

Submission

Grounds of objection

1. Disagree with the results of LUCRA on dwellings

The Department of Agriculture requested a Land Use Conflict Risk Assessment (LUCRA) where the impact on dwellings was assessed. The impact on dwellings was assessed as low risk with the following statement:

The closest dwelling is 180 metres to the west of the site and as such there is little risk of land use conflict. The landscape planting (if proposed) or some existing vegetation (particularly along Baroona Road) would reduce any risk of conflict.

The proposed issue management is that the land use plan be developed in consultation with adjacent landowners to minimise visual impacts where they arise following construction. (Appendix E, p15)

I am the owner of Netherby, a 2300 acre grazing property which includes the closest dwelling. Netherby shares a 1.6km boundary along the Baroona Road with the solar farm.

When the sun is in the west, the solar panels will be facing towards Netherby dwelling, creating negative environmental impacts for people and grazing animals. The rural landscape and scenic views will be destroyed and I believe the assessment of the risk of land use conflict should be medium or high unless a wider buffer zone planted with denser trees and shrubs is implemented.

The proposed buffer zone is not wide enough nor dense enough to minimise the visual impacts on the dwelling where they arise following construction. The proposed width of the buffer zone is not as wide nor as dense as discussed during consultation with the land owner.

2. Disagree with results of LUCRA on visual amenity

The Department of Agriculture requested a Land Use Conflict Risk Assessment (LUCRA) where the impact of visual amenity was assessed. The impact of visual amenity was assessed as low risk with the following statement:

The proposal site is adjacent to the Newell Highway and is well screened from the highway due to perimeter tree planting. A landscape plan will be developed in consultation with adjacent landowners to minimise visual impacts where they arise following construction. (Appendix E, p16)

Netherby is located on the western side of the proposed solar farm and has shared 1.6km frontage to the Baroona Road. The Proposal indicates a 10-metre-wide corridor around the perimeter of the site to include both:

- A 5 metre landscaped zone to minimise visual impacts
- A 5 metre buffer to prevent arrays being built right up against the boundary fence.

This corridor is not wide enough to successfully reduce the impact on visual amenity and needs to be much wider. The landscape plan should include a 30m corridor on the Western and Northern boundary to reduce the impact on visual amenity for the neighbours and the potential for future conflict.

The area between the Newell Highway and the solar farm fence is 30 metres wide and defined as well screened. The LUCRA states the Newell Highway and is *well screened from the highway due to*

perimeter tree planting. The natural vegetation is as dense as possible to achieve in this environment.

The corridor around the perimeter of the site should be located on the property, between the fence and the solar arrays. I request that the corridor should:

- Be used for dense planting of trees and shrubs to minimise visual impact
- Be 30metres wide
- Include planting of 2 rows of shrubs and trees with rows at least 10 metres apart to ensure the survival of plants in the long term
- Include a 5 metre buffer between the solar arrays and the planting of trees and shrubs.
- Be located along the entire Western and Northern boundary (excluding access point) to eliminate visual impact of the solar plant on neighbours and people using the Baroona Road.

The issue of visual amenity needs to be addressed before it leads to conflict and this can only be achieved by including a wider landscaping zone in the planning stages.

3. Disagree with the Landscape Plan due to local climatic conditions

The EIS describes the Landscape Plan in 3.2.7 as follows:

A landscape plan would be developed in consultation with adjacent landowners. The aim of the plan would be to minimise the visual impacts of the proposal (in particular the arrays and the ancillary infrastructure) on these adjacent landowners. Planting within the site would consist of locally occurring species, with a particularly focus on using native species removed by construction.

Vegetation would be planted within an approximately five-metre-wide buffer zone around the perimeter of the site in the vicinity of potentially impact properties. Vegetation (i.e. trees) would be planted in two staggered rows. The position and selection of screening vegetation would ensure that the survival of vegetation is maximised.

Figure 3.1 includes an indicative layout of the proposed screening based upon the location of dwellings at which visual impacts maybe experienced. The position of any screening vegetation would be confirmed during detailed design and following consultation with the relevant landowners.

The climate of the area is extremely hot and dry in summer making it very difficult to establish and maintain plants and trees. Trees need space to develop a root system that will sustain them through drought and heat, therefore a 5 metre corridor of 2 rows of trees is not sustainable. There needs to be a wider corridor of 30 metres between the boundary and the solar arrays to allow for the planting of 2 rows of trees and shrubs that will grow and survive.

I consulted a local native tree and seed specialist and he recommended:

- 2 rows of trees 20 metres apart
- Trees/shrubs planted 10 metres apart with an alternating placement in each row
- Trench to be ripped to a depth of at least 30 cm
- Use tube stock
- Water every 3 days during summer and dry periods
- Plant in autumn
- Water regularly to establish

4. Concerns about the ongoing maintenance of the planting of trees and shrubs

Point 3.2.7 describes ongoing maintenance as follows:

Screening vegetation would be maintained for the life of the solar farm. This would include replacing any vegetation which does not survive.

I agree with the need to allow for ongoing maintenance and replacement of the trees for the duration of the solar farm. My concerns about the future maintenance of trees and shrubs include:

- There will be a lower survival rate of trees and shrubs if they are planted too closely together and in too much competition with each other for water.
- There is mention of possibility of running stock on the solar farm after completion. If this occurs, the stock will need to be fenced out from the trees so that the trees and shrubs are not eaten off by the stock.
- Grass growing between rows should be slashed will to reduce fire risk rather than being sprayed. Spraying of grass has the potential to result in erosion of the topsoil and gullying.

5. Loss of land values

As a neighbouring land holder who is significantly impacted by the location the solar farm I am concerned about a possible decrease in land values in the vicinity the solar farm. Potential buyers may be de-motivated to buy when they view the negative environmental and visual impacts. Therefore it is critical to ensure the visual impact is addressed in the planning stages.