

To NSW DPI

5 February 2026

I write to formally object to the proposed Merino Solar Farm project.

This proposal represents poor strategic planning for the future of Goulburn and the wider Mulwaree region. A key to long term growth is population increase by attracting families to live & work in Goulburn & its surrounds. The location of this development will directly restrict this logical and natural growth of Goulburn. This area has been identified as ideally suited to future rural residential/lifestyle expansion, offering proximity to town, existing services, and transport corridors. Locking this land into industrial-scale energy infrastructure will permanently remove this land & locality that should be preserved for sustainable residential growth and community development.

The project will have major and irreversible impacts on existing neighbours and the broader community. It will fundamentally change land use, amenity, and liveability in a rural residential area, replacing a lifestyle landscape with industrial infrastructure.

As a directly impacted neighbour there has been a total lack of consultation & ongoing use of under handed stand over tactics and mis information, including “your neighbours have signed you will miss out” & “must sign agreement before end of month otherwise you will miss out”. Legal advice on the agreement offered by the EDPR confirms the agreement is against all NSW DPI guidelines & guarantees nothing, noting DPI guideline recommends legal advice to taken & be paid for by proponent. EDPR has advised will only pay if we sign their agreement.

My Grandfather was a local GP in Goulburn and one of the founding doctors of the McKell Clinic, one of the first of its type in Australia. He bought our property around 80 years ago as a respite for the demands of being an all-round doctor in the days when the GP did everything from births to deaths and everything in between. His plan was for he and my grandmother to retire and live out the rest of their days in the peace and quiet of their much-loved little farm. My siblings and I were born and raised here. My parents both had off farm income that allowed us to enjoy everything a rural life offers. My wife and I built our own home here and our own children have grown up here as well. This property is not just a piece of land; it is our life. It has been our sanctuary through good and bad, and this was never more evident than through Covid and through my wife’s cancer treatment. On the days she couldn’t get out of bed, she could look out the window and see our animals and the landscape we love. We have chosen to live here and stay here because it is part of us. We know every part of our farm. We enjoy every seasonal change, and we are privileged to share this with the next generation, our grandchild.

Visual assessment (montage) provided by EDPR does not comply with DPI guidelines & it is misleading in many areas bastardising the outcome of our visual assessment.

Property values have fallen with discounted sales & unsold properties a reality in the wider industrial development footprint.

There will also be significant damage to local infrastructure. Heavy construction vehicles, ongoing maintenance traffic, and construction loads will impact local roads, bridges, and

drainage systems. These costs will **not** be borne by the developer - they will fall to Council and local ratepayers. The community will pay for the damage while receiving no meaningful benefit.

Potential noise & dust impacts have been grossly understated & require an independent study to be done.

Environmental risks have not been properly addressed. The scale of panel arrays, associated electrical infrastructure, and site disturbance creates real risks of:

- Erosion and sediment runoff
- Contamination of local waterways
- Long-term soil degradation
- Chemical and material pollution from infrastructure components
- Dust and noise

Fire risk is a major and unacceptable concern. The combination of large-scale solar infrastructure, battery systems, electrical equipment, and rural vegetation creates a high-risk fire environment. There are serious risks of toxic fumes from burning batteries, cables and solar panels, which would severely inhibit firefighting operations and place residents and emergency services at risk. Access for firefighting could also be compromised by hazardous fumes and infrastructure layout.

Remediation and decommissioning present a serious financial and environmental liability. There is no adequate bond, guarantee, or financial security mechanism to ensure site rehabilitation. The proponent does not own the land — it is leasing it. The cost to remediate would be 10 times the value of the property. This places the long-term cleanup risk squarely on the landowner and then the, ultimately, Council and the community. This risk is clearly personified by the fact that the major host property is now for sale. If the proponent were genuinely committed to the long-term future of this project, they would purchase the land rather than lease it. The current structure allows the proponent to extract value while avoiding long-term responsibility. If the landowner cannot fund remediation, the burden will fall to Council and local ratepayers.

There is also no meaningful benefit to the Goulburn community from this project. electrically, it delivers zero local benefit — the power is distributed to Sydney, not required locally. Goulburn bears the impacts, risks, and costs, while other regions receive the energy.

The Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) also shows that the “Community Benefit Fund” is being used for individual remuneration arrangements rather than genuine wider community benefit. This directly contradicts planning guidelines, which require community benefit mechanisms to support public, community-wide outcomes — not private agreements with individuals or pro renewable groups.

This project imposes long-term risk, financial liability, environmental harm, infrastructure damage, and planning constraints on Goulburn, while delivering no meaningful local benefit.

For these reasons — strategic planning failure, infrastructure burden, environmental risk, fire danger, remediation liability, financial risk to Council and ratepayers, and lack of community benefit — I formally object to the Merino Solar Farm project.

This development is not in the long-term interests of Goulburn, its residents, or future generations.

Yours sincerely,

Joseph Coles
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