

Objection to Oxley Solar Farm Armidale

SSD 10346

Rutherglen

1125 Castledoye Rd

Armidale 2350

31-08-19

Dear Sir/Madam

I write this submission to object to the solar farm SSD 10346.. The awareness of this proposal has been an area of concern and given my residence is very close to the proposed farm it is alarming that the community has not had more input given its location is very close to Armidale, impacts many properties in the area and is next to a national park.

I support sustainable energy projects but only when they are communicated responsibly and there is good planning and fully researched and then responsibly located. I cannot understand the need to place the farm, or any farm, in such proximity to a city. I do not accept finances as an excuse to locating the farm away from the town. The company should be factoring in the cost of locating and building transformers in more remote areas.

On research regarding the proposal, I am genuinely concerned about several issues. Some of these include

- There is an obvious lack of communication/ consultation with relevant stakeholders including myself. Specifically, the lack of information and the vagueness of the proposal. There has been purposeful lack of awareness as there was some consultation during Covid lockdowns that clearly people could not get to. I have received one flyer in the mail but never any specific information and am only informed due to the local committee. By consultation I mean meaningful and respectful consultation that looks at the arguments or concerns and then negotiates some responsible solutions or compromises. To date I have only found out about the proposal due to the hard work of some of the community to keep us informed. The company responsible would appear to be doing its best to minimise input from the community and the “consultation” appears to be because they “must” not because they are genuinely interested in the concerns.
- The environmental factors including the aesthetic, cultural and agricultural output of the land. The Aboriginal heritage within the Oxley area is rich and speaking to the Elders in the community the consultation is minimal and again almost patronising.
- The disposal of the panels when the “use by” date is reached. In my limited experience the destruction and “life” of the panels are not addressed and are a major concern. Currently on my parents’ property some of the panels have ceased to work and there are no guides as to destruction or reason they have stopped working or being effective.
- The effects on land values of properties or house values if they can sell. This is obviously based on assumptions but land values with a view of 1 million panels are likely to decrease or be difficult to sell.

- The lack of a cultural assessment/impact with the local Aboriginal people. This is indicated in the scoping report – table 4.2 that much more consultation needs to be initiated to understand the cultural significance.
- The lack of benefit to Armidale community. This project is aimed at and I quote
 “1. Attract renewable energy investment and projects.
 2. Build community support for renewable energy.
 3. Attract and grow expertise in renewable energy”

I understand the need to pursue these projects but as a community member who lives close to the project and had to find out via neighbours, this is not building confidence that this is what the project is aimed at. These are business projects looking at the cheapest most effective way for the company to benefit. Australia has so much land that is not usable and not built up – why can they not factor in the costs and build and harness solar energy in the non-built-up areas. I do not accept cost in a first world country as an argument when dealing with multinational companies.

These goals do not require a significant solar farm to be built in areas that are inhabited by rural folk. The proposed areas of Dubbo Armidale and Hay are all significant Rural areas in NSW. They would not try to do this in parklands in Sydney as the community would not accept this. There is so much unused land in Australia. These goals could be reached using this land.

- The location is close to a town and a national park. There is a lot of biodiversity in this national park including fauna and flora that are endangered. This is a tourist attraction and a significant tourist venue to living in a town like Armidale.
- The report states
 “to reduce land use conflict and sterilisation of rural land by balancing primary production, residential development and the protection of native vegetation, biodiversity and water resources, c) to identify State significant agricultural land for the purpose of ensuring the ongoing viability of agriculture on that land, having regard to social, economic and environmental considerations,” but the project is being built on grazing land that is cleared and used for this purpose.

This submission is to object to the proposal. Armidale is a town that relies on agriculture and tourism and this proposal threatens both these important contributors to the community.

The Castledoye solar farm action group is now the only place I am receiving information about the project from and is providing responsible information about the project and are made up of many professional people who are appalled at the location of this project. I fully support the committee and its objectives.

Thankyou

Fiona Simmons 13/04/2021

