

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed changes to the Walla Walla Solar Development Approval. As a neighbour I was assured that changes were made to mitigate my concerns. We were always told that they were “the best at what they do” that the project had been “paused” and “they had gone over it with a fine-toothed comb and made sure that everything was in order” yet here we are without a pole in the ground, and they need to adjust the panel heights, spacing between rows, the transport route and the substation location and height.

Transport Route: I along with other neighbours were told that FRV had listened to our concerns and as a result they had reconfigured their transport plan and no vehicles would be using the section of Benambra Road between Weeamara Road and our driveway. To date FRV have provided us with no specific reason for this requested change, and they have not consulted with the community. I would have thought if there was a valid and genuine reason for this requested change, they would be telling us what it was. Unfortunately, it appears that it is simply inconvenient for them to construct the access road prior to commencing construction of the solar farm so they are now suggesting this won't impact us. I also note that in planning to commence the construction of the Substation they have made no mention of the condition of consent that requires them to complete their plantings prior to the commencement of construction. Again, another mitigation measure they were doing for the neighbours that now seems to be conveniently overlooked.

In relation to the NGH assessment that was recently undertaken. FRV had committed to keeping us informed of what was happening with the project however they only told us after these assessments were completed. My wife and I had noticed there were people doing surveys on Benambra Road when my wife asked them what they were doing? They said roadside surveys. She asked them who they worked for? They said they couldn't say. She asked if it was to do with Solar? They said they didn't know they'd just been asked to do surveys. She contacted Colin Kane from council as she was concerned that they were surveying the section of Benambra Road that we had been promised they wouldn't be using. He said he hadn't heard anything about it and didn't know who was there or what they were doing. We have had to contact them on a few occasions now to ask what is happening. This causes a lot of anxiety and as we can now see they aren't concerned about mitigating our concerns they are only concerned with meeting their needs.

Panel Height Adjustment: When they told us they were taking away 200,000 panels we asked if taking away 200,000 panels changed the capacity of the project and were assured that it did not. We asked if it meant that the panels would be moved closer together to allow for the additional setback from Orange Grove Gardens and were assured, they would not. The advice we received was that the technology had changed so much since the beginning of the planning process that they were able to generate the same amount of power from 200,000 less panels. The reduction in panels would not create any other changes to the project. So, despite having the new panel information at the time the plan was submitted they failed to mention the change in height/size and failed to mention that the panels would need to be moved closer together. They indicate that the panels will only be higher for 30-60 minutes per day, but I don't believe that this is correct. If the panels are bigger the racks will have to be higher which will increase the height of the whole array all day every day and it will take even longer for the screening plants to block them out. But yet again they twist and manipulate words to suit their needs. Again, we are expected to just accept it and their assessment that it will have no impact on us.

Substation: I cannot tell you how frustrated this requested change makes me. They have constantly told us that they are “the best at what they do” that the project had been “paused” and “they had gone over it with a fine-toothed comb and made sure that everything was in order” but they have overlooked a major piece of the process. If they cannot connect to the grid their project is useless. Yet

despite this they have only now discovered that they made an error and despite numerous promises that they moved the substation away from us to mitigate our concerns and to make it less visible they now want to move it 30m closer to us and increase the pole heights by 15 metres (that is a 5-storey building) to meet Australian Standards (which it appears have not changed in recent years). Now this is a company that boasts about their reputation, they boast about having several other projects connected to the grid and operational, they told us they had done "EXTENSIVE" technical surveys, studies and drawings (at a significant cost), and worked closely with TransGrid to determine which location would have the "least visual impact" on us (despite never coming to our home to assess that) and none of them thought to look at how they were going to connect the substation to the grid until now!". This is a \$400k project and the only way it works is to connect it to the grid and no one checked that their plans were accurate? Or is it just a case that they knew when they got to this point the department of planning wouldn't say no to a change request? We have repeatedly told them if they move the substation to the 3rd transmission tower it would be not only in our background instead of our foreground that there is better visual shielding from our location, but we have been told they have assessed it and think this location "conveniently the one furthest from and least visible to the involved land holders" is best for us. We strongly disagree!

Our experience with FRV to date has been less than satisfactory. We were not told when Cliona left the project and moved back overseas, until I had queried something and was advised that she had left. At the time Rob Beckett from DPIE followed up for me and got back to me advising that I could contact him or the DPIE team anytime I had concerns. Less than 4 weeks later he was introduced as Cliona's replacement. Rob was one of the contacts that we had within the department. He has been privy to conversations and information that many neighbours and objectors felt would have been confidential now here he is with that information working for FRV (I and many others see this as a huge conflict of interest). Not only does he have that information, but he also has the inside scoop on what modifications would and would not get approved and how to get around certain aspects that may be tricky. This puts us as neighbours and community members at a significant disadvantage. Not to mention that he also has significant connections within the DPIE. I cannot see how in his role he would not be using all of this to his advantage, and I think this creates a huge moral and ethical issue for this project and the Department assessing any requests associated with it. We have had poor communication with FRV often having to email them to find out what is happening on site despite promises we would be kept informed. NGH who they use for their surveys when asked what they were doing when conducting roadside surveys refused to identify themselves or confirm they were associated with the solar project, which again creates further anxiety.

We request that when assessing these changes that you deny them and hold the company to account. They have had since approximately July 2019 to get this right. They made promises and are now relying on the fact that they have approval, that no changes will be rejected. There are 3 other approved projects in this area alone and if you allow these types of changes to go ahead how is anyone supposed to have faith that the conditions of consent mean anything.

Many thanks