

Objection to Merino Solar Farm Project

State Significant Development – Goulburn, NSW

I object to the proposed Merino Solar Farm development.

The proposed Merino Solar Farm would fundamentally change the character and amenity of this area and is inconsistent with the intent of the State Environmental Planning Policy (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021 and the NSW Large-Scale Solar Energy Guideline (August 2022) as it applies to mapped regional city land at Goulburn.

Please see below within my letter of objection highlighting key points of disfavour pertaining to the proposal.

Objection to Merino Solar Farm Project

I am a lifelong resident of Goulburn. I have chosen to continue living here because of the region's scenic rural setting, open landscapes and strong country identity. The visual quality of the surrounding countryside, the sense of space, and the ability to enjoy a quiet rural lifestyle close to a regional city are fundamental to what makes Goulburn a desirable place to live.

The proposed Merino Solar Farm would significantly erode these qualities and is inconsistent with the intent of the State Environmental Planning Policy (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021 and the NSW Large-Scale Solar Energy Guideline (August 2022) as they apply to mapped regional city land.

Inappropriate location on mapped regional city land

The site is located on land mapped for the regional city of Goulburn. Under the SEPP, development consent must not be granted unless the consent authority is satisfied that the development:

- is located to avoid significant conflict with existing or approved residential or commercial land uses, and
- is unlikely to have a significant adverse impact on the regional city's capacity for growth, scenic quality and landscape character.

Large-scale industrial solar infrastructure at the edge of Goulburn conflicts with these objectives. This area plays an important role in providing a rural transition between the city and the surrounding countryside. It supports lifestyle living, future rural-residential opportunities and the character that attracts people to Goulburn in the first place.

The proposal represents an industrial land use in a location intended to support the long-term growth, liveability and visual identity of the regional city.

Loss of scenic quality and rural aesthetic

Goulburn's rural landscapes are a defining feature of the region. Open paddocks, grazing land, scattered trees and expansive views create a sense of place that is valued by residents and visitors alike.

The proposed solar farm would replace this rural scenery with large expanses of reflective panels, security fencing, inverter stations and associated infrastructure. This would result in a substantial and permanent change to the visual environment.

Of particular concern is the impact along a highly travelled road, where the development would be experienced daily by residents, commuters and visitors. Instead of entering or moving through a rural landscape, people would be confronted with an industrial-scale energy facility. This would significantly degrade the aesthetic quality of the area and diminish Goulburn's country character.

The photo montages provided by the proponent do not, in my view, adequately represent the true scale and dominance of the infrastructure or the cumulative visual impact across the landscape.

Impact on regional identity and lifestyle living

Many people choose to live in and around Goulburn because it offers a country lifestyle within reach of a regional city. This includes the aspiration to live on larger blocks, establish gardens, keep animals on a small scale, and potentially pursue hobby farming in the future.

The introduction of large-scale industrial solar development near these areas undermines that way of life. It reduces the attractiveness of surrounding land for lifestyle and rural-residential purposes and discourages future investment in small-scale rural living.

This directly conflicts with the role of Goulburn as a growing regional city that offers diverse housing choices and lifestyle opportunities.

Heat bank / heat island effects

I am particularly concerned about the potential for heat bank or heat island effects associated with extensive solar panel arrays.

Large concentrations of panels absorb and re-radiate heat, which has been identified by scientists as having the potential to raise local temperatures. In summer, this could worsen already extreme heat conditions, affecting nearby residents, vegetation, wildlife and overall comfort.

Any increase in ambient temperature would negatively impact quality of life and the enjoyment of outdoor spaces, which is a core reason many people choose to live in this area.

This issue has not been satisfactorily addressed.

Future growth and land use flexibility

The area surrounding Goulburn should remain available for future rural-residential and lifestyle development as the city grows. Industrial-scale solar infrastructure effectively sterilises surrounding land and limits future planning options.

This undermines the regional city's long-term growth potential and conflicts with strategic planning objectives.

Other concerns

Additional matters of concern include:

- Bushfire risk and adequacy of firefighting water supply
- Emergency access and evacuation arrangements
- Noise from inverters and substations
- Construction and operational traffic impacts
- Soil erosion, water flow changes and contamination risks
- Decommissioning, rehabilitation and long-term land management

These risks compound the unsuitability of the site.

Conclusion

The Merino Solar Farm is not appropriately located on mapped regional city land at Goulburn. It would cause significant conflict with existing and future lifestyle and rural-residential land uses, seriously degrade scenic quality and rural character, and threaten the regional identity that makes Goulburn a desirable place to live.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the consent authority refuse the Merino Solar Farm proposal.

Angus Hedges

29th January 2026