
SUTTON SOLAR ACTION GROUP

Springdale Solar Development's potential impact on threatened fauna

There are currently two Senate Inquiries taking place that have potential implications for the proposed Springdale Solar Development.

The Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications Inquiry into Australia's Faunal Extinction Crisis and the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee Inquiry into the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

In May this year, Dr Deon Nel, Executive Director of Conservation for WWF International, in the UN's Sustainable Development Organisation Report said,

"It's no longer useful to treat climate change, biodiversity loss and land degradation as separate challenges. These challenges are completely interlinked & require a far more unified and cohesive response".

Whilst Australia is a signatory to the much talked about Paris Agreement re Climate Change, we are also a signatory to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (the Aichi Target), one target of which specifically states –

"By 2020 the extinction of known threatened species has been prevented and their conservation status, particularly of those in most decline, has been improved and sustained".

59% of all mammals, 40% of reptiles and 30% of birds in NSW are threatened with extinction. It is little wonder then that it is widely recognised that Australia is struggling to meet its Aichi targets.

The biggest challenge facing such threatened species, is the destruction of habitat & land clearing.

The SSAG has made a submission to the 'Inquiry into Australia's Faunal Extinction Crisis', using the proposed Springdale Solar Development as an example of how various, already threatened fauna in this area, could be severely affected by the development. https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Environment_and_Communications/Faunalextinction

Residents would already be aware that Springdale was referred by the NSW Government to the Commonwealth due to "matters of national environmental significance", and the project is a "controlled action" under the EPBC Act.

The Government identified a number of threatened species and communities that may occur within 5km of the proposed development. They suggested that there is likely to be significant impacts to:

- Golden sun moth; and
- Natural temperate grassland of the south eastern highlands

In addition, they identified further potential risks to:

- Superb parrot;
- Striped legless lizard; and
- White box – yellow box – Blakely's red gum grassy woodland and derived native grassland

Their assessment goes on to say,

"This list is not exhaustive and it is the proponent's responsibility to ensure any relevant protected matters under this controlling provision are adequately assessed for the Commonwealth decision-makers consideration".

We specifically pointed out in our Senate submission that the Springdale EIS states how 'low impact' the development will be, but with terms like 'levelling and grading' "to achieve more suitable gradients" peppered through the EIS for roadways, siting of the solar trackers as well the 24 buildings on the site, it does not sound low impact. Our concern is that this site is going to be 'engineered' to suit the development, not the other way around.

In 2011 Professor Mark Burgman, an Environmental Scientist from the University of Melbourne likened environmental impact assessments as "death by a thousand cuts". Fast forward to December 2018, and little appears to have changed.

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