

Merino Solar Farm

Application Number: SSD-5915545

Assessment Type: State Significant Development

Local Government Area: Goulburn Mulwaree

My husband and I are the owners and occupiers of land at 244 Elm Grove Road, Tirrannaville, identified as R3 in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Merino Solar Farm. Our property directly adjoins the proposed development, sharing an extended boundary of approximately 668 metres, with our dwelling located approximately 600 metres from the proposed solar panel infrastructure.

As immediate adjoining landholders, we will be subject to significant, direct, and ongoing impacts arising from this proposal during both the two-year construction phase and the anticipated 35-year operational life of the project. The disruption experienced since 2022 has already been unacceptable and distressing, and has had serious adverse effects on our health, our family life, and our plans for the long-term future. I object to this proposal on the basis of the continuing and substantial impacts we will be forced to live with.

My concerns are as follows;

1. FIRE RISK & FIRE ESCAPE/ EMERGENCY ACCESS

As adjoining landholders, we have serious concerns regarding the increased fire risk posed by a development of this scale and location. The proposed project includes extensive electrical infrastructure and a 450 MW/ 1800 MWh Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), in an area already recognised as a high bushfire zone.

Introducing this level of electrical and battery infrastructure along with 870,000 solar panels greatly increases the risk of a spontaneous ignition fire.

Battery fires have the potential to generate substantial emissions, release toxic smoke, and can burn for days posing serious risk to nearby families and livestock. Solar panel electrical malfunctions, overheated and/or damaged panels creating added fire risk.

Our rural firefighters mostly volunteers, operating with limited resources will face difficulty extinguishing electrical and battery related fires along with the access issues due to the 8ft perimeter fencing.

Our residence is located within a cul-de-sac where evacuation options are severely limited. In the event of a bushfire approaching from the west, evacuation to the east represents the most direct and the safest route. The proposed layout of the solar panels and associated 8 foot high security fencing would effectively eliminate our existing safe, reliable and unobstructed fire evacuation route.

The Bushfire assessment report in the EIS fails to adequately address emergency access and evacuation arrangements for nearby neighbours.

At a meeting with EDPR, representatives dismissed our above concerns quoting "its only a grass fire". An appalling comment, from someone engaging with landholders. We are well aware how quickly a grass fire can become a serious and uncontrollable threat.

2. VISUAL IMPACTS

The proposed solar panels will be located approximately 300 metres from our property boundary and extend for 668 metres along our shared boundary. The development will be clearly visible from every part of our property, including our home, work sheds, gardens, paddocks, and the access road.

The submitted photomontages and visual impact assessments in the EIS significantly understate the true visual effect of the proposal. In reality, the entire development would result in 1850 acres of oats, barley, canola crops and grazing land being replaced by rows of full-scale solar panels across a wide expanse. This would fundamentally alter the existing scenic and rural character of the landscape, resulting in a dominant and intrusive visual presence that is inconsistent with the established rural setting.

The digital photomontage of the proposed development as viewed from our property, identified as R3, does not accurately represent the visual landscape as is experienced from our home. We were not consulted after these images were taken nor were they provided to us for review and our permission was not given to use them in the Visual Impact Assessment.

I suspect the images were not offered by EDPR for us to review because we would have refused their publication.

3. DUST IMPACTS

The scale of this project indicates a construction workforce of approximately 300-500 workers, operating for at least 60 hours per week (extended in summer months) over estimated 18-24 month period. This will involve extensive earthworks, continuous operation of heavy machinery, and a high volume of associated vehicle movements on dirt roads. The substantial disturbance of soil will generate excessive dust, which, combined with Goulburn's notoriously windy conditions, which will spread the dust beyond the site on to the roofs of neighbouring homes and sheds. This dust fallout will affect our home greatly, including the contamination of rain water in roof catchments, creating direct implications for our drinking water quality, and also affecting our stock's water supply.

Our drinking water supply relies on rainwater catchment we are NOT supplied with Goulburn's town water and this will be a everyday impact, particularly in 24 month construction stage.

Reports submitted in the EIS fail to address the serious impacts and mitigate the appropriate dust suppression measures for neighbouring landholders.

4. LAND DEVALUATION

Following consultation with a qualified and experienced real estate agent, an attached independent appraisal has confirmed that the proposed solar farm development would result in a significant reduction in the value, marketability of our home and prejudice the future subdivision potential of our land. This anticipated loss in value has created uncertainty regarding our long term financial security, planned retirement and our commitment to not becoming a financial burden to our children or society.

Our property is also situated within the 5 km area of the neighbouring proposed Gundry Solar Farm, were reports of neighbouring properties on the market for over two years, becoming unsaleable, highlighting the significant impacts the Merino Solar Farm could have on all surrounding properties. The two industrial sites with a combined 1.2 million solar panels and imposing infrastructure, impacting the value of at least 300 family homes and properties. These renewable projects are being forced upon us with little regard for the people affected.

To date, no adjoining landholders have reported an increase in property value as suggested by the ever misleading proponents, EDPR.

5. SOCIAL LICENCE

In October 2022, our lives were significantly impacted when we first became aware of the proposed solar farm, not through the proponent but a neighbour. Subsequent meetings offered by EDPR felt more like a "tick the box" exercise than a genuine consultation, lacking meaningful engagement or open dialogue. Our concerns regarding increased fire risk and evacuation planning, the visual impact, degradation of the rural landscape and the proximity of solar panels approximately 30 metres from the airport runway, were either dismissed or not taken seriously. This has left us feeling that neighbouring landholders are not valued or genuinely considered by the proponent.

We hold serious concerns about the consultation process, particularly the lack of meaningful engagement with all 194 affected landholders. Many nearby neighbours not receiving any notifications and/or were excluded from one on one discussions, with EDPR selectively choosing which individuals to engage with. This approach falls

well short of transparent, fair and inclusive consultation, also raises serious concerns about the adequacy of the process taken.

My husband and I were invited to participate in consultation regarding proposed Neighbourhood Benefit Sharing Program until we received emails imposing strict deadlines and indicating that all funding would be redirected to Goulburn Mulwaree Council if the agreement not signed. A subsequent email advised that the offer could not be progressed due to timeframe associated with planning milestones.

Just one more example of EDPR engagement with landholders, we considered this bullying behaviour, closing down face to face consultation with all further correspondence through our solicitor.

EIS was lodged on 14th January 2026, why did the communications regarding neighbourhood benefit sharing have a closing date?

We suspect we had a little more contact with EDPR than our neighbours, because EDPR were required to do so, it was not true or genuine engagement.

6. INCREASED TRAFFIC

The proposed development will increase vehicle movements on our local roads, the anticipated daily movements of approximately 670 light vehicles and 74 heavy vehicles during the 24 month construction period raise significant safety concerns. Increased traffic volumes are likely to worsen congestion, limit safe turning opportunities, and elevate the risk of collisions at the key intersections at the Mundy St bridge intersection turning onto Sloane St, already a congested intersection.

Goulburn and surrounding areas frequently experience low thick fog conditions during the cooler months, resulting in reduced visibility and limited sight distance. When combined with the increased traffic volumes, these conditions create very dangerous situation for vehicles turning from Elm Grove road into oncoming traffic on Braidwood road. The local school buses use this intersection at least four times a day, further increasing safety concerns, particularly in peak traffic periods.

The Traffic Impact Assessment contained in the EIS (page 24) identifies that “the number of crashes recorded along this section of Braidwood Road meets the criteria for classification as a black spot” reinforcing existing safety concerns.

All vehicles travelling to Goulburn, along Braidwood Road and Windellama Road and are required to merge at the Mundy St bridge intersection, resulting in increased wait times at the bridge, creating a bottleneck during peak traffic periods. The anticipated 744 vehicle movements to and from the Merino Solar Project on a daily basis, increase safety issues at this location.

As everyday users of Braidwood Road we know large potholes can develop rapidly, often appearing overnight following heavy rainfall. Sections of Braidwood Road have limited lane width and narrow shoulders, leaving little room for vehicles to safely avoid these potholes. Road shoulders can become water logged, making it unsafe for drivers to move to the left to avoid hazards in particular large trucks.

SUMMARY

The desktop studies in the EIS do not adequately capture the uniqueness of our rural vista, and our landscape will be changed forever if this project is to proceed.

The EIS does not capture the uncertainty experienced by landholders, the depleted feelings associated with the ongoing fight to be heard, or when much loved neighbours unable to cope are forced to move on. I believe renewable energy has its place alongside fossil fuels maintaining this country and our rich and prosperous lifestyles. The scale and nature of the proposed development are not suitable for this location.

This development has no immediate benefits to us, just immediate and everlasting impact. I fear what generations to come will think of the decisions made today.