

I would like to object to the proposed the Culcairn Solar development – these developments are absolutely not farms; they are industrial developments. We have not asked these developments to be in our area and believe more consideration needs to be done to keep these developments away from prime agricultural land and kept within the renewable energy zones stated by the government.

After reading the EIS and living near the proposed site I have several concerns:

1. AGRICULTURAL IMPACTS

While I cannot give you yield and agrimony reports from the proposed land. I have however seen firsthand this land continually and reliably producing grain, fodder and hay yearly. It is highly sought after, highly productive land. The EIS claims that this land is Class 4 Land under the Important Agricultural Land Mapping. This mapping was completed during the 1980's and is sorely outdated. Greater Hume Shire Council have recognised the value and importance of this farming land and other land within the Shire and has petitioned the Department of Primary Industries to reconsider the land classing. I understand that this has been completed and the Class of Land has been changed. This has not yet been released to the public and is awaiting approval from the Political Leadership. I urge the Department of Planning to withhold making any decision in relation to this proposal until this mapping is completed and released to the public.

The last few years has seen drought affecting almost all of Australia. This land still produced grain, hay and fodder when the majority of farms outside of our area were unable to produce. This permitted the grain, hay and fodder from this property to be used to assist other farms feed their livestock.

2. WEED MANAGEMENT

After seeing several solar development sites, including the NEOEN Coleambally and Griffith sites I believe their weed management plans have missed the mark completely. The entire property consisted of broadleaf weeds including Patterson's Curse, Marshmallow, Cape Weed and infestations of Roly-Poly weeds. The staff at the Coleambally site mow between the panels on zero turn lawn mowers. This does not eradicate the weeds and it is an ineffective practice. Mowing weeds actually spreads the seeds of the weed and causes the weed to grow wider. From my understanding sheep cannot be used to graze weeds as many weeds are toxic to sheep and they won't eat them. The spread of weeds from the proposed Culcairn site needs careful consideration as a large portion of the land has a silver leaf night shade infestation and has already spread into neighbouring lands. Hairy panic is another weed that needs to be kept in control of and it is highly flammable and toxic to livestock.

3. ENVIRONMENTAL

The proposed site is located within a close distance to Gum Swamp and Billabong Creek which runs along the site to the north. Both Gum Swamp and the Billabong Creek are home to many critically endangered animals and ecosystems. The removal of 99 paddock trees, with most of them being hollow, will be detrimental on the local wildlife in the area. These trees provide a safe habitat to so many

species of birds, possums, bats and reptiles and I don't believe enough has been done in the EIS or by NEOEN to protect these animals or ecosystems. With the Billabong Creek flowing into the Murray Darling Basin catchment area, I have huge concerns for the flow on effect of chemicals leaching from broken solar panels into these important waterways.

I will give you a couple of examples of how horrifyingly bad these wildlife studies have been completed and I believe effects on the environmental impacts have been overlooked or grossly underestimated in the EIS.

My husband stopped around mid-afternoon and asked a couple of young girls sitting in a car near the end of our driveway what they were up to and they said they were looking for a particular parrot and my husband said I am not sure what they look like and their reply was neither do we. These same girls asked if we have owls in the area, but I am unsure how they were expecting to find them during the day.

In the EIS it has stated they have looked for frogs and were unable to locate them. This was conducted in summer during drought conditions. We have a multitude of frogs in this area, but you only find them during the wetter months.

Flood risk should also be taken into consideration, in 2010 we had a bad flood that year with many parts of the proposed development footprint being impacted by the rising water and being impassable to vehicles.

4. VISUAL

We are one of the closest neighbours and have an elevated, unbroken view over the majority of the proposed development site. From our property we will have a view of approximately 5km of panels, clearly visible to the north and 4km to the west. Photomontages were taken and form part of the EIS. I was told by a NEOEN representative that I could choose the images taken to be used as part of the EIS. The images published are not the ones I approved. The images are from the paddock adjacent to our family home and I do not believe they are a true image of the impact that my family are facing if this development is to be approved. Images are quoted in the EIS as a realistic impression, this is absolutely not the case.

Night Lighting will be an ongoing issue throughout the entire lifetime of the project, I currently have no other light source within a couple of Km's of my family home. I am of the understanding that the substation and site offices will have a constant light source for the duration of the project 30+ years and this will be seen from almost every room my house.

5. TRAFFIC

We currently have about 12 cars a day that use the northern section of Weeamera Road. The EIS states that they are expecting around 50 heavy vehicles, 150 light vehicles and 300 cars per day 6 days a week. This section of road is currently dirt and approximately 5 to 6 meters wide and does accommodate two-way local traffic at a reduced speed, but only with both vehicles needing to slow down and move to the shoulders of the road. If this development was to proceed, I believe the road should be widened to at least 8 meters like the southern section of Weeamera Road and more than a light seal needs to be applied.

At the intersection of Benambra Road and the Olympic Highway we currently have 4 buses stopping in both the morning and afternoon. I am concerned that the increase vehicle traffic on these roads will pose a danger to the children catching the bus and to other children already on the bus.

Vehicular movement within the construction site will also increase dust to nearby neighbours and potentially cause an increased accident risk to vehicles moving along Weeamera Road or vehicles leaving their properties. This road is used frequently for the movement of agricultural machinery and used almost daily to move stock from one paddock to another.

EIS states road maintenance was addressed with concerned individuals, I do not believe this to be the case as I have never been consulted on the matter nor has my husband.

6. HEAT ISLAND EFFECT

According to the clean energy council report, heat island effect and micro climates do happen in large scale developments. Within the report it states that with trees that have a high leaf density and a high rate of transpiration are the most effective way to disperse the increased temperature. I believe the already proposed tree lines need to be increased with mature trees and the tree lines need to be denser.

7. NOISE

Construction is planned from 7am to 6pm Monday to Friday and 8am to 1pm on Saturdays, with extra vehicular movements before and after these times. We will have increased noise for 12 hours per day, 5 days a week and 6 hours on Saturdays.

The increased noise is noted in the EIS but it states it will only be temporary 12 to 18 months while the site is under construction. 12 to 18 months is a long time when you are being woken up most days by construction noise. I was unable to locate the assessment for the noise levels and or the decibels indicators for the pole piling or how many pole piling rigs would be operated at any one time. This

concerns me greatly as I have now found out from a third-party source that pole piling rigs are around 107 to 112 decibels per unit.

What will be the accumulative decibels with other construction equipment being used and from the increase of vehicle movements?

Safe work Australia clearly states that a worker should not be exposed to more than 85 decibels over a period of 8 hours without causing damage to the human ear and livestock can have physical ear damage at 110 decibels.

What about the neighbours that border this development? Are we expected to wear ear protection in our own homes?

I have spoken with several people that have lived near other solar developments and have been told that the noise from pole piling rigs has almost driven them insane. These properties were between 500 and 800 meters away from the solar developments, my family is under 200 meters from the proposed Culcairn site.

8. FIRE

We have raised concerns with the Rural Fire Service and the developers. Local Rural Fire Service Volunteers are refusing to enter this site in the event of a fire due to entrapment concerns (8 foot high chain mesh fencing and rows of solar panels connected by steel drivelines), electrocution (residual voltage held in the panels, inverters, batteries and other electrical equipment) and exposure (toxic chemicals released by burning wiring, solar panels and associated machinery). The Solar Site at Coleambally has already had several fires impact the site caused by faulty panels and equipment.

9. CONSULTATION

The consultation that I have had with NEOEN has been inconsistent and have had many questions and emails unanswered. The EIS has many inconsistencies and I urge the department to listen to the concerns being raised. I understand that there is a large amount of submissions in relation to this project. I urge you to travel to our area and meet with the affected neighbours to get a true understanding of the effect that this proposal will have on our lives. Desktop planning and mapping is far different to actually attending the site and seeing the area for yourself.