

FORMAL OBJECTION TO THE MERINO SOLAR FARM

Application Number: SSD-5915545

Assessment Type: State Significant Development

Local Government Area: Goulburn Mulwaree

EXECUTIVE STATEMENT

I object to the proposed Merino Solar Farm on the basis that the site is strategically unsuitable due to its close proximity to the City of Goulburn, its conflict with the NSW State Environmental Planning Policy (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021 (Infrastructure SEPP), and its failure to protect regional growth, future housing land, and residential amenity. My family home is located approximately 150 metres from the proposed development, making it the closest residence identified in the project documentation. The second residence on the property has not even been identified despite the developer being informed in March 2025. It is approximately 130m from the proposed development. While I support renewable energy generation in principle, the scale and siting of this proposal represent a serious planning failure that would impose disproportionate, long-term impacts on both my family and the wider Goulburn community.

1. INTRODUCTION AND PERSONAL CONTEXT

My family home is located approximately 150 metres from the proposed Merino Solar Farm. My parents live here with the reasonable expectation—supported by NSW and local planning strategies—that land surrounding Goulburn would be planned and managed in a way that protects residential amenity, avoids land-use conflict, and supports the long-term growth of a designated regional city.

The proximity of this proposal to my parents' home means the impacts would be immediate, permanent, and unavoidable, affecting visual amenity, noise, safety, land value, and quality of life for decades.

2. SUMMARY OF KEY OBJECTIONS

- The site is approximately 6 km from the Goulburn CBD and falls within the Regional City investigation area under the Infrastructure SEPP.
- The proposal is industrial in scale (450 MW over ~1,850 acres).
- It conflicts with Clause 2.42 (Regional Cities) of the Transport & Infrastructure SEPP.
- It undermines identified future housing and growth land.
- It creates severe land-use conflict, including direct impact on a residence 150 metres away. (and does not account for the 2nd residence here which is 130m away)
- It fails to address cumulative impacts with nearby solar developments.

3. CONFLICT WITH THE INFRASTRUCTURE SEPP – REGIONAL CITIES

Clause 2.42 of the Infrastructure SEPP applies to development within 10 km of a regional city. It requires consideration of regional growth strategies, future urban land, scenic values, and avoidance of land-use conflict.

At only 6 km from Goulburn CBD, the Merino Solar Farm introduces a permanent industrial land use that constrains future growth and undermines the regional city's strategic role.

4. INCOMPATIBILITY WITH GOULBURN'S GROWTH AND HOUSING STRATEGY

Goulburn is identified as a strategically important regional city. Council planning documents identify land impacted by this proposal as necessary to meet future rural-residential and fringe housing demand. The proposal risks sterilising land required for long-term growth.

5. FAILURE TO MINIMISE LAND-USE CONFLICT

Clause 2.42 of the Transport & Infrastructure SEPP requires infrastructure to minimise land-use conflict. Locating an industrial-scale solar facility within 150 metres of a family home is fundamentally incompatible with accepted planning principles.

6. SCENIC, LANDSCAPE AND COMMUNITY INTERFACE IMPACTS

The development would permanently industrialise approximately 7.5 km² of rural land forming part of Goulburn's landscape setting, resulting in a permanent loss of rural character and amenity.

7. PROXIMITY TO GOULBURN AIRPORT

The proposal borders Goulburn Airport, with panels located as close as 30 metres from the boundary. The absence of enforceable glare and aviation safeguards further demonstrates poor site selection.

8. CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Combined with the nearby Gundary Plains Solar Farm, the proposal would result in an unprecedented concentration of industrial energy infrastructure adjacent to Goulburn.

9. PLANNING LAW SUMMARY

Under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 and the Transport & Infrastructure SEPP, State Significant Development must be assessed on strategic merit and site suitability. Clause 2.42 requires avoidance of significant conflict with existing or approved residential or commercial uses of land. ~~and is unlikely to have a significant adverse impact on the city's capacity for growth, or scenic quality and landscape character. (this bit is already mentioned in point 3?)~~ The proximity of this proposal to a residence 150 metres away demonstrates a failure to meet these statutory requirements.

10. CONCLUSION

For my family, this proposal is not abstract—it would permanently industrialise land 150 metres from our home, 130m from the second home. On both personal and planning grounds, the Merino Solar Farm should not be approved in its current form.

Joseph Harry Albert Coles

February 4, 2026