

I would like to make it very clear that I strongly object to the Maryvale Solar Farm as proposed by Photon Energy.

The land this proposed solar farm is being built on has been mapped as Biophysical Strategic Agricultural Land (BSAL).

Your own department, NSW Planning and Environment, clearly states that BSAL “is land with high quality soil and water resources capable of sustaining high levels of productivity” and that it “plays a critical role in sustaining the State’s \$12 billion agricultural industry”.

The NSW Government Large Scale Solar Energy Guidelines also lists BSAL land to be an area of constraint when it comes to site selection for a solar farm. **Constraint** – not do as you wish so you can meet our renewable energy targets!

If this land is so important to the agricultural industry, then why would your department even consider a proposal that is being built on this land? There is only so much of this land available in Australia, so why would we fill it with solar panels? Is the aim to import our food from other countries within the next few decades?

The EIS states that the farm “is not expected to impact or sterilise surrounding land use from routine agricultural practices during construction, operation and decommissioning”.

The key words in this statement are “**is not expected**”. No studies have been undertaken to show the long-term effects of solar farms on the land. There is nothing to say that the land will not become sterile following the operations involved with solar farms. If the company proposing the solar farm cannot guarantee the land will not become sterile, the question needs to be asked again, why are we risking our prime agricultural land?

I would like to call on the NSW Government to undertake their own research in relation to solar farms and the impacts that they have on our land. Not to be blindsided by studies and research that has clearly been funded by solar companies.

I would also ask that as part of conditions of approval, if this is determined in Photon’s favour, that the government insist that the company undertake soil tests every 12 months, which are to be reported back to the State Government and available for public perusal, to ensure that the soil quality of the land is not being compromised.

Prime agricultural land is just too important to risk for something that can have long-lasting and widespread damaging impacts to rural Australia.

The impact on the community by large scale solar farm developments also needs to be investigated. Wellington has six large scale solar farms that have either been determined or are in the process of being determined. This equates to more than 6000 acres of land in the area.

That is 6000 acres of farmland that will be lost to the community for the next 25 to 30 years. And, while there will be a short term boom in town while these projects are being built, it is not fair to risk the long-term loss.

It can be estimated a 2000 acre farm will spend \$250,000 per year in town. Local businesses, particularly agricultural businesses, who rely on this income will suffer massive losses from landholders who spend money in these businesses not just for one or two years, but every year. It is not fair to risk businesses in our town, which may also have a damaging impact on the future of Wellington, one of the oldest towns in Australia.