

Andrew & Stacey Miller

56 Woodland Ridge Road,

Muscle Creek NSW 2333.

Formal Objection to the Muswellbrook Solar Farm

Re: Applicant Number SSD-46543209

Proposal by Applicant ESCO Solar Farm 9 Pty Ltd

Proposed Development of a 135 MW solar farm and associated infrastructure, including battery storage and grid connection.

We object to the building of Muswellbrook Solar Farm for the following legitimate reasons;

1. Visual Impact (Visual Pollution) -the impacts of pollution that impair one's ability to enjoy a view.

Our residence is located 530mtrs from the boundary of the proposed site. We enjoy many daily walks in the local residential area with our young children. In the application from Esco, it is noted that the project is located 2.5km from the township of Muswellbrook. However, conveniently left out of this documentation, is the location of a prestigious Large Lot Residential community, comprising of approximately 70 households. Further to this location, a few km south of the Proposed Solar Farm is the Historic Muscle Creek Community. Of which generations of Primary Producing Farming families still reside.

In the EIS, Esco has stated the following:

“ The rural landscape is valued by the local community. There is potential for change to the rural landscape for landowners/nearby neighbours near to and in line of sight to the Project site in particular residents of Woodland Ridge Estate and along Sandy Creek Road. While the VIA assessed visual impacts to be low, due to the value placed on the rural landscape by members of the community, this impact has been assessed as being of medium significance.”

Reference: ESI : Key Social Impacts, ID L01

The fact that all residences that have been deemed not to have not been considered for any mitigation procedures is inappropriate. We argue that this is grossly misrepresented by ESCO, and nothing more than a financially driven decision.

An independent assessment on the visual impacts of these homes, not involving a financial stakeholders of ESCO , should have been undertaken to avoid any suggestions of corporate coercive behaviours being used.

Many of our homes will look direct down onto the Solar Farm, and it is well documented that a depreciation in property values, occur when such developments are placed in such close proximity to existing landholders. Our front yard will have a view of no less than an estimated 100,000 solar panels, stretching up to the base of Bells Mountain.

Aside from the inappropriate suggestion of ‘No mitigation measures required’ for our household. What compensation will be afforded to our family for the impact this will have on us.

2. Biodiversity Impact Assessment – Impact on threatened species, to native flora and fauna that reside in the proposed area. Governed by the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.

While it appears that a very in depth assessment of all of the native flora species, including endangered Eucalyptus, and native grasses have been well considered. We question some of the conclusions reached.

As a long residing resident of Woodland Ridge, Muscle Creek, it would seem to us, that a far more extensive assessment of threatened fauna species should be undertaken, before any further consideration of this proposal is remotely considered.

The report has listed a number of threatened species (classed by the EPBC), that are reported to inhabit the area is the following - **Critically Endangered**- 2 bird species; **Endangered** – 1 bird, 2 mammal Species; **Vulnerable**- 1 amphibian, 3 mammal and 2 reptile species. The report includes the Koala, but seems to exclude other threatened species that are known to reside in the area. For instance, the Endangered Spotted Tailed Quoll. This animal has been sighted on properties here in Muscle creek.

Remote camera surveys, were then engaged to validate the presence of these species with in the limits of the proposed solar farm. The suggestion that the other very important species, are not to be included in the report, is quite astounding.

It is known by us, that 2 Koalas were rescued from the site of Muswellbrook Coal approximately 12 months ago. A local wildlife carer was engaged to care for these animals. A very serious concern now rests upon a significant level of deception at some point.

These 2 Koalas would have been found during the investigation and reporting process, and intentionally left out of information provided. Or, a suggestion could be made they were found, after the cameras were removed, and the reporting process had subsequently finished in July of 2022.

Either way, information has not been shared appropriately during this study, and brings a question of deceptive practices involved, as it was employees representing Muswellbrook Coal/Idemitsu, and or its affiliates that initiated contact.

To this point we request that a new assessment be undertaken, before any further consideration moving forward with this approval.

3. Fire Hazard Risk Assessment – All land in the area is currently considered bushfire prone land, and mapped by Muswellbrook Shire Council.

The Woodland Ridge Residential Estate are assessed as 'high risk', based on 'likely' fire impact and 'moderate' consequences. This is identified in the Muswellbrook Bushfire Risk Management Plan (2011).

The only suggestion in the report provided for the Muswellbrook Solar farm is to include storage tanks to use in the event of fire outbreak, for fire control.

Who will Muswellbrook Solar farm suggest that use those water reservoirs. Will they have a dedicated team, employed to mitigate fire risk.

There is only one access road into Muscle Creek, how would resources from Muswellbrook and adjoining brigades actually access the area if it were cut off at the beginning of the road.

In an unlikely yet possible catastrophic event, will our homes be put at risk, if rural firefighting resources are redirected to the solar farm. We have a small, but passionate RFS located in Muscle Creek, that is already severely underfunded, it has a fire tanker that simply would not provide the capability to fight such threat on the proposed Solar farm.

Final personal thoughts.

In the rush to meet the Net Zero Government Initiative, and the Rewiring the Nation strategy, it is our opinion that that we are considered merely collateral damage, in an effort to accomplish those targets.

There have been no legislative changes that implore good and fair corporate practices to ensure all community stake holders are looked after. An example being that at no point has there been a provision for a minimum exclusion zone to residential properties affected by green energy applications. Rather, to push through at all costs.

We think it should be noted that many residents in the Muswellbrook Shire consider themselves as part of a mining community. As part of this community, for generations we have been almost solely responsible for building this nation. Our generations of family members have help provide our economy with the prosperity we enjoy today. Families have suffered years of adverse health effect from direct mining activities. We do this because we are a type of people that are conditioned to work hard. We have worked hard, and our sacred homes are worth being protected.

The effort to move forward with forms renewable energy in this country is an absolute must. That can be acknowledged by most Australians. However, it does not negate the fact that this Solar Farm proposal is simply in the wrong place.

Kind regards,

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