

DUNBOGAN MERINO STUD

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Subject: Objection to proposed Cobbora Solar Farm

Application Number

SSD-29491142

Assessment Type

State Significant Development

Development Type

Electricity Generation – Solar

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to you to object to the Cobbora Solar Farm. My family and I currently operate Dunbogan Merino Stud which is 6400 acres near by to the proposed project. We have three children aged 11 (Angus), 7 (Marnie) and 2(Sally). We operate an intensive mixed farming business running 10,000 merino sheep and cropping 1500 acres of cereal and canola crop each year. We employ a full time staff and rely on multiple part time and casual employees as well as a number of contractors.

I am a 4th generation farmer here on the land where our family property is located 5400 meters from the Cobbora Solar Farm boundary. As a resident we will be heavily impacted by this project as well as the other projects intended for this area.

After being involved with a number of submission for various projects already I urge you and you team to consider the impacts this project has on those that live with it. It is quite easy to look at these projects and see that they look like they are within guidelines, but at some stage the people that live with the impacts of these projects need to be considered. I remind you and your team that these guidelines are sufficient if you are not living near these projects and if you are not impacted by them. For those of us that live next to the projects, bring families up next to these projects and have assets next to these projects the guidelines are

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far from satisfactory. Our landscapes will be transformed from beautiful agricultural land that we have cared for generations to industrial devastation.

The proposed Cobbora Solar farm is part of three solar projects that all neighbour each other. Two of these projects will be amongst the largest in Australia and if constructed will total approximately 10,500 acres of farmland under panels in one large holding with shared boundaries. It is of my opinion that the Cobbora Solar Farm is on the least valuable food producing land of the 3 projects (Dapper Solar farm and Sandy Creek Solar) and will most likely have the least impact to the community that is expected to live with it.

At present we have had no contact from the proponents of Cobbora Solar Farm as to the impacts that it could have on our Family and business.

The main issues are detailed below.

1. Cumulative impact of projects in the region:

The EIS of this project and those projects surrounding it need to be considered in a cumulative way. The impacts of these projects combined will decimate the landscape.

It is important to consider the effect of multiple projects (5) on the visual character of the landscape. Multiple projects near each other can result in cumulative visual impacts that affect the way a landscape is experienced. Cumulative visual impacts can arise from the presence of similar projects that may have a low impact individually, but when viewed together can have a significant visual impact on the landscape.

Further cumulative impacts that need to be considered

- Emergency services thru Dunedoo and surrounds. Currently 1 ambulance and 1 police officer in a population of 800 people. It is expected that cumulative there could be 10,000 workers present working on the proposed projects in the area.
- Medical services. Currently 1 doctor present in the local community.

Other concerns around the cumulative impacts of the project include increased traffic on bus routes, roads and stock routes when combined with the two other projects. The clearing of native vegetation and the use of water from local acquirers all need to be considered, The cumulative impact of the 5 projects in the area is vital.

The cumulative impacts of these projects to the existing landholders needs to be addressed before been approved.

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2. Visual Impacts

As outlined above the landscape will be drastically changed to industrial land.

The visual landscape character of the area will change from predominantly rural agriculture to renewable energy infrastructure. At no stage have I or my family being consulted on the visual impacts of this project. Our family property and family home overlooks the project site with beautiful views up to 15km. the project is located 5.4km from our family home and 2.4km from our property boundary. There has been no visual assessment completed from our home nor anywhere on our property.

Our own family home “Dunbogan” (PR30) as per the EIS will overlook the project in direct line of sight. As per 2.4.1 the proponents are aware of our business and residence but continue to ignore us “Other residences are located along the Golden Highway, Spring Ridge Road, Dapper Road, Tallawonga Road and Sandy Creek Road. There are 31 receivers within 4 km of the Project Area.” You would think that a leader in renewable energy could spend the time to consult and meet with those affected.

Further moderate visual impacts may be scene at the Fairview Cottage (PR 21). Again these impacts have not been looked at nor considered.

Our adjoining property “Carella” will also be impacted to a lesser extent.

Our own independent assessment of the visual affects from various Project are shown below. This shows the impacts as to the visual impacts.

Figure 1: Indicative visual impact assessment of solar farm showing the high impacts of the proposed project.

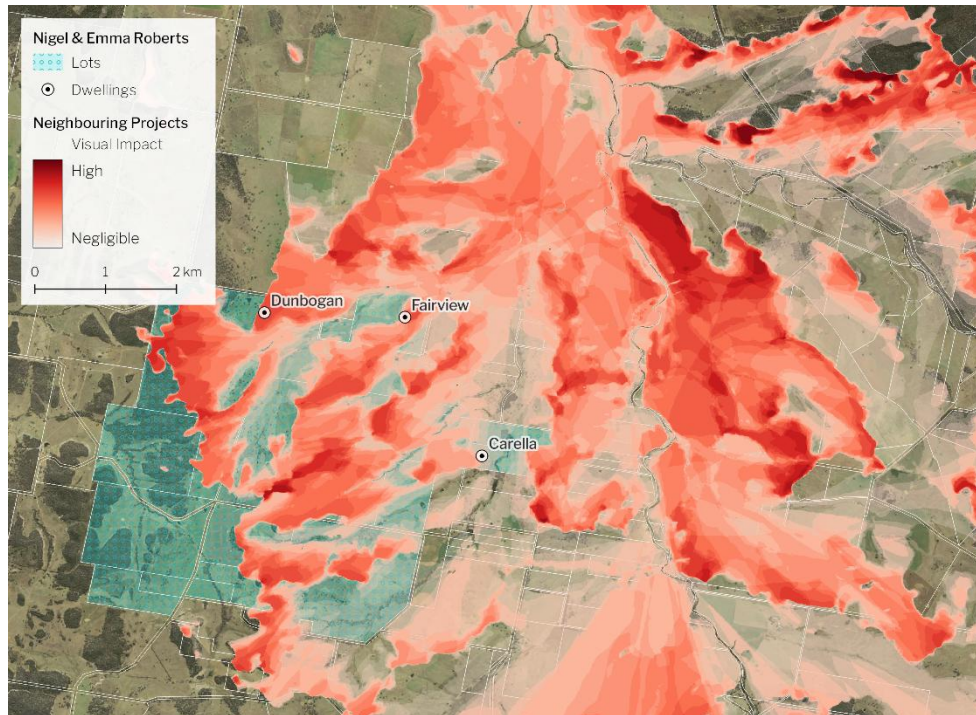
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3. Public Liability Insurance

The issue of Public Liability Insurance continues to be avoided. I took this unanswered issue to Energyco on 28th November 2022. This needs to be resolved before any projects are approved.

Our business expects to be surrounded by in excess of billions of dollars of solar panels that includes the Sandy Creek project, Dapper Solar and Cobbora Solar. My insurer has informed me that the maximum level of PL insurance I can obtain is currently \$20 million. If I or an employee here in our business starts a fire and is deemed liable for starting that fire that burns these solar farms down who or where is the difference coming from? We also need to consider the loss of income from the proposed solar farms.

Further to this all businesses surrounding these projects will be heavily affected as contractors will avoid the risk of damages to these projects as they too will only have \$20 million PL cover. Our current business contracts out harvest and hay contracting (both quite fire prone). Who is going to perform these jobs for our business with the added risks associated with the infrastructure losses from these projects? This issue is common to all mixed farming businesses in the area.

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4. Engagement/Consultation for Neighbours

As already outlined there has been **NO** engagement or consultation for our business or family. We continue to be walked over and treated in a very poor way. Our mental health continues to deteriorate.

No concerns have been addressed as we have not had the opportunity for our concerns to be heard. If this is how a global renewable developer consults with a neighbour that is going to be heavily impacted by a proposed project then this is atrocious. We continue to deal with arrogance and ignorance as to the impacts of our business and family. When will this change? Approving this project only increases the arrogance and complacency of all developers and the consultation process that it lacks.

5. Social Impacts

By far one of the biggest social issue if the project was to proceed is that families will leave the community. Our family intend on leaving the area if the numerous projects proposed are to proceed. As well as ourselves we are aware of several families that intend on leaving the area if the proposed developments are to proceed. As well as this there are a number of long term rentals in the area that will leave given the changes. I am yet to see a social impacts study that touches on families leaving the community!

Further social issues include

- the division and conflict within a small community.
- Housing
- Access to medical facilities
- Roads and infrastructure
- Increases in Crime and prevention as result of increased population
- Labour shortages in our own business

6. Hail Risk

The proposed site has a high risk of hail. At present we pay the highest form of insurance cover for broadacre cropping in NSW and Australia. Our business has had 3 hail claims for crop losses over the last 12 years due to hail. Has the proponent and the associated insurers looked at the risk of hail in the area?

If a hail event is to occur which is likely, is there associated risks where heavy metals and toxins can move into the waterways as runoff from rain events? If this was to occur the entire Talbragar River and the Macquarie River downstream of Dubbo would be greatly affected.

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8. Bushfire Risk

The entire project area is very susceptible to bushfire. I am a member of the Elong fire brigade. Elong Fire brigade are not trained to fight fires in high voltage areas neither do they have the training or equipment available to them to fight fires in the proposed development. Will the volunteers of Elong and Laheys creek fire brigades be happy to fight a fire within the proposed development given the high voltage electricity proposed.

Who does the proponent intend to fight the bushfires in the area if the project is to proceed. Community members such as ourselves intend on leaving the area if the proposed development is to proceed. Are employees going to be members of our local fire services? Who will be on site on Sundays if a fire was to start? The precedence of fires would be expected to increase with a larger workforce and the increased presence of high voltage energy present in the area. Again the cumulative impact of projects in the area will remove large numbers of residents that at present make up the local fire brigades.

The other area of concern is if these panels were to be damaged in a fire and a watershed event was to follow the implications to the Sandy Creek, the Talbragar River and in turn the Macquarie river could be catastrophic to large communities and the associated habitat. If such an event was to occur would heavy metals from the solar panels enter the associated waterways? The toxic nature of panels and in such a large area make this a real risk that

8. General Impacts

The proponent intends to clear 251ha of native vegetation, some of which is endangered or critically endangered. What will the removal of this vegetation have on erosion and salinity issues that we are already seeing increasing. How can biodiversity be destroyed within this project and brought back as an offset for currency. Once this biodiversity is destroyed it is gone forever. The biodiversity along these waterways and across the proposed site has been created over millions of years. No currency will replace that biodiversity.

There are issues with laydown areas and the current bus routes that families can use. These bus routes need assurances in place that minimise impacts to existing community members. Educating our children is hard enough without the impacts of these projects.

Water supply during the construction phase is of also great concern. Water should not be allowed to be removed from ground aquifers. As mixed farmers of livestock we rely heavily on these bores to provide stock water throughout the year. In the drought of 2017/18/19 the only water we had for livestock was from groundwater. The removal of water from this

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acquiifer for construction could place water supply for local livestock under great pressure. This acquifer is largely untested.

The EIS is full of contradictions. Pg 64 outlines that all neighbouring residences within 4 km have been consulted is entirely not true. Alike the majority of projects in this area so far , the consultation process has been nothing more then absent. How can a developer plan to develop a \$2 billion solar far forget to consult with those neighbours impacted. I remind you that this EIS was paid for by the proponent and is not independent.

Given the consultative process and large areas of endangered native vegetation to be cleared this project should not proceed.

Kind Regards

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