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We would like to make a submission to the Cobbora Solar Project SSD-29491142

CWO REZist Inc is a community organisation supporting those in the CWO REZ negatively impacted by proposed wind, solar and BESS projects. Accordingly, we object to this planned industrial solar project due to the negative impacts on the surrounding neighbours and community members and surrounding agricultural enterprises.

Whilst the developer justifies itself with meeting government targets, it is clear from recent data that we don't need more solar - in the middle of a sunny day there is already an excess of power produced by rooftop and industrial solar and no ability to export it to the coastal centres. This is shown by the negative wholesale prices in the middle of the day.

Storing this energy in a BESS to deliver at a later time is an extremely expensive way to shift the time of delivery and is only made possible by the high wholesale prices at peak demand times of morning and evening.

If you consider the whole of life environmental, energy and materials costs of short lived solar and even shorter lived BESS, you are in fact causing more harm to the global environment than you would by burning conventional fuels in the most efficient manner.

There will be major inconveniences to residents during the estimated 47 month (almost 4 year) construction process. The increased traffic of over 100 vehicles a day will negatively impact residents and local road users and will increase travel times to locals and visitors.

The construction noise is also a major concern to residents near to the site.

The cumulative impact of living in a REZ is already being felt by residents and construction on most projects has not even begun. Energy Co's cumulative impact study has been so delayed it will be out of date and not fit for purpose (if it is ever released). However having the Elong Energy Hub and Sandy Creek industrial solar projects adjacent to the project, Spicers Creek industrial wind project within 1km and Dapper industrial solar project within 2km all with overlapping construction periods, makes the localised cumulative impact unacceptable to non-associated neighbours.

Solar panels are NOT environmentally friendly – made with a toxic mix of gallium arsenide, tellurium, silver, crystalline silicon, lead, cadmium, and heavy earth materials. Solar panels deteriorate, resulting in lost efficiency, total failure or even fire. They get damaged by hail, wind and fire and potentially leach their toxic chemicals into the soil and water courses. Major damage does happen – such as with the Beryl Solar plant in 2020 with impacts from heavy rain, a lightning strike, inverter damage and other failures. The contamination risks to the land and through the water courses will not be tolerated by the local community.

PV solar systems are also prone to fires from panel and electrical equipment failures

causing risk to nearby farms, native bush and the community, as accessing the fires on/near a solar site is difficult and limited for safety reasons. Gunnedah Rural Fire Service has confirmed that firefighters can only fight fires in a solar plant from the perimeter due to dangerous high voltages and the possibility of toxic gases. In August 2022 a small grass fire near Beryl solar plant required a dozen emergency vehicles and three water-bombing helicopters to protect the solar plant and nearby farm. A small fire of this size could potentially be put out by easily and quickly by minimal fire crew, yet this small fire took four hours and multiple crews to bring the situation under control.

BESS batteries use lead, lithium and cobalt, all of which are hazardous materials. This is of much concern to residents and the community as ordinary fire suppression measures cannot extinguish a Lithium chemical reaction fire. A fire that occurred in the 350MW/450MWh BESS during testing on 30 July 2021 in Geelong, Victoria shows how dangerous it can be for nearby residents. When one of the 13 tonne battery packs caught fire, it burned for three days and resulted in the evacuation of residents because of the toxic fumes generated.

The University of Washington's Clean Energy Institute report on Lithium batteries[i] stated: "*Li-ion batteries still have a number of shortcomings, particularly with regards to safety. Li-ion batteries have a tendency to overheat, and can be damaged at high voltages. Most Li-ion electrolytes are highly flammable, so damaged batteries can experience thermal runaway and combustion. Because of the risks associated with these batteries, a number of shipping companies refuse to perform bulk shipments of batteries by plane. Li-ion batteries require safety mechanisms to limit voltage and internal pressures, which can increase weight and limit performance in some cases. Li-ion batteries are also subject to aging, meaning that they can lose capacity and frequently fail after a number of years. Degradation, cost, and safety make Li-ion batteries a poor fit for grid-scale energy storage. And despite the high energy density of Li-ion compared to other kinds of batteries, they are still around a hundred times less energy-dense than gasoline, which contains 12,700 Wh/kg by mass or 8760 Wh/L by volume".*

Huge solar plants are not visually appealing and will impact near and not-so-near neighbours. As well as potentially impacting the value of neighbouring properties, the natural beauty of this district is very popular with travellers and visitors. Placing solar panels over scenic farmland will likely deter tourists visiting as the once productive farming land will be a reflective sea of solar panels.

Apart from removing land from productive farming for up to 35 years there is the likely long-term damage to the soil. The long term impact to the soil (from compaction and potentially leaching of toxic chemicals into the soil) could ruin its ability to be productive farmland in the future.

We urge DPE to listen to those most heavily impacted by this project and to consider the cumulative impact on the district by multiple developments. This project should be rejected.

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[i] https://www.cei.washington.edu/research/energy-storage/lithium-ion-battery/