

I object to the Culcairn Solar project on a number of levels. These are numbered below.

Firstly, I object to the nomenclature of the Culcairn Solar project, as a farm, where in fact it is a major industrial plant. This is a plant, where there is multimillion dollar infrastructure, major changes to the community, and long term impact to the community. In calling it a farm, there has been a lack of due diligence in the planning of this project. If this was considered a major industrial enterprise, there would be far more planning, consultation, and research into the contracted companies. The companies involved have little information on their financial success, which is important, as if these companies fold, there is uncertainty as to the future of the infrastructure on our community. The planning is rushed. In undertaking research about this area, I have discovered that this area was graded in the 1980s drought as occasionally arable land, which if due diligence was being undertaken, would be reviewed, as this is very reliable land for agricultural production. The timing of this is extremely difficult for farmers in this area, as in the midst of a statewide drought this area is producing hay, stock and grain, and they have a huge workload and stress in considering responses to this project.

Secondly, I object to the installation of these plants in an area that, unlike many other areas of the state, is not being residualised in population and demographic as other rural areas of NSW. As a resident and taxpayer in NSW, I am concerned that this area of the state is enjoying a growth in young families and diverse enterprise, a traditional hub within travelling distance from Albury in NSW. The size of the plants compromise a significant business operation in Culcairn, The Orange Grove reception centre, which has not considered community consultation. The size of this plant is enormous – the biggest development seen in any recent proposals.

The impact on the infringement of the community needs careful, thorough and diligent consideration, and the long term future of the community needs to be factored into this project development. In a time where there are so many communities suffering from residualisation, due to drought and the Murray Darling Basin Plan impact, there are areas in the state that could much better support the development of such a large industrial plant. I understand that this is due to the location of the plants to the existing grid, but this again is a rushed decision – a new grid west of this area could much better support alternate townships, an injection of much needed infrastructure in residualised areas of the state.

Thirdly, I object to the installation of the Culcairn Solar Plant on prime agricultural land. In the midst of a drought, this area is producing hay, stock and grain, with large numbers of neighbouring farming enterprises affected in proximity of the plants. I object to the removal of high numbers of old trees, creating salinity issues in an area that has never experienced them. I object to the removal of farmland with historical significance, and there is much conjecture over the change in microclimate. I have seen the huge number of weeds under the recently opened Finley plants, and all the information regarding grazing opportunities are negated to me by what I have seen. In all of this, as a resident of the Jindera area, and understanding what may transpire in our local area, there are concerns about fire hazards, and even the insurance prospect of residents nearby has not been thought about. Farms neighbouring the plants may not be able to insure their properties, and so one neighbour will profit, and one neighbour will not be able to conduct business without major upgrade if obtainable public liability insurance. This, in a district with a number of small productive farms affects the long term health of a now-thriving community.

Lastly, after the most horrendous fire season in NSW in living memory, the consideration of placing such plants in areas where there is a fire risk. The factors of community safety, along with

immeasurable repercussions on insurance premiums for neighbouring farms. If renewable energy is placed in arid, sparse areas, this risk to this vegetated local community would be negated.

Ultimately, what I object to most is that in our state, we have always made haste slowly. There is a need to consider renewable energy opportunities, but to rush into such huge decisions, the considerations of location, local impact, productivity, community health, wildlife habitat and risk have not been taken into account in a thorough and timely manner.