecting their properties, workplaces and daily lives.
- I am concerned about the younger generation considering moving away if the project proceeds, affecting family lives and farm visits, and negatively impacting the mental health of farmers in the area.

Further considerations for the Department of Planning

- There have been suggestions that the site will be screened by vegetation but the details provided in the EIS are hazy. It would be ecologically inappropriate to plant a considerable number of non-native species, and it takes considerable time for natives to grow to such a size as to be effective. The developer should be required to plant mature trees and shrubs in layered planting to restrict view of the project from the road, and to offer complimentary landscaping to all affected residences and landholders in the valley.
- The developer should be required to reconsider the positioning of the various infrastructure on the site such that the visible impact from the road and residences in the valley is minimised. For example, the substation should be placed where it is visible from the fewest residences possible.
- At a minimum, the Middlebrook and Marsden Park Roads should be converted to bitumen at the developer's expense to help minimise ongoing water use, dust and road hazards due to the development.
- The New England Highway should be upgraded to include appropriate turning infrastructure at Middlebrook Road.

A handwritten signature in black ink on a dark grey rectangular background. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style and appears to read "J.R. Forsey".