

'Granite Hill', 1917 Urana Road
JINDERA 2642
5th February 2020

Mr Jim Betts
Secretary,
Planning, Industry & Environment
GPO Box 39
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Re: Objection to proposed Culcairn Solar Farm

Dear Mr Betts

My name is David Gray. My wife and I are 4th generation farmers on 'Granite Hill', a 440ha property on Urana Road, Jindera.

In opening, I state that I have never made a financial contribution to any political party.

As you are no doubt aware, the wider Albury area (which includes Jindera, Walla Walla, Glenellen, Culcairn and other regions) has long been one of our country's largest contributor to the food source of our nation. We have a reliable rainfall and fertile land close to major markets, making this an ideal location for farming.

Over the past 142 years, our family has undertaken enterprises such as beef, sheep, crops and hay. My wife and I currently operate a Charolais cattle stud, a commercial herd of cattle as well as a small number of sheep. Although we have been affected by the drought, we have been fortunate enough to still be able to cut and store hay and silage this year.

Combination of the Culcairn, plus the three other proposed solar farms in our area, will in effect remove 6,500 acres from our farming food bowl. We've already lost a significant amount of farming land in Australia to subdivision.

I am not opposed to renewable energy. I am however, opposed to locating solar farms on good farming land, purely because the location is close to the grid.

My main concerns in relation to the proposed solar farm are as follows:

1. Loss of agricultural land – As stated above, this area has some of the best farming land in our country. The rainfall is fairly reliable, the soil is good quality fertile loam, ideal for cropping and grazing. I would feel the same way if one of our neighbours proposed a subdivision of this quality farming land.

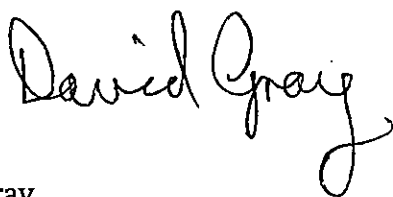
2. Loss of magnificent old trees – We understand there are large numbers of well established trees, some of which are 150 years old are to be removed from the sites to make way for panels. These trees provide nesting sites and corridors for birds, squirrel gliders and other wildlife. Some years ago, around 60 species of birdlife were identified on Huonlea, the property on which the Jindera solar farm is proposed. I understand that the companies are obligated to replace the trees, but replacing established trees with tube stock that may or may not survive is fairly useless.
3. Erosion in wet years and dust in dry years – it goes without saying that, without the current ground cover, there will be increased erosion and dust under the panels.
4. Filling in of dams –it doesn't make sense to fill in existing dams that currently supply reliable water source for stock and wildlife. There has been no mention as to how water will be provided for the sheep that will supposedly be grazing under the panels. The lack of dams would increase the volume and speed of run-off, which in turn will increase the risk of erosion.
5. Fire risk – I am concerned about the risk associated with accessing the area in the event of a fire, and the risk of toxic fumes.
6. Noise and increased wear and tear on local roads during the construction phase.
7. Visual impact –If the solar farm goes ahead, many families will be looking down on, or directly at the panels from their homes. In addition, I am aware that there is a local business (Orange Grove reception centre) that will be adversely impacted.
8. The companies implied that the local townsfolk would enjoy cheaper power. We all know this is not the case.

In closing, I would like to suggest that further consideration needs to be given to alternate locations for the solar farms. There are vast areas west of here where there are very few trees, no dams and plenty of sunlight. I understand the infrastructure is not there at this stage, however surely that should not be an issue.

I would also like to see solar panels on the rooftops of buildings in industrial estates, car parks, sporting facilities and other large buildings in our area. We took the step some time ago to put panels on our shearing shed. Apart from the fact that the rebate was dropped significantly afterwards, we have been very pleased with our decision to install the panels.

Thank you for taking the time to read my submission. If you wish to discuss my concerns with me, please contact me on 0427 808 395.

Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Gray". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, prominent 'D' and 'G'.

David Gray