

OBJECTION to Birriwa Solar Farm Modification 1 (SSD-29508870)

I strongly object to the Birriwa Solar Farm Modification 1, just as I have objected to the whole project since its inception.

The “rapid transition to renewable energy” is turning rural and regional NSW, and Australia, into industrial precincts – taking valuable land out of food and fibre production and threatening future production, dividing communities, threatening ecosystems and causing negative social and economic impacts, amongst other things. Rural and regional communities are being sacrificed in the name of a “clean”, “green” energy future, something that has been acknowledged and accepted by Premier Minns. Yet to common-sense rural landowners the “rapid transition to renewable energy” seems to be destroying the environment to save the planet – it makes no sense!!

Projects like Birriwa Solar are baring large areas of farmland, including trees that have been planted for either livestock shelter or soil health reasons ie. salinity and those that are hundreds of years old, to accommodate man made infrastructure for the purpose of energy generation. Thousands of hectares of land will be taken out of production for this reason – is energy generation more important than food and fibre production? Does it make sense to sacrifice flora and fauna in one area to lock it up in another, and pay for the privilege?

According to an ABC news article published on 18th February 2025, “late last year, the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) said ‘emergency’ powers were urgently needed in every state to ensure rooftop solar could be turned down or switched off in extreme circumstances. Those circumstances would arise when there was so much rooftop solar in the system that it was threatening to overload the grid.” Does it make sense to install huge swathes of industrial scale solar when the grid is overloaded by rooftop solar when the sun is shining?

Merotherie Road, and even more so Birriwa Bus Route South, are very quiet local roads hence ACEN finding there was little to no traffic on each. ACEN has taken this as justification that there is plenty of room to accommodate project traffic when really that is the nature of such local infrastructure. Local landowners and organisations have proposed alternative routes in an attempt to preserve the high value biodiversity (as previously marked by Mid Western Regional Council) along Merotherie Road and Birriwa Bus Route South. EnergyCo owns cleared land beside both roads which could facilitate the relocation of roads negating the need to upgrade the current roads and remove countless valuable trees. Will ACEN, EnergyCo and DPHI consider this proposal further?

I first asked ACEN about the extra land that had been signed up for the Birriwa Solar project nearly two years ago. In true renewable energy developer style, ACEN would not acknowledge that the project footprint would be increased until earlier this year. We need more transparency, honesty and accountability if the large scale renewable energy projects are to proceed. ACEN, as a renewable energy developer within the CWO REZ has already done their reputation a lot of damage – behaviour of employees during the Independent Planning Commission (IPCn) meeting in Dunedoo regarding this very project, senior executive handling of the situation, and treatment of local landowners has not done the company any favours.

DISCLAIMER: I, as a farmer working full time, have not had adequate time to read, comprehend and respond to the countless pages contained in the modification report and associated documents so reserve the right to send additional information to the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure as it becomes available to me.