

I object strongly to the proposed solar industrial site in Bendemeer due to the following reasons:

Lack of community consultation and inconsistencies with neighbouring properties – During August 2022, my husband and I were first notified about this ridiculous proposal from a text message sent by a neighbour. It was shortly after that our email address was linked with Athena through a group email, due to questions that we had. On the 23 August we received an email from Maddie Kulk (from Forster NSW, hardly a local) wanting to arrange a meeting on our property. It was then earlier this year a few neighbouring properties met with Athena employees, due to numerous inconsistencies with their information supplied to the surround affected neighbours that we learnt, communications with one neighbour have been going on for 4 years. How can this be? You want to ruin our lives and the community and consultation starts with being untruthful. How is it that all other solar industrial sites have a 10km buffer zone around their townships, but Bendemeer doesn't. Why don't the Bendemeer community and people matter? This proposed site is located within 1.5km of the town. It will negatively impact the tourism for the town.

Mental health, well-being and additional stress – This has caused a considerable amount of added pressure, stress and a decline in emotional wellbeing. On our very first encounter with Athena, I had tears in my eyes, and I couldn't believe what I was hearing. How could this happen to us. My mind went into overdrive as I had a lot of questions which weren't answered with factual information and information directly linked to the Bendemeer industrial site. This has continued to place additional stress on myself and is impacting my family. We moved to Bendemeer to raise our children on the land and enjoy our horses and hobbies along with contributing to the beef production industry. The country life offers that chance to get away from the hustle and bustle and enjoy the outdoors, beautiful scenery and peace and quiet. If this proposal was to go ahead, that would be taken from us. How can we be living in Australia in the 21 Century, pay for our own property and have no rights. Living in the 21 Century and raising a young family is hard enough. It just makes no sense.

Devaluing Neighbouring properties – While the hosts of these industrial sites make a fortune from their once viable agriculture land the surrounding neighbours' assets are adversely negatively impacted and devalued. Not only will it decrease the value of neighbouring properties like ours who is impacted the entire length of our property, but it will also decrease the number of interested parties. The property owner of River Side doesn't even live on his property or use it for agricultural pursuits. It is leased out. The owner resides in Sydney. How can someone who doesn't even live here and that we haven't even seen or met choose what we have to put up with while he is living it up in Sydney. This is just greedy and not bringing or supporting the local community. We have never seen him around helping out at local events and contributing positively to the community but all of a sudden see him when the cameras are around. He obviously likes the spotlight.

Division of a tight knit community – To us, the local Bendemeer community, fighting against this is another job for us. For Athena employees, this is their job. They can 'smooze' the locals at the CWA on Fridays, try and buy people and businesses by offering free coffees from the General Store, meet all the locals at the pub. They have the greatest opportunity to pressure local residents and persuade them that this is great for the town. Throw money at things like the local art show and try to buy votes through the campdraft and rodeo committee. The last thing small community committees need is for members to be arguing and disagreeing about something like the Solar proposal and loose members. This has already happened. Money doesn't fix things. You can't just create a divide amongst a once very close community and throw money at the problem that you have created. We are talking about people's lives. I know of people who have been friends and neighbours for 20 plus years who are no longer speaking to one another. Is this really what we want for Australia? Is this what we want to create in small, rural communities? Is this what we want to create in Bendemeer?

Bendemeer was such a lovely community and a very unique one that you just don't simply find these days. People who actually live here help each other and care about each other. Money is never exchanged because that's just how the country life goes. How can foreign, overseas investors, non-local energy companies take all this from us. It just seems like perfect timing for this to pop up. We have had a long-lasting drought, that caused farmers to sell off stock for extremely low prices or pay a ridiculous amount of money for fodder. Times were tricky and farmers did it tough. Then the bush fires that impacted our local community, covid and the mouse plague. It's been a tough time for all farmers and then money incentives like this come along at the right time and people have no choice but to jump at the chance.

Visual impact – The visual assessment conducted from our residence had to be taken twice before EIS submission due to Athena leaving trees that will be bulldozed on the proposed site. They were very hesitant to show us and give us our visual impact photo montage. The visual assessment is only conducted from the residence and also this is problematic as it incorporates the few existing trees we have on our property, which when taking a photo blocks out several squares on the visual impact photo but move a few centimetres either way and it is a completely different view. Also living in Bendemeer through the most recent drought, keeping what trees we could alive was challenging and therefore we have lost trees. Trees are living and may in fact die, leaving the visual impact hideous. I can't believe and believe it is completely wrong and misleading information if it states the visual impact from our property is low considering it is only taken from the residences when the entire length of the property is adversely impacted visually. If potential buyers were coming to look at purchasing our property, they would be looking at the visual impact of the entire property, hence impacting our ability to sell our property, decrease the number of potential buyers compared to now and also devalue our property due to the visual impact across the entirety of the property. Who wants to live in the country and look at the glare and a whole black wall. I think it is also unfair to have other cells in the photo montage impacted by solar panels but because they don't occupy more than 25% those cells aren't included. How can this be accurate. If you have several cells occupying 20%, then that is a lot of additional visual impact not counted for the residing neighbours for example.

Impact on Flora and Fauna – The loss of animal habitats is huge. I can't even begin to imagine how these native animals would feel with the loss of their homes to bulldozing. The current site is home to the threatened Wedge Tailed Eagles that nest in the tress on the site, kangaroos, wombats, possums, koalas just to name a few. How is it that the average farmer has difficulty removing a tree, but these projects can cause many hectares of 100-year-old plus trees to be bulldozed. We were told by Athena that they would be planting trees the entire length and well-established trees as a visual screener, but they have since reneged on that idea. Bendemeer is a difficult climate to grown trees with tree growth rates very slow. This project will be on a hill facing us and the hill would be a couple of hundred metres tall. Not sure how you are going to buy trees that tall to screen. The changing of water sources for the animals.

Noise impacts -After viewing the EIS, the noise impacts on neighbouring residents haven't been factored in. The information provided in the EIS seems to be a guess as no actual testing using current technologies have been conducted at our place of residence. No one has taken samples on different days, with different wind speeds and directions at our place of residence to determine the impact of pillions being driven into the earth, so I'm not sure how it can state low noise impact. 35 Db of noise can be described as a quiet voice or a very quiet room fan at low speed 1 metre away. This is what will be heard continuously if erected. As described by Mr Owens, it will be a 'hum'. This will be a constant hum, why and how is it fair for us to have to put up with a constant 'hum'. We live

in the country to not hear a constant 'hum' from an industrial site. The increase in traffic including trucks will be more than 35Db of noise travelling past our place of residence. This increase in constant noise will impact neighbouring properties mental health and wellbeing. The number of hours in what is stated as a day of work on the site doesn't allow for enough sleep time from newborn infants and children as recommended by NSW Health. If children are napping during the day, these working conditions and the noise impact will seriously impact child development, with inadequate sleep and or disrupted sleep.

Water and water systems - Bendemeer won an environmental award for our beautiful McDonald River system in 2022. How can we change the water coming into the river system and let toxins leech into our protected waterways. We have trout releases in the river behind the proposed site. What will happen to these animals? By the proposed solar site capturing their own water run off this will change the already established water courses. Currently run off feeds down stream to us, which we use for livestock as drinking water and flows on down into the river system. We don't want toxic water coming down stream for our livestock and we don't want the water course changed or damaged, so we don't get any of the natural water. The increase in water through the washing of the panels will promote the underground water and cause further issues downstream. It will impact the underground water and will cause down stream properties to become additionally wet/ boggy and in turn increase erosion. The granite soil type won't hold the pillions in place and will cause water cause issues. The granite soil erodes easily and moves easily.

After viewing the NSW roads and transports requirements for roads that are 100km zones, being classed as a highway and also containing trucks (and with the increase in truck usage), the guidelines state that roads being used for these purposes are required to have a lane width of 3.5 to 3.6 metres. Upon measuring the road outside of my property on the Oxley highway, each lane is barely 3 metres in width. Furthermore, it is dangerous to increase the traffic and truck usage on this road with this project as traffic can't be seen turning into our property from either direction or vice versa. This increases the likelihood of a serious accident as no turning bay and there's inadequate room for traffic to go around a turning vehicle. There would be no time for traffic travelling 100km per hour to see a turning vehicle and be able to prevent a collision. With the added extra of the glare on the road caused by solar panels.

Regarding the increased employment opportunity, this is purely a sales pitch. Local people won't be considered during the construction and maintenance of these industrial sites. Larger contractors will be brought in. Bendemeer residents don't live in Bendemeer for the employment opportunities that it offers. Majority of people live and work on their farms or travel to Tamworth/ Armidale for work.

The wildlife and pests will be forced to reside at another location, the neighbouring properties due to the construction site. The project committee have informed that they will be responsible for their own pest management i.e., rabbits. How will this be possible? How will you erect a fence without scaring off the rabbits? How will you fence a water course to be rabbit proof?

My very few interactions with the Bendemeer Renewable Energy Hub team have been far from pleasant. They are only ever here to tick the box and say we have consulted community. They often fail to follow through with what they say they are going to do and often provide different neighbours with varying stories. Our suggestions are never taken into consideration, and they actually don't care for the people and community of Bendemeer. They pride themselves on being there and being a positive contributor to the community when in fact they are tearing it apart. For sale signs are going up all around us at this present moment. People are opting to sell out while their properties are still worth something and getting out of our community. How extremely sad. Small communities like ours

need young families to stick around as they will be the future of our community. The Energy Hub members promote themselves as being locals and wanting to raise their children with the same country upbringing they had. Well, that's what we are trying to do, and it doesn't involve Solar industrial sites. The energy hub people aren't in fact locals and while they try to sell this to residents to convince them to support them, people who actually cared about our community wouldn't be tearing it apart. One member told me that she was sorry for 'ruining our dream for our property'. What right do they have to tell us that they are ruining our dream for our own property due to this absurd proposal. This is our property and our home, and no one has a right to ruin our dreams for our property when we are using it for the agricultural purpose it is intended for and we aren't causing noise, visual disturbances to others.

Incorrect information is provided in the EIS in terms of the temperature. Bendemeer is well known for its long cold, miserable winters. In winter people who currently have solar on their homes can't rely on off it for their power source due to the extreme cold climate. Winter goes for a very long time often a good 5 months in Bendemeer with our coldest temperature recorded as minus 14. There is limited sun during these months hence not the right location for solar. With cold, cloudy, sleety weather this is not optimal or beneficial for Solar Power.

The constant noise and visual disturbances that this proposal will cause will drastically impact the animals and will be cruel to neighbouring animals. The constant noise will drive these animals insane as they aren't used to hearing it. The constant glare and the impact for neighbouring properties will be ridiculous. We will be prohibited from moving our livestock and treating them in our yards during the afternoons due to the glare we will receive. Our livestock won't be able to see where they are going with the nature of the panels facing directly at us in the afternoon. These planned solar industrial sites are running the agricultural industry of Australia. We may have power, but we won't have any food. It just makes absolutely no sense. I believe it is cruelty to animals to have them running in and grazing around these metal and glass structures. What about any toxins and poisons that come from them and your expecting animals to live in an industrial site. Very unnatural and cruel. The increase in sun capturing has been known to warm the climate surrounding the solar panels. This will further change our climate.

We have had very little support with this. We have a government and council that are meant to be supporting the local people within their electorate, however, we feel we have been forgotten and don't matter. We will continue this fight until someone listens. We strongly object to having a full view of a solar industrial site on our doorstep. We strongly object to the way local people have been treated. We strongly object to this dividing our wonderful community and destroying our beautiful surrounds. We strongly object to bulldozing local animal habitats. We strongly object to changing the water course. We strongly object to the glare this will cause. We strongly object to risking our health and wellbeing. We strongly object to putting our animals and livestock at risk. We strongly object to the noise this will create. We strongly object to pests that will be pushed onto our property. We strongly object to the devaluation of our property's. **WE STRONGLY OBJECT TO SOLAR INDUSTRIAL SITES IN THE BENDEMEER COMMUNITY.**

**BENDEMEER SAYS NO TO SOLAR!!!**