

I have numerous concerns re the proposed New England Solar Farm.

- Communication

UPC conducted 4 town (Uralla) meetings. My property lies in the fork of Big Ridge and Munsies Road, Uralla. Both these roads have proposed solar farm infrastructure (past my property). I was only made aware of the 3rd meeting by a concerned resident who lives on Gostwyck Road, (a proposed major thoroughfare in the Central/Southern array area of the proposal). This resident received a written invitation to attend the meetings. My immediate neighbours were also not aware of the proposal until I advised them. On attending the 3rd meeting, signing in, identifying my address, a UPC representative advised he would like a private meeting with me and my husband. I had to chase up on this meeting. During the 4th meeting, UPC representative, Killian Wentrup arranged a meeting date/time. The meeting went ahead and we discussed our concerns with Killian. Apart from those property owners that are involved with the project, there are only 6 families that needed to be contacted on Big Ridge & Munsies Roads. Whilst this is not a reason for the project to not go ahead, for such a major project, surely it would not have been hard to personally contact those 6 families, considering those on Gostwyck Road were contacted? Poor communication!!!

- Roads

UPC Killian Wentrup advised prospective workers would be bused in from Tamworth (south) and Armidale (North). The workforce at some stages will be 700. Buses coming from Tamworth will need to go through the railway underpass on Barleyfields Road. Currently 2 cars can't pass at this site. With the projected increased heavy vehicle traffic, possibly a "give way" sign should be installed if construction may take up to 3 years. The EIS states that these roads do not meet rural road standards at present. During construction, Barleyfields, Big Ridge and Munsies Roads will have hugely increased traffic movements (including heavy vehicle). These roads will need widening and upgrading to be able to handle this increased traffic. Killian Wentrup advised that Munsies Road would have an extra 8 traffic movements per day. The EIS states that for Big Ridge Road, there will be a peak daily traffic movement of 635 and the peak daily traffic movement for unsealed Munsies Road is 69. These number of traffic movements will impact severely on these roads. Due to the much increased dust, Killian did indicate that Munsies Road would be watered on a regular basis (where will the water come from to do this?) and possibly, as a last resort, Munsies Road could be sealed. This increased amount of dust (my home is 125 metres north of Munsies Road) will settle, ending up in our tanks, our only water source for drinking, bathing and washing. Nothing short of sealing Munsies Road is acceptable to us, given our close proximity to this road. Winds prevail predominantly from the South and West, so blowing the dust directly at my home.. I doubt that this would occur as it would add to UPC costings. 635 Big Ridge and 69 Munsies Road traffic movements per day would also create a lot of noise.

A further issue is that many people use Barleyfields and Big Ridge Roads for walking and cycling, due its quiet and, up to now, safe appeal. This "safe" appeal will certainly change with a peak 635 daily traffic movements. The establishment of a walking / cycling track need to be considered to cater for these walkers / cyclist's safety.

All in all, the information in the EIS re roads is much different to that indicated by the UPC representative.

- Environmental

The land identified for the proposal is prime agricultural land (mainly sheep and cattle grazing). Whilst the New England, like much of NSW, is currently in drought, when it does rain, including possible storms, the current lack of vegetation and fragility of the fine granite soil types will result in severe erosion. Will any chemicals be used when washing these panels on an annual basis?? If so, surely we can't allow this to enter our waterways. With the ongoing drought, and the amount of dust settling on the panels, will the panels remain efficient or will washing be required on a more regular basis.

- Wildlife

Do Solar farms affect wildlife in any way? Has there been any study on this in areas where solar farms have been constructed? When asked specifically about birds, UPC representative advised me that no studies had been done. That doesn't mean solar farms don't create adverse issues for birdlife. The EIS Biodiversity report states that the land identified for the solar farm has low biodiversity value, due to the land being mainly cleared. My small farm is mostly cleared, yet numerous bird species are sighted on a daily basis. Kangaroos are often seen. Echidnas and turtles have been seen moving through our house yard. Hares are sighted very regularly.

I have sighted koalas on Big Ridge road yet the Biodiversity Report indicates no koala habitation. The local W.I.R.E.S. representative used to collect the appropriate eucalypt leaves / branches from Big Ridge Road to feed the orphaned / injured koalas in her care.

- Others

UPS offer a community benefit sharing contribution of \$250/megawatt/year for 25 years. What is the expected income per annum for UPC? What guarantee can UPC provide, re these contributions, should the solar farm ever be on sold?

UPC is an overseas company. Whilst they have offices in Australia, the \$'s will not remain in Australia.

Land values – I am very concerned as to whether the solar farm will have any effect on land values. Have any studies been done on property values where other solar farms have been constructed?

I am pro Uralla, having been a resident for some 28 ½ years. My "farm" was purchased in 1992 with the view to being here for the long term. Our children were schooled in Uralla. Approaching retirement, we were looking to subdivide, downsizing and rebuilding on a smaller portion of our holding, however the LEP prohibits us from doing this, yet the possibility of using prime agricultural land for a solar farm seems a possibility???

I implore you to please give this proposal your very, very careful consideration.