

Objection to the Merino Solar Development

I wish to base my objections on the following points:

- Adverse impact on my chosen lifestyle
- Lack of consultation
- Visual impact of the development
- Impact of the noise from the development
- Lack of impartiality shown by the developers
- Fire Threat

Introduction

I chose to purchase my property for a number of reasons:

- It is a relatively easy commute to Canberra where my partner and I were working at the time.
- It is close to amenities in Goulburn.
- I can agist my horses. I was previously paying for agistment.
- It provided a tranquil place for my partner and I to relax from stressful Canberra jobs.
- It was seen as the place for me to retire from full-time work.

My property is ideal for the type of lifestyle that I want during my retirement. It offers the benefits of country living while being close to town amenities. I enjoy doing outside jobs around the property and looking after the needs of my horses. It is peaceful and I look forward to spending many years here.

I did not buy this property so that I could next to a major industrial complex!!

The Merino Solar Development will adversely impact my proposed lifestyle. Two years of construction happening, at least 5 ½ days per week will be unbearable. Regardless of what the EIS insists about noise etc, the fact that the peace and quiet that I enjoy now will be constantly and incessantly interrupted. The dust and vehicle traffic will also be a reminder of what is occurring not far from me. My views to the south and west will not be of fields of canola or cattle gently grazing but row upon row of glass and metal solar panels.

EIS Structure

The EIS is extremely long, technical and repetitive, making it difficult to read and comprehend in the month that has been permitted to respond to it.

Lack of Consultation

As one of the 188 non-associated receivers within 4km of the Project Site, I have not received any specific correspondence regarding the development. No-one has requested to visit my property or shown any other interest in my opinions or the potential impact it will have on me.

Visual Impact

The landscape character and visual impact assessment (Appendix F5) was subjective and difficult to follow. The point of showing two hay bales with a witch's hat on top is pointless. It

might show the maximum height of a solar panel but seems to miss the point that there will be rows and rows of these panels obliterating the landscape. This is akin to having one person in the MCG to represent the crowd. The one person is not easily found but put in another 80,000 people and the impact is very evident.

Figure 5-2 shows a visual reference for scenic quality values. Who is to say that a mountain scene is of a higher quality than a plain? This may have been sourced from an NSW Department of Planning and Environment document; however I would suggest that it be reviewed as it a poor example and highly subjective.

The bare earth renders that have been used to determine the visual impact bear no resemblance to the actual landscapes. Regardless of how close or far away the solar panels are from the residence they always appear in the middle of the render. The renders also appear to highly compressed in the vertical scale reducing the view of the solar panels. How does this provide an accurate assessment of the solar panel coverage?

The renders are taken from the residence on the property. I did not buy a piece of land to stay in the house. Wherever I go on my property I will see solar panels. Anytime that I see a solar panel the scenic quality will be reduced to zero!

Impact of Noise

The noise impact appendix is based on predictions and has been generated to assume away the impact of noise from the development. With the closest residence being only 150m from the construction site, how is every piece of equipment going to have a noise level of under 20dB. This fails the sensibility test. The developer obviously has no appreciation of weather in this area. Winds are constant, consistent and generally fairly strong. They have totally ignored the impact of a strong wind carrying construction noise to nearby properties. When a westerly wind is blowing and cars/bikes are racing at the speedway, the noise is very evident. When considering the operational noise, they considered what has been termed 'slight to gentle breeze'. They have defined this as 3m/s at 10 m from ground level. 3 m/s, which equates to 10kph, is a rarity here with standard calm day having winds around double that. Also, due to the terrain between my property and the construction there will be no terrain or vegetation to dampen the effect of construction or operational noise.

Regardless of the supposed noise level, any noise at night is unacceptable, especially if it is constant. There doesn't have to be peak noise level event for any disturbance to occur, the very fact that there is a noise is a disturbance, given that there currently next to zero noise.

Given that this entire appendix has been a paper exercise, there has been no proposed follow-up to ensure that any construction would comply with the requirements, should approval be granted. I would expect this as a minimum given there not any actual evidence to substantiate their claims in this appendix.

Lack of Impartiality

A Community Benefit Scheme based on an individual's agreement with the development and not lodging an objection is highly questionable. The project is not approved and yet they are willing to pay people not to object. To me, this is akin to buying votes for the project. The payment of \$20,000 to the Goulburn Group is also questionable. They do not represent the community around the development and to my understanding, none of them reside in this area.

The way that this EIS has been written is to assume away all the potential impacts on the non-associated owners so that the developer will not be liable for impact agreements. The closure of the Objection Group's Facebook page also raised concerns about silencing contrary opinions.

Fire Threat

Regardless of the mitigation measures put in place, the risk of fire has increased simply because of the number and type of structures proposed compared to the current landscape. Whether the fire starts in the proposed development or passes through it will hinder firefighting efforts. As consequence, properties adjacent to the proposed development will be a greater risk of incurring fire damage. There is a greater risk of toxicity from fires in solar developments. This will adversely affect properties since water is captured from rain. The proximity of the development to the Goulburn township could have consequences should a major fire occur. There is a likelihood that a fire could occur (it cannot be said that it would never happen) and it should be noted that the consequences could be very high, if not catastrophic.

Conclusion

The proposed solar development is using the current location purely for its vicinity to major power lines removing the need for any major infrastructure construction. The EIS has shown that there is major objection to its construction. Despite this, the EIS has purported that a major construction over nearly 1000ha will have no impact on nearby properties and the community in general. This clearly fails the 'pub test'. The lack of serious engagement with nearby property owners and the way impacts have been assumed away with little or no substantiation indicates a lack of concern for the livelihoods of the impacted community.

I strongly opposed the Merino Solar Development.