

Name: Tammie Booth

Address: 21 Blue Hole Road, Castledoyle, NSW 2350

OBJECTION

SSD No. 10346 Oxley Solar Farm Armidale

Dear Minister

I write to **object** to the proposed solar farm development by applicant Oxley Solar Farm Development Pty Ltd, south-east of Armidale, NSW. This proposed development will significantly impact myself, my family and the wider community. The location of this development is unsuitable for several reasons, which are evident upon visiting the proposed site.

It is mentioned in the EIS put forward by OSD that comprehensive consultation with affected landholders was undertaken, and listed by date on pages 71 and 72. The information regarding consultation opportunities have been lacking, using a limited number of avenues, mostly consisting of newspaper and radio advertisements. I do not use either of these mediums very regularly and therefore have heard most information by word of mouth. Not very good for a company proposing a multimillion-dollar development. In the meeting requested by myself with Mr. Bruce Howard on 17th September 2020, he did not have any answers to my concerns or questions, instead stating different areas of the company would have those answers or referring to the Department of Planning. He behaved in a manner which was not very empathetic to our situation and seemingly without adequate knowledge of the development. Appendix C Community Consultation Plan outlines proposed engagement activity and includes near neighbours be contacted at milestones in the development to touch base and seek feedback. This has not occurred. It also states phone contact will be made with near neighbours when the EIS is on public exhibition, this has not happened either.

I am extremely appalled by the choice of photos of the proposed site used in the EIS. Figures 1-3 to 1-8 are an inaccurate depiction of the landscape, showing a much flatter view of the proposed site than the reality. They are not a true representation of the undulating terrain. I urge you Minister, to view this location in person to really see the true location of this development. Furthermore, there are no images showing the adjacent landholders views of the site, only carefully selected pictures from the public road. The DPIE's own Large-Scale Solar Energy Guidelines state selection issues may exist especially in sites with high visibility such as those on prominent or high ground positions, or elevated nearby residences with views toward the site. This describes my position in relation to the development accurately. If you were to see this site, you will understand the proposed screens for my residence (p. 158) would need to be planted next to my window to block the potential view of the solar panels should this development be approved. It would take many years for a vegetation screen to grow high enough to reduce the visual impact from my perspective. It is clear that this key constraint has clearly been disregarded by OSD. In addition, OSD states (page 107) they have

commenced discussions with landholders regarding screening. This has not happened. When the issue of visual impact was raised with Mr. Howard at the abovementioned meeting, he simply said OSD would plant trees. When the height and rate of growth needed from our perspective was raised, he did not have an answer. It is noted that the EIS shows a proposed screen around our house yard to minimise the visual impact (page 165). This has not been discussed with us. It would block our view entirely and defeat the purpose of us purchasing this land in the first place. Many nearby residences are at the same or similar elevation in relation to the development site as us and will also have their views significantly impacted.

The EIS put forward by OSD also describes the proposed site to have 2.3m high security fencing with barbed wire topping and local flood lighting. The lighting will be installed around the development with automatic security system settings to detect unauthorised entry; will this come on with every movement of the wildlife? This is mentioned in the EIS as 'to be confirmed during design phase' (p.54). Could this end up being higher and more extensive? My family purchased this property, enticed by its outlook and quiet undisturbed rural setting, for my young family to grow up in. This will be drastically changed should the proposed development be approved, and our family home will no longer provide us with what we have worked so hard to purchase and enjoy.

Recently my immediate family was impacted by the bushfires that came into the Oxley Wild Rivers National Park. The effects on their emotional state and wellbeing, as well as their businesses and family homes were immense. To propose a solar farm so close to a National Park that has recently had hectares burn uncontrollably, taking livestock and homesteads, seems unthinkable. The measures proposed to prevent fire risk surrounding this development seems futile and uneducated. One of the fire measures indicated are the use of one of the dams to access water to fight potential fires however, it is stated in 4.6.2 of the EIS that decommissioning of the dams within the development will be undertaken as part of the site preparation and earthworks, reducing the available water sources. This can only result in the use of water from our local supply to fight potential fires that may impact our area due to the increased fire risk this development would pose. Having recently endured a crippling drought where water use was very limited in our local area, I have grave concerns surrounding the severity of the risk and danger of this development being proposed in such proximity to the National Park.

The New England is renowned for its diverse agricultural production, generating billions of dollars into the economy each year. Developing this prime agricultural land for solar energy is incompatible with the land use in this area. This development on another site, less productive agriculturally, would allow this land to continue to be productive in the agricultural sector, whilst allowing solar energy production as well on an alternate site. When purchasing our land, we were aware of its covenants and as such were happy that our block and the surrounding land was zoned for rural production. The development of this land is a gross loss of productive agricultural land and conflicting with the surrounding area and its uses. As a third-generation farming family I am concerned that developments that could be proposed on sites that have little to no use in other areas are being approved on valuable and productive agricultural land.

I have no objection to renewable energy however, I believe the proposed location for the Oxley Solar Farm has been chosen purely for its proximity to the transmission/distribution infrastructure,

with no consideration given to the countless impacts on our local community. Additionally, the proposed location contradicts council and government planning. It has disregarded the value and importance of the existing agricultural industry in the area, the effects it will have on the value of our scenic and recreational assets that draw thousands of tourists into our local area each year and the disruption of a lifestyle and location many of us have worked very hard for.

I would like to express my full support of the written submission put forward by the Castledoyle Solar Farm Action Group.

Sincerely,
Tammie Booth