

Renee Seis
11/28-32 Berner Street,
Merewether, NSW 2291

Re: Stubbo Solar Farm, Application Number SSD-10452

To whom it may concern,

I object to the Stubbo Solar Farm project.

Our family property, "Yallambee" at 272 Merotherie Road, Gulgong shares at least 2 kilometres of fence line with the project, making our family property a direct and significant neighbour. I would like to highlight the lack of consultation and engagement that has been received from UPC\AC.

The EIS implies that it has completed "key consultation and engagement" with landowners and near neighbours. In Appendix B Community and Stakeholder Engagement Plan, it says specifically that there has been "targeted consultation with nearby landowners (within two kilometres of the Study Area)". The family property is one of, if not the most significantly impacted neighbours which will be affected by the solar farm, with around 2 kilometres of shared fence line - and well within 2 kilometres of the study area.

I strongly disagree with the statement that UPC\AC has completed targeted consultation with nearby landowners. The communication we have received from UPC\AC in relation to the Stubbo Solar Farm is highlighted below:

- Late 2018/ early 2019: Letter received asking for expressions of interest to be involved a potential development. As our family had heard nothing further after this, we assumed it did not progress any further
- 15th August 2020 & 4th September 2020: Responses from Stubbo Solar Farm to posts by my brother Jonathan Seis and myself on the Stubbo Solar Farm Facebook page, after we posted comments to a Stubbo Solar Farm Facebook post dated the 4th of August.
- 4th September 2020: Phone call received by my brother Christopher Seis, who is the landowner, followed by a subsequent email to Christopher noting that UPC\AC will send through a map showing our property and site boundary.
- Sometime between the 4th – 15th September 2020: Phone call from UPC\AC
- 15th September 2020: Email sent with attachment showing the property and the Stubbo Solar Farm study area.
- 28th of October 2020: My mother, Barbara, and Christopher spoke to UPC\AC representatives Michael Zippel and Killian Wentrup at the Stubbo Solar Farm Community Information Drop-In Session in Gulgong. Michael told them that he would be around for a couple of weeks and would pay them a visit.

UPC\AC says in Appendix B that they "dedicated a great deal of time and effort to ensuring that every landowner within a 2km radius of the site, and potential sensitive receptors within 5km of the site were informed about the project throughout the development process." Our family has not been informed throughout this process. We were not aware of this proposed development until August 2020, and this was not due to UPC\AC communicating with us. The only reason that we became aware of it is because one of my brothers is friends with one of the property owners who is committing land to the project. By the time we became aware of it, the website had been up for about 7 months and the Facebook page up for about 5 months. UPC\AC should have contacted Christopher and/ or my mother long before that point to ensure they knew what was happening,

especially when, as they say in the EIS, they started their targeted consultation with nearby landowners in early 2019.

On the 4th of August, Stubbo Solar Farm had posted on Facebook that they had extended the study area after talks with their “project neighbours”. At no time was our family involved in these talks to extend the study area. As of the 4th of August, my family still did not know anything about the project, and as noted above, did not find out about it from UPC\AC’s representatives.

On the 15th of August, after he saw UPC\AC’s post from the 4th of August, Jonathan pointed out to UPC\AC that our family was one of the largest project neighbours and we had not been contacted by them. After some posts back and forth between Jonathan and UPC\AC on the 15th of August, our family subsequently still heard nothing from any UPC\AC representatives. It was not until I posted to the same thread almost 3 weeks later on the 4th of September 2020 that UPC\AC contacted Christopher.

In their responses to Jonathan and myself in the Facebook comments, Stubbo Solar Farm claimed that they had difficulty in contacting our family. I cannot understand why for the following reasons:

- The initial letter for the expression of interest found its way to the family property with no problems,
- the sending of the initial letter indicates that UPC\AC had identified the Lot Numbers and Addresses in the area they wanted to target,
- UPC\AC had been in contact with Mid-Western Region Council and their records show the address of the property and Lot Numbers,
- Lot Numbers and property addresses are very easy to search for via Land Registry Services Online,
- the surname of Seis is not common, and
- the phone number of the property is readily available in the White Pages.

In their comments, Stubbo Solar Farm said that a letter was sent to the address that corresponded to the title and if it was not received then it must have been incorrect. Stubbo Solar Farm did not say when the letter was sent when I asked the question. They subsequently said that “a letter will be arriving shortly”. Given the nature of the development, I find it very surprising that there was no attempt to follow up the letter with a phone call. At the time of these Facebook posts, as per what is said in the EIS, it would be getting close to 18 months since consultation with nearby landowners commenced. This timeframe requires more of a genuine attempt to contact a key neighbour than sending a letter and doing nothing further.

Stubbo Solar Farm could have also used the Facebook posts to make more meaningful contact with Jonathan and/ or myself. They chose not to. Instead of being pro-active, the comments back to Jonathan and myself included asking to give them the contact details they needed.

The first time any of our family met any UPC\AC representatives in person, and the only time there has been any meaningful consultation and engagement was when my mother and Christopher met Michael Zippel and Killian Wentrup at the Gulgong Community Information Drop-In session on the 28th of October 2020. Whilst there Christopher expressed concerns about how UPC\AC would manage a bushfire.

The response to this concern was that the Captain of the Fire Brigade would be given a key to the Solar Farm. The area has seen a lot of bushfires over the years (with one bushfire 40 years ago that devastated many farms in the area, including parts of the study area and the family property). This

response to a genuine concern based on the past experiences of my family indicates to me that UPC\AC do not understand and/or do not take very seriously the threat that bushfires pose. Given the toxic materials that are in the solar panels I doubt that the local Fire Brigade would be coming to fight it at all if the fire is damaging the panels. It is very hard to feel comfortable that the concern was taken on board given the response. It is even harder to feel comfortable that in the event of a bushfire, UPC\AC will manage it properly.

My mother and Christopher were also told during the Drop-In Session that that one of the UPC\AC representatives would be around the area for a couple of weeks and would come and visit them. They are still waiting for that visit and no contact has been made with them since.

At the time of the Drop-In session, UPC\AC used COVID-19 as their reason for not visiting the property. Whilst COVID-19 has posed its challenges, this does not seem like a reasonable excuse: they still held their Community Drop-In session, at the time of the Drop-In session a representative was going to be around for a couple of weeks, there have never been any cases in the Gulgong area, and it would be quite easy to ensure a COVID-19-safe visit on the property any time prior to or after the Drop-In session if they wanted to facilitate meaningful engagement.

Christopher also asked a UPC\AC representative about planting trees along the edge of the shared fence line so that there could be a buffer between his property and the solar farm to reduce the visual impacts of seeing the solar farm from certain points on the property. He was advised that UPC\AC would not do it as there is little impact from it. Given that no one from UPC\AC has stepped on the property, I fail to see how anyone from UPC\AC can say that. It also indicates to me that UPC\AC are inflexible and will not easily accommodate or work with their neighbours.

It seems to me that Stubbo Solar Farm did not think making contact and engaging with my family, one of their key neighbours, any priority whatsoever, and they certainly have not been proactive in trying to do so. There has not been much genuine effort on UPC\AC's part. In the limited time my family has had to engage with them, UPC\AC seem to have been dismissive of concerns and the request raised (and the request is not asking much from a project the size of Stubbo Solar Farm), nor have they endeavoured to understand or accommodate them. In the context of the lack of engagement, I am baffled by why this is the case.

In the EIS, UPC\AC says that some near neighbours who initially raised concerns have become more comfortable as a result of their consultation efforts. I can assure the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment that my family, a significant neighbour, is not more comfortable as a result of the consultation efforts of UPC\AC.

Declaration

I declare that I have not made any political donations in the last 2 years.