

Walla Walla Solar Farm Objection

- **Preservation of Agricultural Land:** Australia only has a certain amount of high quality agricultural land and we need to protect it. Many areas in Australia are no longer suited to farming due to effects of ongoing drought. The area surrounding Walla Walla is largely unaffected by drought and the farming land is still successfully producing agricultural crops and raising sheep and cattle.
 - Due to the ongoing drought and climate change, food prices are predicted to grow. We are importing more agricultural produce due to the prolonged drought. We are well positioned to grow all the food required but if we utilise productive farming land for other uses such as solar we will not be capable of growing the amount of produce required for our own needs. Australia this year imported wheat for the first time in 12 years after drought across the eastern states saw grain production fall last year. This Grain was imported from Canada. This raises biosecurity concerns among grain growers about the risk of bringing in a disease or new weed strains to Australia.
 - There are many areas in Australia that are more suited to the installation of solar farms. Examples would be areas that are no longer suitable for farming due to drought and lack of consistent water sources. I note the companies are planning to build the solar farms in the Walla Walla area because of the proximity of the sub-station. This is a cost effective approach for them with little value and many negatives for the local community.
 - The Governments need to have an overall plan which includes building the required infrastructure in communities that would benefit financially and socially from the installation of solar farms. Why does the government not encourage local investment in these projects rather than allowing subsidised foreign investors to reap the financial rewards?
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- **Change of ambience of Walla Walla surrounds:** Walla Walla is situated in a beautiful country setting. People move here to experience this lifestyle. A large proportion of the surrounding landscape will change from picturesque agricultural land to that with an industrial appearance. The ambience of the area is important to the mental well-being of the local residents. Property values will be affected and no compensation is offered to affected residents. This will also affect the future growth of the shire with people no longer wanting to relocate here from larger towns/cities. When Residents buy properties in this area they pay a high price for a property that is in a certain zoning. What good is zoning if it can be changed to meet commercial needs? The average resident is not able to utilise their land in a way that is not compatible with the local zoning.
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- **Heat transmission from the panels** will impact upon local climatic conditions and result in heat transmission out of the solar farm and into close neighbouring properties. People in neighbouring areas could suffer health issues and loss of vegetation and gardens. As the area is known to reach a temperatures in the mid-forties in summer a rise of several degrees will be very unpleasant for the nearby residents.

- **After the contract expires:** How will the local residents be assured that the area will not be damaged or left in a state of deterioration when the contract finishes? What will Greater Hume Shire look like in the future with huge acreage taken up by solar panels? At the moment it is a picturesque area but it could quite possibly become an eye-sore in the future. The Company developing the site is foreign owned. There is nothing to stop it selling (once the project is built) to another foreign company, who then, may not adhere to the original agreements such as removal of infrastructure after the contract is finished. We have been assured the land owner will be responsible if the company does not reinstate the land to its original condition. However in thirty years' time the original landowner may not be living on the affected property.
- **Tree Removal:** Many trees are to be removed for the construction of the solar plant. This is a significant loss of native habitat in the area.
- **Dust problem:** It will be difficult to maintain vegetation below the panels. This could create a significant source of dust for nearby residents. I understand the suggestion is to allow sheep to wander around and under the solar panels. I would question, in summer with the heat generated by the solar panels, that this would be an appropriate solution.
- **Weed management** under and around panels will require large, regular doses of chemical herbicides. This will be a possible health hazard for local residents. The compacting of the soil and the change in the microclimate under the panels will have a long-lasting effect on soil productivity.
- **Fencing and Screening:** Indications are that the area will be fenced including the use of shade cloth. It will not take long for the shade cloth in windy conditions to become unsightly and dilapidated. There have been suggestions that the area will be screened by suitable vegetation but the details of this are not transparent. It takes many years for such planting to be effective. Will the residents be properly informed of what vegetation will be used and how long this will take to effectively block the unsightly view of solar panels?
- **Bushfire risk:** The bushfire emergencies happening in NSW and Queensland highlight the problems inherent in the installation of solar panels in rural/residential areas. We understand that bushfire brigades are not happy to enter the property in the event of a bushfire. It is difficult to fight a fire with the close placement of the solar panels. Safety is the issue for the fire brigades.
- **Fires causing release of chemicals into the atmosphere and the neighbourhood.** What is the situation in the case of fires regarding the release of chemicals into the atmosphere from the burning infrastructure (panels, batteries, etc.)? The air-quality in the event of a fire involving a solar farm would have a catastrophic effect on the health of nearby residents and the fire-fighting crews. In the case of asthma sufferers this could be fatal.

- **Water Requirements:** The solar farm requires a significant amount of water in the construction phase and when operating as a solar farm. Where does this water come from? Many local farmers are already carting additional water in the summer season. Is there any provision for fire-fighting purposes on the proposed solar farm? Most water supplies to secondary streets eg: Klinberg Rd Walla Walla are only 50 mm in diameter and are therefore are not suited to any fire fighting purposes.
- **Insurance Cost Increase for Residents:** If a fire breaks out on neighbours' property and damages the solar plant how does the resident ensure their insurance policy will cover this? It is likely that insurance policies will increase for nearby residents.
- **Bird life/ Conservation of habitat and species:** Species diversity and habitat will be destroyed by the clearing of local trees and vegetation. Fencing of the perimeter will prevent native wildlife from moving freely through the area.
- **During Construction:** Local residents will be adversely affected by dust, noise and traffic movement. There will be a large number of trucks driving down local dirt roads during the construction. Will local councils be reimbursed for this and roads maintained/repared immediately damage occurs? During construction we have been informed that the noise level of installation is well over acceptable levels of noise pollution set down by the Environmental Protection Authority.
- **Increased danger to local traffic:** The area in question is a quiet country area with limited traffic. The area is a favourite one for children to ride their bikes and locals to walk and ride (bikes and horses) around these roads. It is likely with the increase of large trucks travelling down these roads that road accidents, deaths and injuries could occur.

The dot points above highlight the reasons for my opposition to any solar farm in close proximity to the township of Walla Walla.