

Culcairn Solar Farm Objection

- **Preservation of Agricultural Land:** Australia only has a certain amount of high quality agricultural land and we need to protect it. Many areas in Australia are no longer suited to farming due to effects of ongoing drought. The area surrounding Culcairn is largely unaffected by drought and the farming land is still successfully producing agricultural crops and raising sheep and cattle.
- Due to the ongoing drought and climate change, food prices are predicted to grow. We are importing more agricultural produce due to the prolonged drought. We are well positioned to grow all the food required but if we utilise productive farming land for other uses such as solar we will not be capable of growing the amount of produce required for our own needs. Australia in 2019 year imported wheat for the first time in 12 years after drought across the eastern states saw grain production fall last year. This Grain was imported from Canada. This raises biosecurity concerns among grain growers about the risk of bringing in a disease or new weed strains to Australia.
- There are many areas in Australia that are more suited to the installation of solar farms. Examples would be areas that are no longer suitable for farming due to drought and lack of consistent water sources. The State and Federal Governments need to have an overall plan which includes building the required infrastructure in communities that would benefit financially and socially from the installation of solar farms.
- **Change of ambience of Culcairn surrounds:** Culcairn is situated in a beautiful country setting. People move here to experience this lifestyle. A large proportion of the surrounding landscape will change from picturesque agricultural land to that of an area with an industrial appearance. The ambience of the area is important to the mental well- being of the local residents. Property values will be affected and no compensation is offered to affected residents.
- **Heat transmission from the panels** will impact upon local climatic conditions and result in heat transmission out of the solar farm and into close neighbouring properties. People in neighbouring areas could suffer health issues with the loss of vegetation and gardens. As the area is known to reach a temperatures in the forties in summer a rise of several degrees will be very unpleasant for the nearby residents.
- **After the contract expires:** How will the local residents be assured that the area will not be damaged or left in a state of deterioration when the contract finishes? What will Greater Hume Shire look like in the future with huge acreage taken up by solar panels? At the moment it is a picturesque area but it could quite possibly become an eye- sore in the future. The Company developing the site is foreign owned. There is nothing to stop it selling (once the project is built) to another company, who then, may not adhere to the original agreements such as removal of infrastructure after the contract is finished. We have been assured the land owner will be responsible if the company does not reinstate the land to its original condition. However in thirty years' time the original landowner may not be living on the affected property.

- **Tree Removal:** Many trees are to be removed for the construction of the solar plant. This is a significant loss of native habitat in the area.
- **Bird life/ Conservation of habitat and species:** Species diversity and habitat will be destroyed by the clearing of local trees and vegetation. Fencing of the perimeter will prevent native wildlife from moving freely through the area.
- **Ongoing Dust problem:** It will be difficult to maintain vegetation below the panels. This could create a significant source of dust for nearby residents.
- **Weed management** under and around panels will require large, regular doses of chemical herbicides. This will be a possible health hazard for local residents. The compacting of the soil and the change in the microclimate under the panels will have a long-lasting effect on soil productivity.
- **Fencing and Screening:** Indications are that the area will be fenced including the use of shade cloth. It will not take long for the shade cloth in windy conditions to become unsightly and dilapidated. There have been suggestions that the area will be screened by suitable vegetation but the details of this are not transparent. It will take many years for such planting to be effective. Will the residents be properly informed of what vegetation will be used and how long this will take to effectively block the unsightly view of solar panels?
- **Bushfire risk:** The bushfire emergencies in Australia this summer highlight the problems inherent in the installation of solar panels in rural/residential areas. We understand that bushfire brigades are not happy to enter the property in the event of a bushfire. It is difficult to fight a fire with the close placement of the solar panels.
- **Fires causing release of chemicals into the atmosphere and the neighbourhood.** What is the situation in the case of fires regarding the release of chemicals into the atmosphere from the burning infrastructure? The air-quality in the event of a fire involving a solar farm could have a catastrophic effect on the health of nearby residents and the fire- fighting crews. In the case of asthma sufferers this could be fatal.
- **Insurance Cost Increase for Residents:** If a fire breaks out on neighbours' property and damages the solar plant how does the resident ensure their insurance policy will cover this? It is likely that insurance policies will increase for nearby residents.
- **During Construction:** Local residents will be adversely affected by dust, noise and traffic movement. There will be a large number of trucks driving down local dirt roads during the construction. Will local councils be reimbursed for this and roads maintained/repared immediately damage occurs? During construction we have

been informed that the noise level of installation is well over acceptable levels of noise pollution set down by the Environmental Protection Authority.

The dot points above highlight the reasons for my opposition to any solar farm in close proximity to the township of Culcairn.