



## BELCONNEN COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Building a stronger community

### **Belconnen Community Council: Wallaroo Solar Farm**

The Belconnen Community Council (BCC) is making a submission to provide a comment on the Wallaroo Solar Farm (application number SSD-9261283).

The BCC is a not-for-profit, government-funded community organisation. The Belconnen Community Council (BCC) is an advocacy group that represents the interests of our members and the community on a range of matters affecting the people who live, work, and play in the Belconnen District.

As the voice of Belconnen for over three decades, with over 100,000 people in our catchment, we are intimately engaged with good and bad processes. We are uniquely positioned to offer observations on what works for all sides of the channels we engage with.

The BCC recognises that the NSW Government, the ACT Government, and the Commonwealth Government have committed to increasing the supply of renewable energy. However, it is essential that significant projects like these are done right, and this can only be done with genuine, good-faith community engagement.

This project will bring changes to the landscape's character and aesthetics. The importance of addressing the project's visual impacts cannot be understated or underappreciated; as identified in the social impact assessment, "the rural views are a key feature for buyers in... Dunlop and Macgregor looking out to Wallaroo". The visual impact has primarily been addressed with landscaping. However, the trails, ponds, and greenspace between the project location and the urban suburbs of Macgregor and Dunlop are popular spaces for residents, and the impact on visual amenities in these areas and related mediation should be further considered.

Questions have been raised about the choice of location for this project. While recognising that proximity to urban areas is a factor in the viability of solar farms, it is crucial to balance this with community expectations carefully. As such, the developer should, in good faith, work towards minimising the project's visual impact even in areas identified as low impact where no mediation work is mandatory.

Should the project be approved, the EIS highlights two community benefits; discounted electricity prices for nearby residents and a community enhancement fund. Clear, concise information must be proactively provided to residents to promote the discounted electricity offering to eligible homes. Further consideration should be given to the funding amount and the operation of the community enhancement fund; the proposed preference of the Yass



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Valley Council administering the fund doesn't provide assurance that the people and land only 150 metres south of the project will receive its fair share from this fund.

Additionally, ongoing community consultation and engagement would be vital to minimise the impacts on our community if the project were approved. The future engagement activities identified in Table 5-4 for post-exhibition and post-determination are email newsletters and maintaining the project website and Facebook page. These methods only communicate with individuals aware of and interacting with the project, so more proactive activities like further letterbox drops should be considered.

A transparent process for ACT residents to raise their concerns should be proactively promoted to deal with any complaints promptly and efficiently; informing residents of the approval conditions and their recourse if the project does not comply will encourage greater confidence. This is especially important due to the project's proximity to the ACT border, with ACT residents who are likely less knowledgeable on NSW planning processes.

The BCC looks forward to further engaging with the relevant stakeholders of this project to promote the best outcome for the community.

Kind regards

Lachlan Butler  
Chair

**Belconnen Community Council**

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