

Sutton Solar Action Group Update

The Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) have confirmed to the SSAG that they will complete their assessment of the Springdale Solar development by the end of September and forward their assessment to the Independent Planning Commission (IPC).

In a letter to the SSAG in late August the DPIE also advised that they are taking into account, as part of their assessment, all of the potential impacts of the development raised by the SSAG on behalf of the local community, including the transport network, visual amenity, biodiversity including regional habitat connectivity, flooding, suitability of the site and the local regional socio-economic benefits.

In their correspondence the DPIE also recognised that in regard to the timing of Aboriginal cultural heritage subsurface testing on the site, the original developer, Renew Estate, had committed to undertake the testing prior to the DPIE's final assessment of the project. The DPIE also confirmed that Renew Estate had advised the DPIE, "on a number of occasions during 2019 that it intended to complete the subsurface testing prior to lodging the Submissions Report and that it was planning to start the works". It is now history that Renew Estate, although advising the DPIE they intended to carry out the works and that information likewise being provided to the SSAG by the DPIE, no such works have been carried out.

In May 2020 the new developer (RES Australia Pty Ltd) proposed that they undertake the subsurface testing following determination by the DPIE and that approach was accepted by the Department. This is proof that Renew Estate continually

misled both the Department and the local community for some 18 months that the proposed Aboriginal cultural heritage testing was what was holding up their providing a response to our objections to the development. It is little wonder that there has been very little trust by the local community in what the developers of the Springdale project have been telling us from the start.

The Department has further confirmed that as part of their assessment they will be examining the merits of the project by reviewing all the issues raised during consultation by key agencies, Council, the local community and interest groups including those raised by the Sutton Solar Action Group. The Department will also be considering the land use compatibility and land zoning for the site and the issues raised by Yass Valley Council in its assessment.

As the project was determined to be a controlled action under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 the Department will work closely with the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment in its assessment on matters of national environmental significance, including the impacts to the Golden Sun Moth.

Once the Department finalises its assessment and hands it to the IPC, the IPC will undertake further consultation with the local community before any final decision is made.

The SSAG will keep you apprised of further developments via the website <https://suttonsolaraactiongroup.com/>

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