

# **Gundry Solar Factory Submission**

## **Wendy Tuckerman MP – Member for Goulburn**

The following submission is on behalf of the residents of the Goulburn electorate who have contacted me, as their state representative and Member of NSW Parliament, expressing their grave concerns about the proposed project: Gundry Solar, the largest solar factory proposal in NSW is planned on the Gundry Plains in the electorate of Goulburn. It is a project that characterises poor planning, disregard to community needs and local voices, and threatens to devastate the prime agricultural land and environment of the Gundry Plains.

The greenwashing of this project is abhorrent. I refer to the wording of the proponent's proposal as a "solar farm" and argue that this is grossly misleading. Farms are traditionally defined as land devoted to producing food and crops with minimal interference in the landscape, not industrial facilities that are majorly comprised of built infrastructure.

This project is not a farm. It is heavy industrial infrastructure which has been greenwashed by LightSourcebp to obscure the true nature of their intentions – profitability. This project is a solar factory designed to maximise corporate profits and it will come at the expense of the environment and the community.

The developer, Lightsourcebp, a British company, boasts of being "the world's largest solar developer", so it is of no surprise they have disregarded the significance, value, and harmony that the prime agricultural land of Gundry Plains holds for food security and our rural economy.

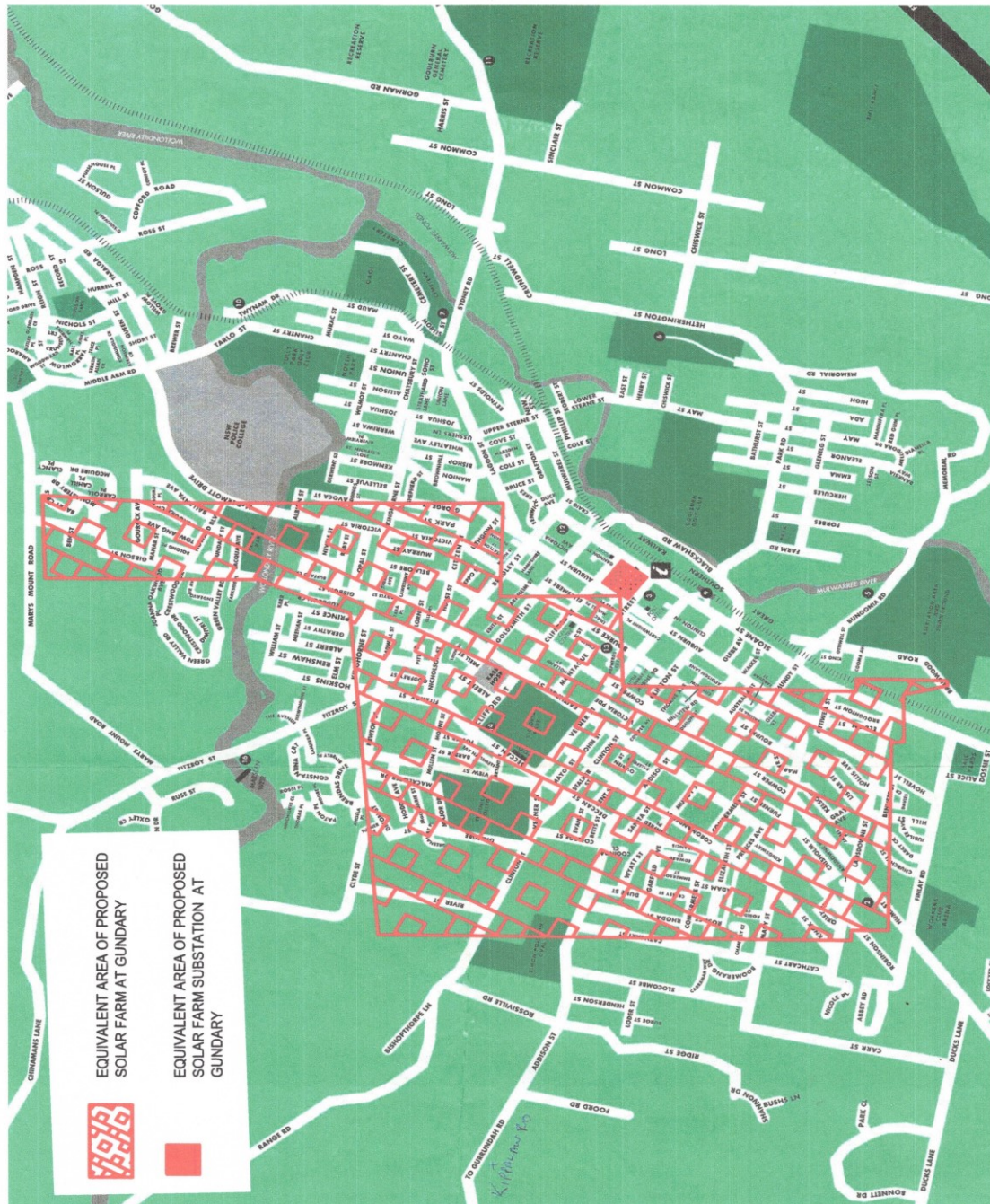
This project also exemplifies corporate greenwashing—portraying profit-driven business as environmentally and economically beneficial. The location has only been selected due to its proximity to the grid, population and price – helped by significant government subsidies to ensure its profitability.

The economic benefits touted by the proponents are short-term and heavily reliant on present government incentives to subsidise the investment. While I acknowledge that there will be an initial inflow of jobs and investment during construction, these are temporary “sugar hits” that offer little in terms of sustained economic growth for the community. Once construction is complete, the ongoing economic benefit to the local community will be minimal. And with little in the way of training and educational opportunities locally, there is less substance to the proponents economic benefits.

Moreover, the generated electricity will be exported to the national grid, with no guarantee of lower energy costs for local residents. The long-term economic impact will be borne by the community in the form of decreased property values, loss of prime agricultural land, and diminished local amenity.

The 400 megawatt project for construction comprises of 660,000 photovoltaic solar panels, placed in rows five metres apart, and with a proposed height of between 3 to 4 meters. The Gundry Solar factory will cover approximately 1735 acres of prime agricultural land. For purposes of scale, the entire footprint of the Sydney Airport is just over 2000 acres and is currently the largest airport in Australia.

Further to this, a draftsman has supplied the below map showing the overlaying footprint over the CBD of Goulburn, which provides further context to the size and scale of the factory.



The proponent advises that up to 89 battery stations will be housed in a series of outdoor containers, along with converters, and a substation, with scaffold and lighting arresters up to 22m high. The unprecedented scale of this proposal will completely transform the landscape from productive farmland to exclusively industrialised energy infrastructure.

The Gundry Plains lie within Sydney's water catchment area, making the environmental risks of this project particularly serious. The construction phase poses significant threats of soil erosion, increased runoff, and potential contamination of water supplies. This could have devastating consequences for local waterways, impacting both human health and biodiversity.

Additionally, the project threatens the habitat of numerous native species, including vulnerable birds, reptiles, and marsupials. The installation of vast solar panels, along with heavy construction and increased traffic, will disrupt breeding patterns and reduce biodiversity, causing long-term harm to the region's ecosystems.

The Gundry Plains are rich in historical significance. Records from 1832 document Aboriginal groups gathering here to celebrate Christmas with early settlers, whose descendants remain in the region, reflecting the deep, enduring connection to this land.

The Goulburn Mulwaree Council engaged the Australian Museum Business Services (AMBS) to conduct an Aboriginal Heritage Study, aimed at identifying culturally significant sites and safeguarding them from developments like this. Approving this project without thorough and genuine consultation with Aboriginal communities disrespects our heritage and violates modern planning standards. Indigenous voices must be central in this process to ensure their cultural legacy is preserved rather than sacrificed for corporate interests.

On the matter of community interests, the bushfire risk outlined in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is severely inadequate. The project's primary access point on Windellama Road is insufficient for emergency response in the event of a fire. The nearby Koorringaroo Road offers only one access point, raising serious concerns about evacuation and emergency service access. If this road is blocked, both residents and emergency responders will be trapped, endangering lives and property.

Of access, the project's transport route options exacerbate concerns over both safety and heritage preservation. Option 1, via Grafton Street, presents significant risks for the 298 children attending St Joseph's Primary School, whose entrance is located on Reynolds Street. Increased heavy vehicle traffic poses severe dangers to pedestrian safety and threatens the structural integrity of the heritage-listed St Clair Homestead. Constructed in the 1840s, this historic site could suffer irreparable damage from vibrations caused by the significant increase in heavy truck movements.

The route also impacts high-traffic community hubs such as the Railway Bowling Club, Belmore Park, Goulburn Visitor Information Centre, Goulburn Railway Station and the Goulburn Marketplace. Increased truck movements will disrupt these spaces, posing risks to pedestrian safety and diminishing the area's liveability.

The site's proximity—just 9.6 kilometres from Goulburn's town centre—contradicts the Goulburn Mulwaree Council's Urban and Fringe Housing Strategy. The council has opposed the project, citing concerns over its obstruction of planned housing developments and future expansion of Goulburn Airport, located only five kilometres from the site.

Furthermore, the NSW Government's Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) policy identifies five designated zones for renewable projects, designed to minimise conflict with existing land uses and maximise infrastructure efficiency. The Gundry Solar factory is located outside any REZ, disregarding strategic planning efforts and placing unnecessary burdens on the local community and environment.

This project is a prime example of poor planning and misplaced priorities. It sacrifices long-term, proven, agricultural sustainability, environmental health, and cultural heritage for short-term corporate gain and a politically driven agenda.

Renewable energy development is essential, but it must be pursued responsibly, balancing development with the preservation of environment, water, and communities.

I urge the Department of Planning to reject the Gundry Solar Factory proposal due to the Goulburn Mulwaree Council's Urban and Fringe Housing Strategy first and foremost, its environmental, economic, community and cultural impacts. I also note that planning policies must be strengthened to protect agricultural land and cultural heritage from industrial encroachment. We must ensure renewable energy projects are sited within designated REZs to minimise community disruption.

As a representative of the state of NSW I believe that we cannot allow short-term profits to multinational foreign-owned companies to overshadow the long-term welfare of our communities and environment.

Sustainable, well-planned renewable energy projects must be developed in a way that respects and protects the very communities they are meant to serve.

Wendy Tuckerman MP  
Member for Goulburn