



Our aim is to protect our rural landscape and the biodiversity of this area for the benefit of all.

<https://suttonsolaractiongroup.com/>
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Submission on behalf of the Sutton Solar Action Group

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Before going into specifics here is an outline of our objections to the DPIE's recommendation to approve the proposed Springdale development.

Overall, the outcome for the residents **has not improved** despite what the DPIE claims.

We believe the DPIE has shown an extreme bias towards the developer, who is the second one, and like the first have treated this community with disdain (see our consultation log included in this submission). The only real change is removal of 2.6ha of panels, a mere 1.4% and has done little for the residents that still overlook the entire site.

Subjecting families to live behind (Tintinhull Road is their only access) **and travel through this development** every time they leave their homes **for the next 30 plus years, which is almost 13,000 days is indefensible.**

The developers use worst case scenarios, **here is a worst-case scenario for those families. What if there is a fire or any situation anywhere on site that restricts those family's ability to leave? You will all be responsible for whatever happens to those families. God forbid. Is this development that important so as to put people's lives in jeopardy? This is not being melodramatic; can the developers guarantee this won't happen?**

A few trees that may or may not grow and a tokenistic offer that some might call a 'bribe', is considered acceptable. Whatever a developer says is accepted and considered correct, with little to no questions being asked. Would you expect a developer to tell you anything you didn't want to hear? Their motivation is financial gain, not for presenting a well-considered and thoroughly researched proposal.

Why is our material any less credible? The developer's make unsubstantiated claims and ours are backed by facts?

We also been advised that RES intends to sell the Springdale project should it be approved. This would mean this community could be in for a triple whammy! This is a mere game to developers, it's our existence.

Here are some facts.

- ☛ The local community has overwhelmingly objected to the development. DPIE included 75 interstate submissions in their counts, why are they included, isn't this a NSW development?
- ☛ The Yass Valley Council (YVC) does not support the development in this area, despite how the DPIE likes to misconstrue the legislation. YVC's outlook for this area is to remain largely the same.
- ☛ The group representing the community the Sutton Solar Action Group (SSAG) objects to the development. Our members lodged their own individual submissions. The SSAG has acted for the community in all dealings with the DPIE since close of submissions.
- ☛ The Sutton and District Community Association Inc. (SDACI) have made it very clear they, are extremely concerned about the issue of traffic through the village and how inept any Traffic Management Plan would be at managing vehicle movements and how nothing in it will be enforceable by the developer. The crux of the problem is that while the designated heavy vehicle route claims to be chosen on least use of local roads, it is the route with the most safety concerns. Surely public safety comes first.
- ☛ The SDCAI also discusses concerns about fire. If a fire starts within the high voltage fenced off areas, who will fight these fires, are the local Rural Fire Services equipped to do so, or do they have to wait for specialised fire fighters to come in? As for the 20,000 lt water tank it will be of little use in a serious fire situation.
- ☛ Should a fire start on a neighbouring property and go into the proposed development area the average landowner will not have anywhere near the amount of public liability to cover any damage that may be incurred as a result of that fire. What will happen in this case? Will the neighbours lose their home and property because they don't have enough public liability insurance? NO ONE HAS THOUGHT ABOUT THIS! Another impact on surrounding landowners.
- ☛ The OEH has previously provided advice on the significance of the area to maintain biodiversity links with other regions of NSW and support the 5km buffer zone.

- ☛ What community consultation? What a joke, both Renew Estate and RES have completely ignored this community and DPIE only made contact with the SSAG in response to our approaches.
- ☛ The chances of the developer engaging with the community in a meaningful and respectful manner when they have done nothing to develop a relationship so far, is most unlikely. **By imposing this huge development on a community and council who objected so strongly you will be creating a very adversarial environment.**
- ☛ The DPIE is condoning and encouraging this type of behaviour by developers by not even mentioning how poorly this development application has been handled, perhaps because it also includes their lack of action.
- ☛ There should be some form of disadvantage/punishment for developers who do not genuinely engage with the community. As long as they do the bare minimum, no one seems to care about the people who will be impacted by these developments.
- ☛ Other projects have been rejected for insufficient community consultation by developers (i.e., Jupiter). **What is so different in our case?**
- ☛ Our frustration with how this development has been handled by the DPIE warranted SSAG meeting with the NSW Planning Minister in April 2020, we lost count of how many times Minister Stokes apologised.
- ☛ DPIE misled this community about the reason for the delay of the Response to Submissions (RTS) from December 2018 (submissions closed on 29 August 2018) until 7 April 2020. The DPIE told the SSAG on five occasions that Renew Estate told the DPIE that they were still finalising the sub-surface archaeological testing (SSAT).
- ☛ On 7 April 2020 RES informed the community they had '*acquired*' the Springdale project. In their correspondence RES stated that the Springdale project had been on hold since summer 2018. Renew Estate had been trying to off-load this project because they couldn't manage, and of course as we suspected all along the SSAT was never carried out!
- ☛ Ngunawal and Ngambri Elders vehemently objected to the development based on the cultural significance of this area and disagree with how the EIS has categorised some areas as 'low significance'. The EIS states that the project won't impact on Derrawa Dhaura (what was formerly known as the Gollion Ochre Quarry) or the Reidsdale site. The 'expert' who prepared the Aboriginal Heritage Assessment not only didn't get the assessment of areas correct, but they also failed to acknowledge that these people were nomadic and as they are not tied to a place, they could well have been anywhere in this area, as has been stated.
- ☛ We also note that on two occasions the OEH recommended that the SSAT be carried out pre-approval and made reference to the Ngunawal and Ngambri Elders submission.
- ☛ It is most regrettable to see that every NSW government website and every meeting is prefaced with the following '*The Department acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land and pays respect to all Elders past, present and future*' but doesn't respect the Ngunawal and Ngambri Elders requests for the testing!
- ☛ Given we were told the RTS was being held up by the finalisation of the SSAT, and now there has been a complete reversal, **we believe the SSAG is entitled to know what was the deciding factor to change from pre to post-approval?** The developers reasoning is bogus. Why would they spend the money for the testing when they don't need too to sell the project!
- ☛ The key issue stated by the DPIE was not loss of agricultural land, it was traffic, visual impact, site suitability, biodiversity and site suitability, in that order, **NONE have been sufficiently addressed and remain unacceptable to the community.**

- ☛ Many residents have developed mental and physical health problems because of what they have had to endure, such as living with constant uncertainty, feeling that they have lost control over their lives and how they have been disregarded by both the developers and the DPIE since 2018.
- ☛ The supposed economic benefits to this area are unsubstantiated, it is just rhetoric.
- ☛ The host landowner will never be impacted by the proposed development he doesn't live on or near the site.
- ☛ The host landowner will benefit significantly, whereas the community will not. No guarantees they will benefit in anyway.
- ☛ The Community Enhancement Fund (or VPA) will benefit a wide area and disbursement of funds will be at the discretion of others, not those directly impacted by the development.
- ☛ The people most impacted by this development will not receive a benefit any kind, not even a hint of genuine compensation.
- ☛ Biodiversity of this area will not be enhanced by the introduction of 300,000 man-made structures that are in total contrast to the surrounding landscape.
- ☛ The Infrastructure SEPP gives the DPIE carte blanche over development by claiming it's for the 'greater good'. It would provide 'greater good' and have 'less impacts' if it was placed in the best location for these types of developments. Just because you can doesn't mean you should, unless you are trying to punish this community for speaking out.
- ☛ This proposed site will be 'engineered' to fit the development rather than choosing a site that is fit for this type of development and with less constraints.
- ☛ AECOM who prepared the Springdale EIS and many of the other documents knew about the energy generation potential of this area back in 2010 (16th out of 16). Knowing that, why would you encourage building it here and then claim, 'The region has among the best solar resources in the world'.
- ☛ While this doesn't preclude it being built, in fact as long as the sun shines you can build it anywhere, but why would you if you are genuinely interested in reducing emissions, it would be a much better idea to build it in a more suitable location where it can reach its potential and benefit NSW.
- ☛ Proposed mitigation has not reduced visual impacts, the theoretical vegetation screening has only a minimal chance of success; especially as there is no irrigation proposed to assist with vegetation growth, DPIE's own independent expert (O'Hanlon) states slopes are hard to restore even in perfect conditions.
- ☛ Residences to the east and north east of the proposed site have never been considered as being visually impacted,
- ☛ Mr Moir who appeared for the Minister in the Rocky Hill case in the LEC stated visual should be assessed without mitigation measures as does O'Hanlon in the Jupiter assessment. **Why is this development being assessed so differently?**
- ☛ We've been insulted by the developer's consultant (AECOM) in the LUCRA by saying 'we'll become accustomed to it' ...
- ☛ DPIE states our objections deal with 'local' issues, which we feel trivialises our concerns, we thought the process was to find out how the local community would be impacted!

- ☛ Not one agreement has been signed by the 15 landowners, despite the passing of time. RES took this project on fully aware of where this project was at. So much for locals supporting the project.
- ☛ At present there are 64 conditions on this proposed development and because our legislation is non-prescriptive, we are reliant on self-reporting by the developer to address any contravention of these conditions. Based on our experiences with the developers and the DPIE we have absolutely no faith that this project will be carried out satisfactorily.
- ☛ The community has been asked to comment on an abstract plan that only exists on paper and does not have any physical or concrete existence. The realities of such a development don't become apparent until long after any approval and by then it's too late for the community to object.
- ☛ The Noise assessment has absolutely no probative value in the assessment process because it's all hypothetical, and even the assessment states that it can't be relied upon.
- ☛ We've been told there will be no batteries, however we note the developer can lodge a DA at any time to include these.
- ☛ Flooding and erosion were brushed aside by the departments as not being an issue, removal of the large pines along the side of Back creek WILL create a significant erosion problem along the waterway. There have been three flood events on this site in the past 12 years.
- ☛ As for decommissioning we note that the despite what Renew, RES or the DPIE say, it doesn't matter how 'strict' the conditions are, there is no way to enforce anything that's written in them, because it's an agreement between the landowner and the developer/facility owner. The most likely outcome is they will remain in place as there is no financial incentive for the developer/facility owner to remove them, and no way to make them.

The proposed development is nothing more than a concept and anything in the documents below can be changed once approval is given for a project without input by the people most impacted.

Biodiversity Management Plan Bushfire and Emergency Management Plan Construction Environmental Management Plan Decommissioning Environmental Management Environmental Management Plan Erosion and Sedimentation Control Plan Heavy Vehicle Traffic Management Plan	Heritage Management Plan High Pressure Gas Pipeline Implementation Safety Plan Landscaping Plan Noise Management Plan Operational Environmental Management Plan Traffic Management Plan
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The SSAG doesn't believe the Springdale solar development should be approved as recommended by the DPIE. We have undertaken a significant amount research and provide in our submission much more information that should be taken into consideration for this development to be assessed properly.

We believe we can show that there are far greater impacts to biodiversity, visual impacts and the community than are there benefits and urge the IPC to refuse approval.

Neither do we believe the DPIE has shown enough compelling reasons that warrants overriding all the objections raised by the SSAG and members of the community? There is no imperative for this be approved.

Assessment report misleading

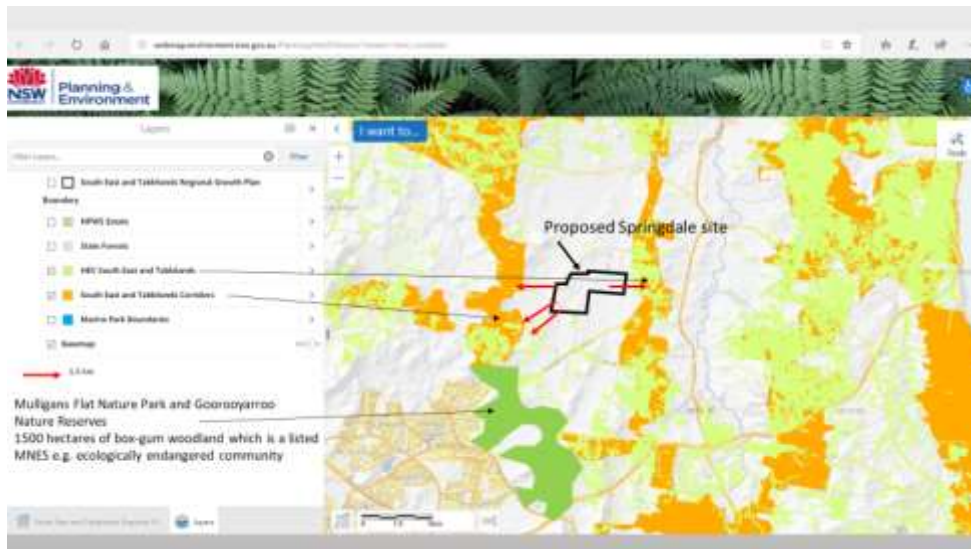
- The DPIE states in both the Assessment Report and again in the meeting with the IPC that the community's key issue is agricultural impact, i.e., loss of agricultural lands. **FALSE**
- Even Prof Lipman didn't feel that the submissions showed a strong concern about loss of agricultural land. **Prof Lipman is correct.**
- The SSAG tabulated the issues raised by the local community and the key issues are not about loss of agricultural land. They are as follows:
 1. traffic/road safety (the SDCAI will be providing and in-depth assessment on this topic)
 2. visual impact
 3. site suitability
 4. biodiversity
 5. socio-economic/economic
- Our analysis showed that **agricultural impact was rated as the 10th issue of concern**. This area has a minimum lot size of 40ha, and while some large acreages still exist, this area is considered rural residential or as we say now days these are 'lifestyle' blocks, owned by 'treechanger's' so not a major concern at all because they are looking for scenic open spaces and a slower pace of life. See later section on real estate values in our region.
- Page 3, line 14 of the DPIE meeting transcript states ... *"you know, other solar projects on agricultural land in the region."* ... DPIE must be getting this project confused with other regions of NSW i.e., Greater Hume, there are no others in our area, hence it's not a key issue for this community.
- Also, on page 3, line 15 and 16 the DPIE states ... *"And we're aware that there are concerns about the important agricultural lands mapping that's been underway for some time by the Department of Agriculture."* This is not a concern of this community! Again, the DPIE must have us confused with other regions. SAAG members who attended the large-scale solar forum in Wagga Wagga in July 2019 noted this issue was raised by that region as a major concern.
- This is further supported by Mr Berry from the Yass Valley Council where he states that this area is not generally considered as land that supports the landowners, as most residents derive their main income from outside sources of work.

5KM transition zone and other strategic planning documents

- Page 3, line 40 of the DPIE meeting transcript states – ... *"the Yass Valley Settlement Strategy, which council made comment on in their – in their submission, that talked about there being a transition zone and that that was something that then wasn't adopted in the final settlement strategy. PROF LIPMAN: why did the Department not support that?"*
- As the DPIE was unable to provide a reason, we have provided this for the IPC's information. Correspondence from the DPE (at that time) to Yass Valley Council dated 20/9/2018 DPE REF: IRF17/337- stated that they believe the Strategy clearly outlines the Councils intentions and provides sufficiently strong messages to discourage inappropriate development without the need to impose a specific restriction that may have unintended impacts.
- **The DPIE states that while a strict reading of the LEP prohibits the proposed development in this area. DPIE's interpretation is this isn't a clear intention to prevent the development! IF ITS NOT INCLUDED THEN THE INTENTION IS PRETTY CLEAR.**

Biodiversity


- Page 5 line 39-40, the DPIE stated that *“the site isn’t located within the regions mapped biodiversity corridors.* When asked about the location of them the DPIE couldn’t provide any information to the IPC.
- As the DPIE wasn’t able to provide you with the location of the development in relation to biodiversity corridors, we have provided this for the IPC’s information. Note that according to this site there is a lot of High Environmental Value areas quite close to the proposed development site.




60-hectare Golden Sun Moth (GSM) conservation area

- Page 11 line 10, RES-IPC meeting transcript, Prof Lipman asked if there was a possibility of locking up this area for biodiversity offsets or some sort of agreement to ensure the ongoing conservation of this area or at least for the life of the project.
- Page 12 line 3, Mr McMahon (for RES) stated that the landowner was not keen on going down the path of having any kind of formal agreement over that part of the property.
- So, without any kind of formal covenant/agreement over that area, the landowner can continue to graze stock, which Mr McMahon sees as a benefit to management of the Golden Sun Moth habitat.**
- Bearing this in mind, the so-called positive benefit of the project is not guaranteed. It already exists as does the woodland area.**

The image below is from the NSW OEH website showing the importance of this area for the GSM and lists a number of surveys conducted by A Rowell who RES already stated consider an expert when it comes to the GSM.




Threatened species



The BDAR did not include the following points:

- This site is **one of only TWO key management** sites identified in NSW,
- The **NSW Saving our Species Strategy** aims to **secure the species in the wild for 100 years** and maintain its conservation status under the Biodiversity Act.
- **All conservation work** being undertaken to conserve the Golden Sun Moth **around the state** is **vital** to its recovery.



Golden sun moth 'mitigation/offsets/improving habitat' – how's that working for this species?

- ACT State of the Environment Report 2015 - 1800 ha retained, this is only 0.0075% of total land area of ACT, hardly significant effort at conservation
- Rowell 2015 Gininderra Drive Extension – surveyed five areas over 10 years, similar numbers observed, grazing management plans not implemented.
- Rowell March 2017 – Lawson South Open Space – overall result is a decline, proposed GSM movement corridor was none existent.
- SMEC Australia – York Park Conservation Area 2017 2013-2017 (5 years) – no improvement after 5 years
- Rowell 2017 – Proposed Springdale development

...“Impacts to GSM habitat from installation of solar panels would include habitat destruction for panel arrays and access tracks, and shading of grassland. Shading is deleterious to GSM habitat, as it is likely to affect soil temperature and moisture and hence vegetation composition and larval development..”
“Initial ecological inspection of Springdale Solar site, Tallagandra Lane near Sutton, NSW

BDAR Conclusion: *The proposed action is unlikely to have a significant impact on the Golden Sun Moth.*” (Appendix B Threatened Species assessments of significance under the EPBC Act, Niche BDAR)

SSAG Conclusion: The proposed action **will have a significant impact** on the Golden Sun Moth, due to **poor assessment and ineffective mitigation measures.**

Having read the surveys encircled above the future does not bode well for the Golden Sun Moth. The results clearly show that these tiny moths are highly susceptible to development regardless of how well-meaning developers are and that the species isn't flourishing anywhere as a result of mitigation measures.

Additional biodiversity information not provided to the DPE/DPIE

The following information is very relevant and should be considered when assessing the proposed development. It was not provided to the DPE/DPIE during the submission process. The extracts below are from OEH's submission to Yass Valley Council during consultations on the Yass Valley Settlement Strategy. The areas encircled clearly state the importance of the biodiversity of this area as providing a vital link between the large nature reserves on the NSW/ACT border and other regions of NSW.

The addition of a **large-scale development such as this is not contributing to the biodiversity of this area** regardless of how it is being sold. **How can the addition of approx. 300,000 man-made structures**, and other assorted buildings all concentrated over 185 ha **be considered as enhancing the biodiversity of the area?**

1) Table 32 Future of the Peri-urban areas -north eastern ACT border on p96 -106. The provision of a 5km wide RU6 Transition or buffer zone around the ACT border.

OEH strongly supports the study's findings of the need for a 5km wide RU6 Transition or buffer zone around the ACT border and need to protect this area from any large scale residential development. The approach taken and the recommendations for this area are clearly justifiable from environmental viewpoint.

As noted in the Strategy, northern ACT border supports nationally important woodland and grassland, within ACT reserve system nature reserves and the biodiversity offsets sites. As stated in Draft Settlement Strategy the vegetation of these areas includes some of the largest, best connected patches of critically endangered grassland and woodland communities remaining in Australia, internationally recognised research sites and large expanses of habitat of several nationally and regionally threatened species.

On a landscape scale the environmental buffer and connectivity links this area provides are considered very important from an ecological viewpoint and typical of the box gum woodland remnants that still exist in the Shire. The remaining patches of these native grassland and woodland remnants are fragmented in nature and are interspersed with cleared and pasture improved areas. It is noted that these values being enhanced by the restoration work underway by the Commonwealth funded Greater Goorooyarroo Connectivity project. Regional significant habitat corridors have been mapped by OEH in these areas and form part of the environmental provisions in the regional plan. **Figure 1** shows the Pre-1750 box gum woodland mapping for the ACT and Southern Tablelands. The area of the transition buffer is the main interface for box woodland between the ACT and surrounding NSW Councils for the region.

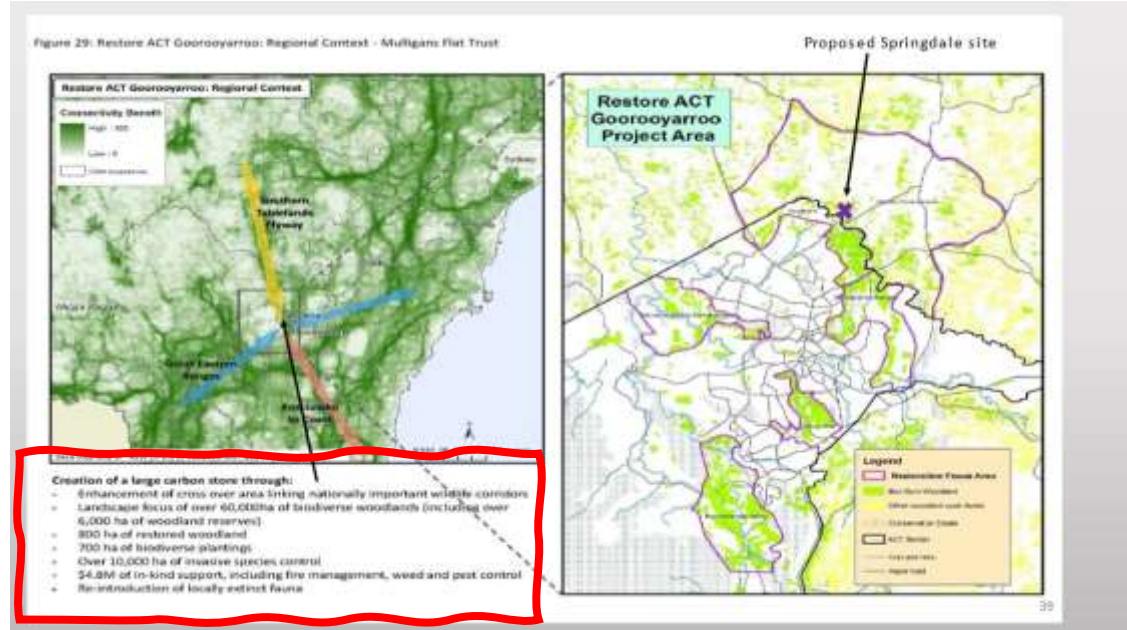
Source: OEH Submission to the Yass Valley Settlement Strategy

When I (Dianne Burgess) spoke with the OEH person who signed the submission, (same section that responded to the Springdale EIS) and asked why this information wasn't provided to the DPE, I was told that they were only asked to comment on the EIS nothing else.

It is most disappointing that such important information is left up to the community to raise. We believe that this should have been considered in the assessment process in conjunction with the discussion on the clear intentions of the Yass Valley Council and the 5km buffer zone.

The sheer scale of the proposed development is far more intensive and concentrated than any housing development would likely be approved given the minimum lot size is 40ha.

Image showing the biodiversity corridors and flyways as well as the Greater Goorooyarroo area



Source: OEH

Submission to the Yass Valley Settlement Strategy

The only thing suggested in the red encircled area above, is for more vegetation, not hundreds of thousands of man-made structures.

Superb Parrot

The information below was not forthcoming from the OEH either. If not for the Sutton community and their concern for this area, this would never come to light. What is worth noting is Dr Laura Rayner's comments about how important this area is and will become in the future.

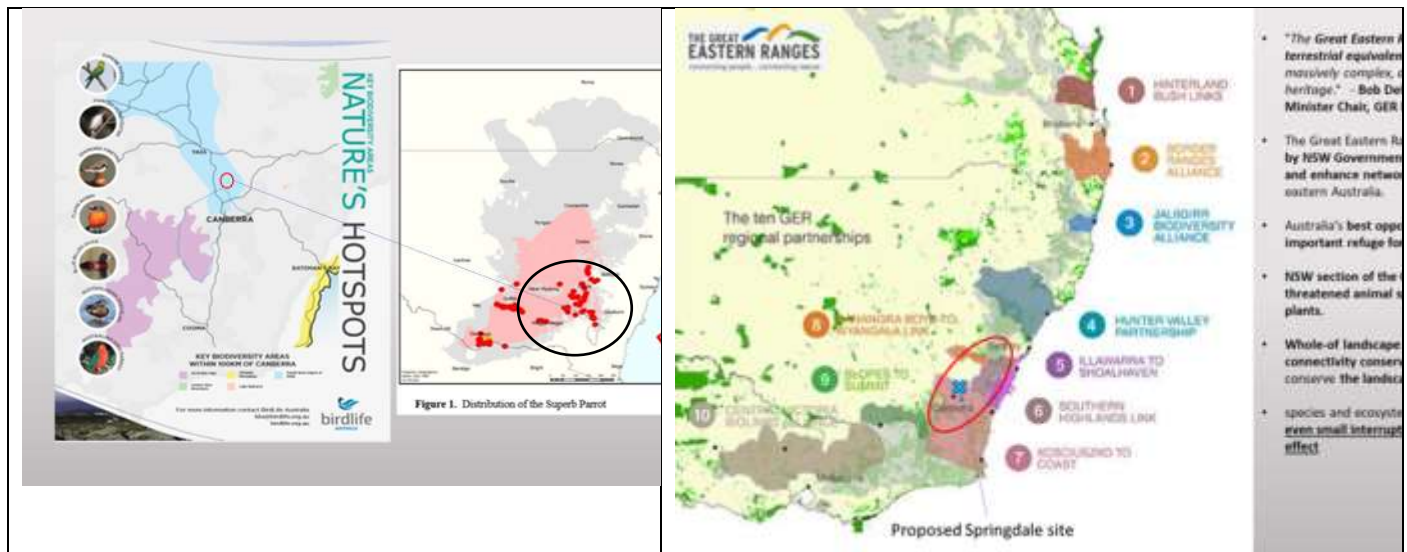
- \$400,000 has been provided to the "Saving Our Superb Parrot" project to local Landcare groups, including the Yass Valley. NSW SoS Annual Report 2017-18
- This area is part of the only identified priority management site for this threatened species in NSW.

- The National Recovery Plan states both breeding and foraging habitat is critical to the survival of the Superb Parrot.
- Hollows don't develop until trees are over 120 years old and may not be large enough until 220 years old.
- Nest sites are almost always located with 10km of extensive tracts of suitable foraging habitat or box-gum woodland.

- The Superb Parrot is a member of one of the most globally threatened bird orders.
- "In 50-70 years, this landscape — this area — is going to be the most important area for the population," Dr Rayner said. (Dr Rayner, ANU and DBRG)
- "We don't know enough about how our threatened woodland birds handle development," Dr Rayner said. Extinction is probably one result. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-12-07/landcare-superb-parrot-changes-habitat/4507150>

The OEH also mentioned the importance of the flyways that converge in this area.

The birdlife Australia map (below left) shows this area is a key biodiversity area, as well as a map of the Superb Parrot distribution, you can see how concentrated the species is in this area (black oval), supporting what Dr Rayner said above.



This area also forms part of the Great Eastern Ranges strategies (see map above right) and is yet another reason development's such as what is proposed should be located in more suitable locations away from important biodiversity area such as this.

According to the Australian National University this area sits between two *bottlenecks in seasonal bird migration*, the southern Highlands/Illawarra Escarpment and the northern ACT–NSW Southern Tablelands and links up with other areas.




Just because the developers or DPIE didn't mention any of this doesn't mean it's not relevant and important. If they did more research, they would know this too. The SSAG has made it their business to be more informed about the area we choose to live in.

'Lake effect'

There are those that roll their eyes and say there's no such thing. Both the USA and the UK seem to take this much more seriously and have undertaken research to determine how these large scale PV solar developments might affect birdlife.

Below are two studies from the USA from very credible bodies that show that there is such a thing and that the siting for large scale solar PV developments needs to be carefully considered.

While these studies did look at the Ivanpah CSP facility the comments below relate to just PV facilities. Notice the comments in the red encircled area below.



A preliminary assessment of avian mortality at utility-scale solar energy (USSE) facilities in the United States
Leroy J. Walston Jr. *, Katherine E. Rollins, Kirk E. LaGory, Karen P. Smith, Stephanie A. Meyers ‡
Argonne National Laboratory, Environmental Science Division, Argonne, IL, USA (2016)
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envsci.2016.04.001>
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/304813378_A_preliminary_assessment_of_avian_mortality_at_utility-scale_solar_energy_USSE_facilities_in_the_United_States

Avian Mortality at Solar Energy Facilities in Southern California: A Preliminary Analysis
Rebecca A. Kagan, Tabitha C. Viner, Pepper W. Trail, and Edgard O. Espinoza
National Fish and Wildlife Forensics Laboratory (2014)
https://www.fws.gov/forensics/~/media/Files/Reports/2014/Avian_Mortality_at_Solar_Energy_Facilities_in_Southern_California.pdf

- ❖ Large-scale facilities represent an avian mortality source.
- ❖ There is little knowledge regarding the magnitude of these fatalities.
- ❖ Mortality caused by:
 - Impact collision - resulting from the direct contact of the bird with a solar panel structure(s)
 - Stranding – results following collision with solar panels, injury or inability for bird to take off leaves the birds stranded.
 - Predation – following collisions the bird becomes stranded and vulnerable to predation.
- ❖ the power of the 'lake effect', in which birds and their insect prey can mistake a reflective solar facility for a water body, or spot water ponds at the site, then hone in on it.
- ❖ Address avian-solar issues through more environmentally-conscious siting decisions i.e away from protected areas or known habitat/foraging areas and/or migration routes. Implementation of more effective minimization and mitigation measures.

These images illustrate 'lake effect' and show how these developments appear from above.



Wirsol's Clermont plant in Qld



Copper Mountain PV facility in southern Nevada. Example for the "lake effect" hypothesis. Photo Credit: Robert Sullivan, Argonne National Laboratory



Figure 2. Photovoltaic collector field at Desert Sunlight Solar Farm showing "lake effect" (Photograph by Jody Fraser, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2015.)



www.alamy.com - EKRFWX

This is from the second research group which has formed to look specifically at this issue.

Multiagency Avian-Solar Collaborative Working Group

Stakeholder Workshop held in May 10-11, 2016, Sacramento, California.

Avian Impacts

Direct Effects: Collisions





Collisions with panels are common






55

Avian Solar Work Group

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The Avian Solar Work Group (ASWG) is a collaborative group of environmental organizations, academics, solar companies, and solar industry representatives that will advance coordinated scientific research to better understand how birds interact with solar facilities.



Mission and Members

There is a combination of environmental organizations, academics, solar companies, and solar industry representatives that will advance coordinated scientific research to better understand how birds interact with solar facilities. Our goal is to advance our understanding in order to develop solar projects in an environmentally friendly and sustainable way.

Learn more

Research Priorities

In 2014 the ASWG released a plan of scientific research that outlines a priority research agenda for solar energy installations. The resulting Research Report defines our research priorities and serves as our agenda for future endeavors.

Learn more

Publications of Interest

Information for a continuously updated bibliography of research facilitated by the Avian Solar Working Group and other research that is relevant to understanding avian-solar interactions.

Learn more

Both these studies have shown that the 'lake effect' does exist and it is a potential hazard to birdlife. Not just the water birds that mistake the panels for large bodies of water and can collide with the panels. They also discuss how insects are attracted to the solar panels which in turn attracts birdlife.

AECOM/RES call these large-scale solar PV facilities 'benign'. It is becoming more apparent that these so-called 'benign' facilities have a dark side, its not all good. Birdlife are seeing these places as a source of food and for roosting and nesting. This can interrupt migration paths and pose potential danger for birds that rely on water to take flight, its too late when they realise that the panels are not water and they become stranded.

Can this developer guarantee that this development will not pose a threat to birdlife?


Some other interesting articles about the impacts on birdlife

[Impact of Solar Energy on Wildlife Is an Emerging Environmental Issue | Black & Veatch \(bv.com\)](#)

[How to Protect Your Solar Farm from Pests and Birds? | SolarFeeds Marketplace](#)

There is also a study from the UK that again concluded that these solar PV developments should not be near protected areas, which in this case is the Mulligans Flat Nature Reserve, Goorooyarroo Nature Reserve and the regional significant biodiversity corridors that surround this proposed development.

It is also worth noting that according to Birdlife Australia and the OEH that flyways pass over this site. Something that mimics a large water body could prove to be dangerous to not only water birds but to other birds that would be attracted to the insects that are attracted to the solar PV panels.



Evidence review of the impact of solar farms on birds, bats and general ecology (NEERO12)

1st edition - 9th March 2017

www.gov.uk/natural-england

NATURAL ENGLAND

Conclusions:

RSPB recommend that solar PV developments should not be built on or near protected areas.

Sensitive species and habitats are not necessarily restricted to the geographical boundaries of protected areas.

Understanding the impact of solar PV developments to identify where a protected area is potentially at risk would allow statutory bodies to provide more detailed guidance on the placement of these developments.

Research using a multiscale approach to determine potential impacts of solar PV developments on biodiversity within the immediate vicinity and the wider landscape should take into account ecologically functionally connected land and a wide selection of habitats.

What we have shown in this section on additional biodiversity are not some wild way-out ideas, they are from credible organisations with published research. The developers claim to be 'experts' and you would expect that they should be up to date with the latest information on anything to do with renewable energy development impacts.

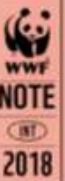
Based on comments in EIS's and in DPIE assessments there appears to be a lack of concern about any potential impacts from such developments. Considering the large numbers of these developments that are popping up all over regional NSW, we believe there should be much more emphasis put on research to understand potential impacts such as what we have shown above rather than dismiss them because they are unaware.

There is a clear message in all of these, biodiversity is not bounded by lines on maps, and rather than risk causing harm, locate these developments where there is much less likelihood of having an impact. AECOM and numerous others have already determined the most suitable places in NSW for solar development, which are not in this area. Approval should be for well-considered reasons, not just because you can.!

RES and DPIE state they don't believe there is a threat to biodiversity and the proposed mitigation is adequate to address any concerns.

Recommending approval based on nothing more than the developer's word and with only limited information from the DPIE's own environmental section is not what the public expect from those whose responsibility it is to protect our biodiversity. With this type of laissez-faire attitude towards environmental impact assessments its little wonder that Australia is leading the world in the faunal extinction crisis.


Images below are in relation to Australia's standing in the world when it comes to biodiversity. Most of these are in response to the Senate Faunal Extinction Crisis which has been extended many times over, the final report is now expected on 30 November 2021.



Dr Deon Nel:
Executive Director of Conservation:
WWF International, May 2018

- **It is no longer useful to treat climate change, biodiversity loss and land degradation as separate challenges.**
- **These challenges are completely interlinked and require a far more unified and cohesive response. This means more integrated strategic analysis planning, integrated target setting and integrated reporting at a national level.**


https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26821Nel_SDG15_expert_group_Deon_Nel_Main_talking_points_2.pdf



10 Million animals a year die from tree clearing in NSW, report finds.
Wednesday November 7, 2018

Darren Grover, WWF Australia's head of living ecosystems, said **'it is the worst place to live in Australia if you are a wild animal that needs a tree to survive.'**


Cate Faehrmann the Greens spokeswoman,...
"The important report should be a wake-up call for Premier Berejiklian that her government's anti-environment agenda has gone too far and she should reintroduce protections for native wildlife and vegetation," she said.




The extinction crisis: Australians call for a radical re-haul of environmental laws

Australia is failing to meet international obligations to protect our unique wildlife, experts say.

<https://www.australiangeographic.com.au/topics/wildlife/2018/09/the-extinction-crisis-australians-call-for-a-radical-re-haul-of-environmental-laws/>




DEATH BY A THOUSAND CUTS



22 January 2018

Australia's biodiversity strategy a 'global embarrassment'



Significant action is required if we want to reverse current trends and save species currently on the brink from the same fate as the Tasmanian Tiger and Eastern Bettong.

Habitat loss in particular underpins the high rates of extinction, driven by land clearing for agriculture, industry and infrastructure....


<https://www.nature.org.au/>

25 March 2011

In a recent interview on ABC Radio National, Mark Burgman Professor of Environmental Science at University of Melbourne described assessment **'death by a thousand cuts.'** **We lose little bits of things, each one of which by itself, is not referable to the minister, because it's not of national significance,'** he says. **'but if you add them up, they become very significant impact'**

<https://insidestory.org.au/death-by-a-thousand-cuts/>


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The WWF submission stated **The main pressures facing the Australian environment today are the same as in 2011: climate change, land use change, habitat fragmentation and degradation, and invasive species. In addition the interactions between these and other pressures are resulting in cumulative impacts, amplifying the threats faced by the Australian environment"**

They also said **"Of the 17 "red lights" Australia receives in the 2017 SDG Index 11 are directly related to the preservation or management of the natural environment."**


https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Foreign_Affairs_Defence_and_Trade/SDGs



Australia's poor performance on collaboration does not sit well with the SDG focus on working across disciplinary and sectoral boundaries to solve complex problems. Governments have the opportunity to lead by example through how they work with each other and with stakeholders.

Environmental performance remains Australia's Achilles' heel—across carbon emissions, energy, biodiversity, deforestation and urban sprawl. Many of our unique ecosystems are under threat and Australia is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Foreign_Affairs_Defence_and_Trade/SDGs/Submissions




First goal of UN sustainability targets should be to not conflict with each other
October 8, 2014 2:06am AEST

Now, with increasing concern over environmental degradation and climate change the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are currently being negotiated as the successors to the MDGs.

Despite a huge effort in setting these goals, the compartmentalisation of major areas such as energy, water and the economy means that they are already in conflict—and this is before climate change is even added.

<https://theconversation.com/first-goal-of-un-sustainability-targets-should-be-to-not-conflict-with-each-other-32577>



Australia falls further in rankings on progress towards UN Sustainable Development Goals
July 11, 2018 3:15pm AEST

"According to the SDG Index, released yesterday in New York, Australia is ranked 37th in the world — down from 26th last year, and behind most other wealthy countries including New Zealand, Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom."

<https://theconversation.com/australia-falls-further-in-rankings-on-progress-towards-un-sustainable-development-goals-99737>



Conservation Act a 'toothless' law

.... Australia's current environmental laws do not adequately protect threatened species or their habitat , says Zara Bending from the Macquarie Uni Centre for Environmental Law **"Since the EPBC Act entered into force, only 21 projects out of more than 6,100 have been stopped due to unacceptable impacts on matters of national environmental significance and threatened species. This is primarily due to high levels of discretion afforded to decision makers."**...

... Australia has some of the most unique flora and fauna on Earth. But according to research conducted by Aussie scientists, **17 of our native birds and mammals are set to become extinct over the next 20 years.**

<https://www.australiangeographic.com.au/topics/wildlife/2018/09/the-extinction-crisis-australians-call-for-a-radical-re-haul-of-environmental-laws/>

As, Darren Grover the head of living ecosystems WWF Australiasaid **"10 Million animals a year die from tree clearing in NSW,.. "it is the worst place to live in Australia if you are a wild animal that needs a tree to survive."**

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Proposed Mitigation to restore groundcover

The developers propose to plant and maintain mature vegetation and to restore ground cover, with nothing more than rainfall. We have just come through the worst drought in this area that anyone can remember. How can they guarantee any of this, and the DPIE accepts this proposed mitigation measure as acceptable?

Based on the SSAG's research we found the following information. The areas circled support exactly what we have said, the chances of success for the proposed mitigation are just words and biodiversity legislation favours developers. Success is highly unlikely.

Mitigation, offsetting and restoration, does it work ?

- The **Native Conservation Council of NSW** made this statement in the submission into the Senate Inquiry into the Faunal extinction crisis.

...**"Documents recently released under freedom of information laws have shown that under the EPBC Act, the Commonwealth accredited a former NSW biodiversity offsetting policy despite it failing to meet national standards. The offsetting policy facilitates land clearing by allowing clearing to occur if impacts are 'offset' by other identified conservation actions."**...

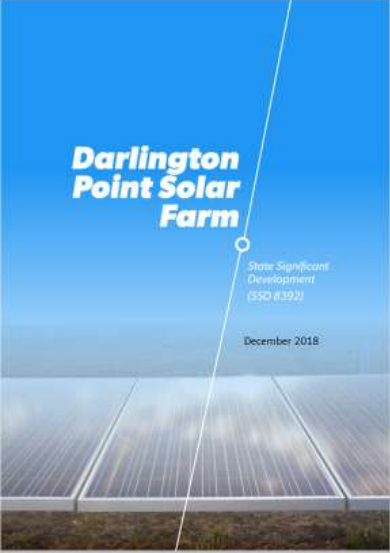
- A paper by **Phil Gibbons, Fenner School of Environment & Society, The Australian National University** titled **"Are biodiversity offsets an appropriate way to conserve grassy ecosystems? FOG Forum 30 Oct – 1 Nov 2014.**
 - **"... habitat loss was the factor that had the most effect on endangered species..."**
 - **"... restoration projects typically have success rates between about 20% and 50% (Maron et al. 2012). The take-home message is that restoration is hard to do..."**
 - **"... Concluding remark of the article, ... "Overall, offsets are not a silver bullet".**
- **ANU Fenner School of Environment & Society webpage:** ... **"In recent research, Gibbons and colleagues found that the circumstances in which biodiversity offsets are likely to result in no net loss of biodiversity are relatively limited, which means that development projects need to be sited carefully."**

- **NSW Scientific Committee submission to NSW Biodiversity Legislation Review Panel 31 July 2014,**
 - **"... The current legislation permits ongoing loss of biodiversity using metrics to determine concepts such as 'maintain or improve' or 'avoid, mitigate, offset'. Even under such schemes, biodiversity decline continues."**...
 - **"the current NSW biodiversity legislation is pro development and native flora and fauna are obstacles that can be traded like a commodity in the market."**

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How can a restoration success rate of only about 20% or 50% be an acceptable outcome! Obviously, experts like Phil Gibbons, who wrote the biodiversity offsets scheme for the NSW government, doesn't have much faith in restoration work.

Similarly, in the Darlington Point assessment Umwelt raised concerns about the unknown impacts of these developments on the land. Unfortunately, this doesn't seem to be a concern for the DPIE. Studies to be done in three years' time are useful but will hardly provide answers, what is the lag time to see if these have caused harm?



Darlington Point Solar Farm

State Significant Development (SSD #392)

December 2018

Umwelt's report acknowledges:

- grasses under and between the solar arrays will have differing levels of sunlight/shading
- there will be changes in hydrology, and temperature will vary under and between panel arrays
- the actual impacts of this shading will not be realised until two or three years post development
- recommended that studies be carried out then to determine the impact

DPE response:

Despite this uncertainty DPE recommended the development for approval with full knowledge of these facts. And recommended that in two or three years time an independent review should be undertaken to determine the impact, and then decide what to do.

State Environmental Planning Policy (Infrastructure) 2007 Part 2 Division 3 Clause 19, Site compatibility certificates states the following:

(6) '...The Secretary must not issue a certificate unless the Secretary:

(c) is of the opinion that the development concerned is not likely to have an adverse effect on the environment and does not cause any unacceptable environmental risks to the land...'

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Based on all this evidence the likelihood of being able to successfully revegetate cleared areas and establish and maintain mature vegetation screening seems highly likely to fail.

Visual impact

First and foremost, the landowner of the proposed site will not be impacted by this development. His residence is not located anywhere near the site.

In the DPIE's assessment of the Springdale project it states that of the 33 non-associated residences (there are actually 36 now) within 2km, 28 are considered to have low or negligible visual impacts due to the topography, distance and intervening vegetation. The remaining five will have moderate visual impacts due to setbacks proposed by RES (1 resident), existing vegetation and proposed 20m screening. The DPIE accepts the developer's opinion regardless of whether this is true or not, it is not even questioned as to the validity of their statements or likelihood of success.

Interestingly, in Renew Estate's original EIS LVIA it states 'residents typically have regular and prolonged viewing opportunities, so are considered likely to have a high level of sensitivity to the proposed change. (EIS page 98) Yet, only 15 out of the 34 residences within the 2km were considered for the visual impact assessment and only one was rated as high and one as high-medium.

As there is no accepted nationally published guidance on landscape and visual amenity impact assessment specific to Australia, any organization including governments, can make their own i.e., VAB for wind or NSW RMS Guidelines. Different LVIA consultants use different methodologies and will generally base them on something that already exists. i.e., the GLVIA (UK) or the US Forestry Service.

To reinforce our point on how highly subjective and unreliable the LVIA's are, the following is taken from notes that were made publicly available for interpreting the UK GLVIA.

Two step approach: judging significance

Step 1: Assess against agreed criteria

- consider each effect in terms firstly of the **sensitivity** of the receptor made up of judgments about:
 - the **susceptibility** of the receptor to the type of change arising from the specific proposal; and
 - the **value** attached to the receptor;
- and secondly its **magnitude**, made up of judgments about:
 - the size and scale of the effect - for example is there complete loss of a particular element of the landscape or a minor change;
 - geographical extent of the area that will be affected;
 - the duration of the effect and its reversibility.
- Consideration of all these criteria should feed into a comprehensive assessment of significance.

<https://www.wychavon.gov.uk/documents/101886/157693/87%20Guideline%20for%20Landscape%20Assessment%20Visual%20Impact%20Assessment.pdf>

Landscape Institute
inspiring great places

GLVIA3 Statement of Clarification 1/13 10-06-13
Statement of Clarification 3 Significance Concerning 'significance':

It is for the assessor to define what the assessor considers significant.... The level of, or degree of, effect may then be judged.

This may be achieved, for example, **by determining magnitude and registering it against sensitivity,**

Depending on the means of judgement and terminology.... The assessor should then establish (and it is for the assessor to decide and explain) the degree or level of change that is considered to be significant.

<https://www.landscapeinstitute.com/resources/clarification/>

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It's one person's opinion and they make up the rules for assessment.

The table below shows the visual impact ratings from Renew Estate EIS (first column), then RES which changed six (second column) and lastly the DPIE's ratings (third column below). This shows how subjective these assessments really are, **what makes anyone anymore correct than the other, after all they are all just expressing an opinion, nothing more than that?**

EIS Overall Rating		RTS Overall Rating	DPIE Assessment Rating	
V01 (R3)	M-L		R3	L
V02 (R7)	L		R7	L
V03 (R5)	N		R5	M
V04 Road user	M	M-L	Road user	L-N
V05 (R1)	M	M	R1	M
V06 (R15 or R17)	L		R15 or R17	L-N
V07 (R14)	L		R14	L-N
V08 (no residence)	M		No residence	L-N
V09...(R6)	N		R6	L
V10 (R4)	N		R4	L
V11 (R16)	M	M-L	R16	L-N
V12 (R20)	M		R20	L
V13 (R8)	H-M		R8	M
V14...(R2)	H	H	R2	M
V15 (R11)	M-L		R11	L-N
V16 (R35)	New	H	R35	M
V17 (new)	New	M-L	R36	L-N
Not in previous LVIA's			R9	L
Not in previous LVIA's			R12	L
R10, R13, R18, R19, R21 to R34			All other residences	L-N

Three different opinions and each one thinks they are correct. Who determines whose version is correct? How can someone who has no connection to this area and never spoken to anyone in our community make judgements about how we will be impacted visually?

We don't agree with the outcome, the visual impact is not mitigated just because the developer says so. They certainly won't say it can't be mitigated, any reasonable person knows this.

The language in the LVIA's are unintelligible and meaningless to the average person. People either like what they see and how it makes them feel, or they don't. They don't go through a process of categorising and evaluating what they see to determine if they like it or not.

Below are four residents which show the elevation profiles and viewsheds. These demonstrate how misleading the LVIA can be. At present there is some vegetation on the proposed site and once removed the site will be even more visible!

1. Resident R2




Proposed 20 metre vegetation screening will hide nothing

Proposed 20 metre vegetation screening will hide nothing

View 1 view south east

View 2 view to the south

This is the LVIA for this family - Significance of visual impact: **high** RES has reduced to this moderate

Sensitivity to change: high

Anticipated change to view
View to the south would have distant views and be partially screened.

Susceptibility of resident to proposed change
Change in their view and visual amenity is high due to close proximity of project.

Value attached to view
Given the environment of their residential property, the value the view is high.

Magnitude of change: high

Size and scale
The size and scale are high, and due to the proximity they will see great levels of detail.

Geographical extent
They are approx. 150m from proposed development. RES now states they are 300m away

Duration/reversibility
Expected to be long term.




Figure 14 | Photomontage looking south towards the site from Tintinhull Road in the vicinity of Residence R2 without visual mitigation



Figure 15 | Photomontage looking south towards the site from Tintinhull Road in the vicinity of Residence R2 with an artistic impression of vegetation screening proposed

What a contrast, figures 14 and 15 have been prepared for the benefit of the developer's not a true representation of what the viewer actually sees.

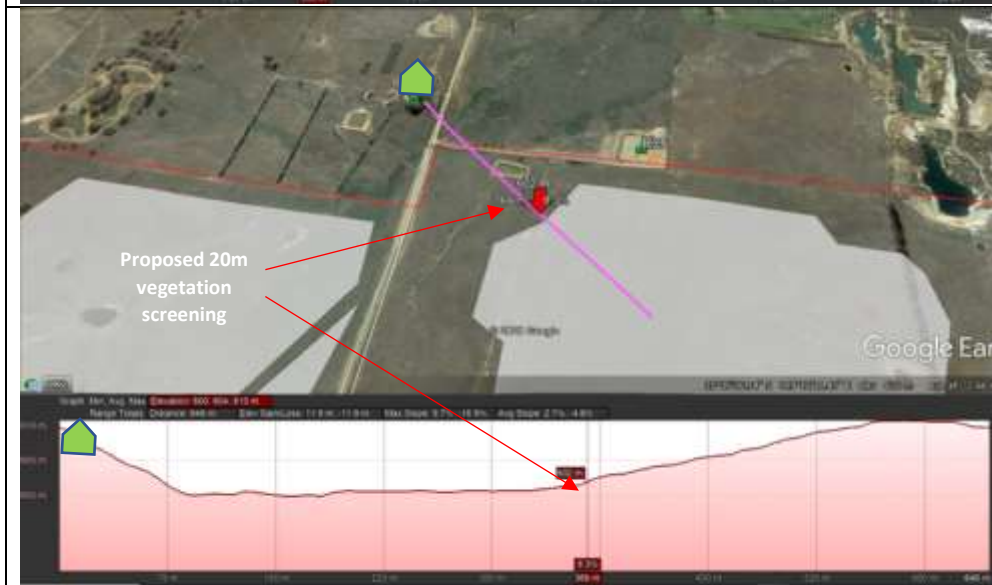


Here you see the **purple** line is the elevation profile for R2 looking south

The **red** lines with arrows show where the proposed 20m vegetation screening will be.

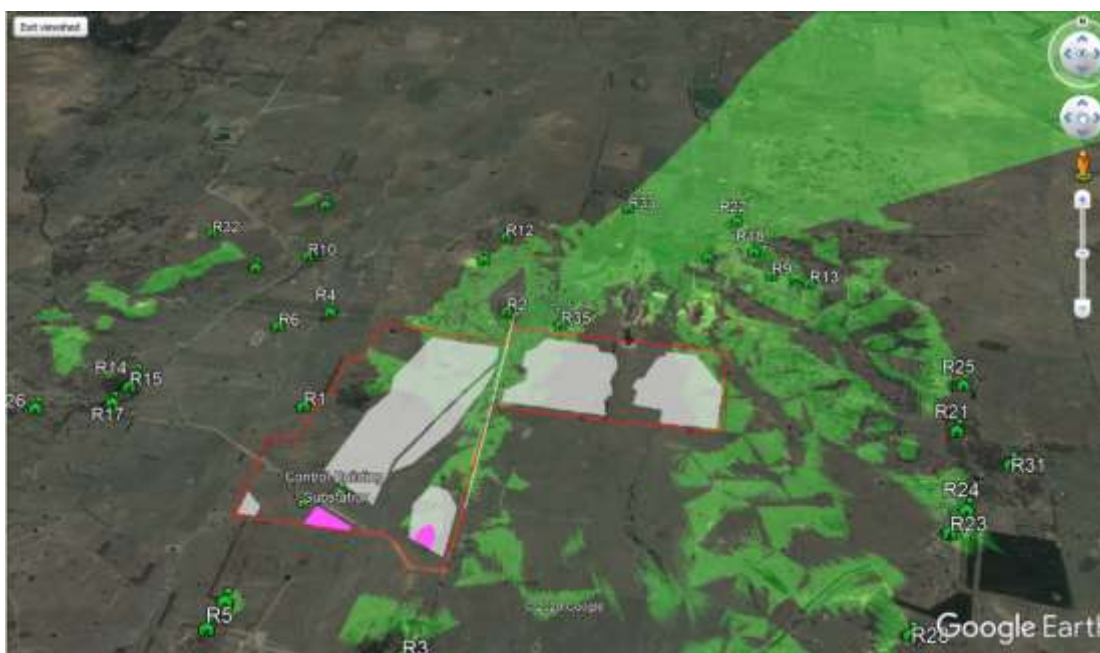
The vegetation screening is **20m in width not height**.

The hill to the south is approx 30m higher, vegetation will do nothing



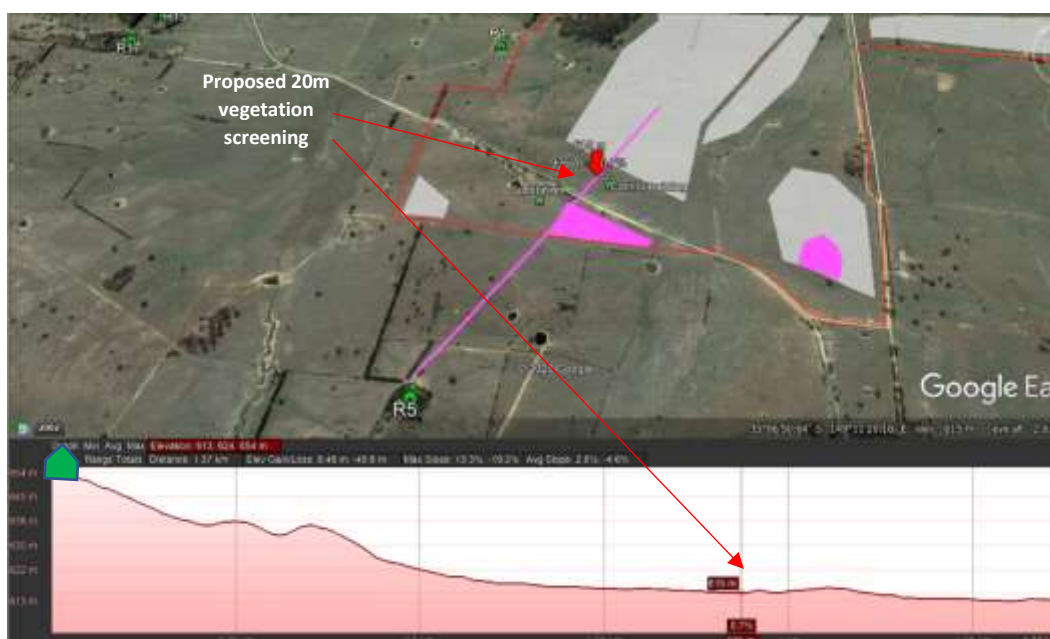
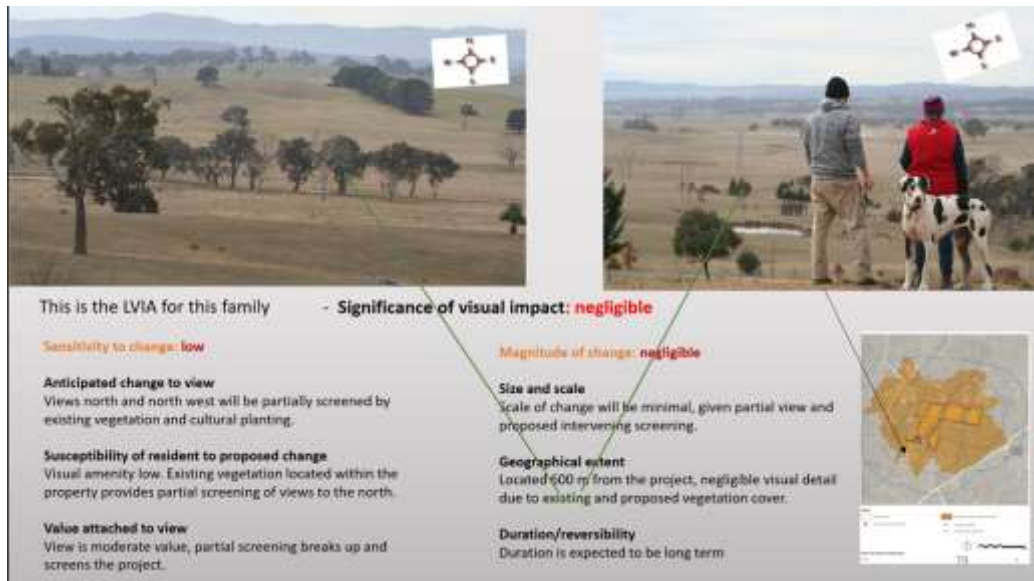
Same goes for the view to the south east

R2 viewshed, they have a view over much of the site, and all along Tintinhull Road



2. Resident R5

Images of the residents looking over the proposed site.



Their elevation profile shows how completely ineffectual any vegetation screening would be to their views.

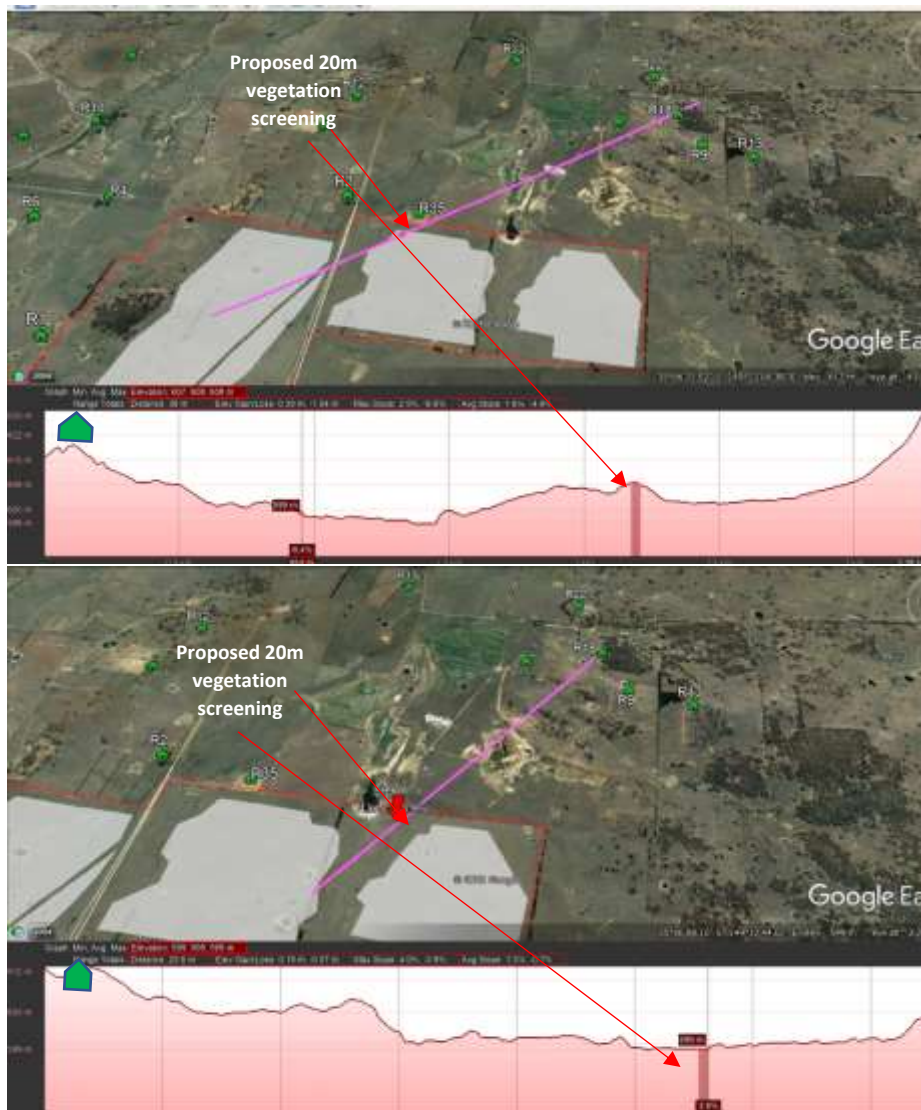


This is the extent of their view, over the entire valley. Their residence is at approx. 650m the lowest part of the site is 600m.

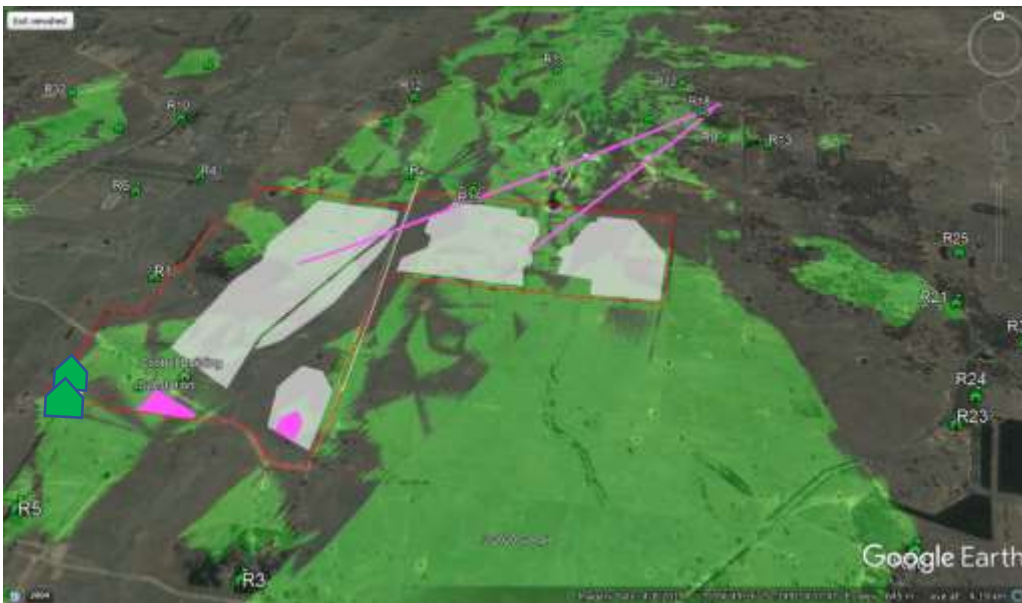
Vegetation screening is impossible.

The following two examples are residences located to the north east of the proposed development site and are considered to be not visually impacted, hence are deemed as LOW-NEGLIGIBLE. The intervening topography and vegetation **DO NOT** hide the site and will become more visible as trees grow.

3. Resident R18



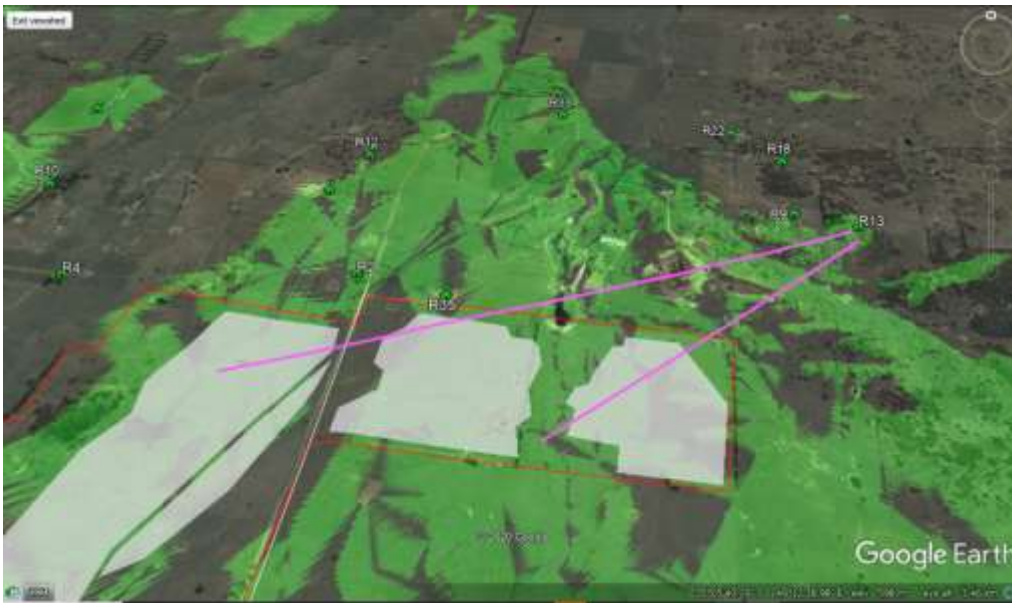
Viewshed for R18, no intervening topography or vegetation



4. Resident R13

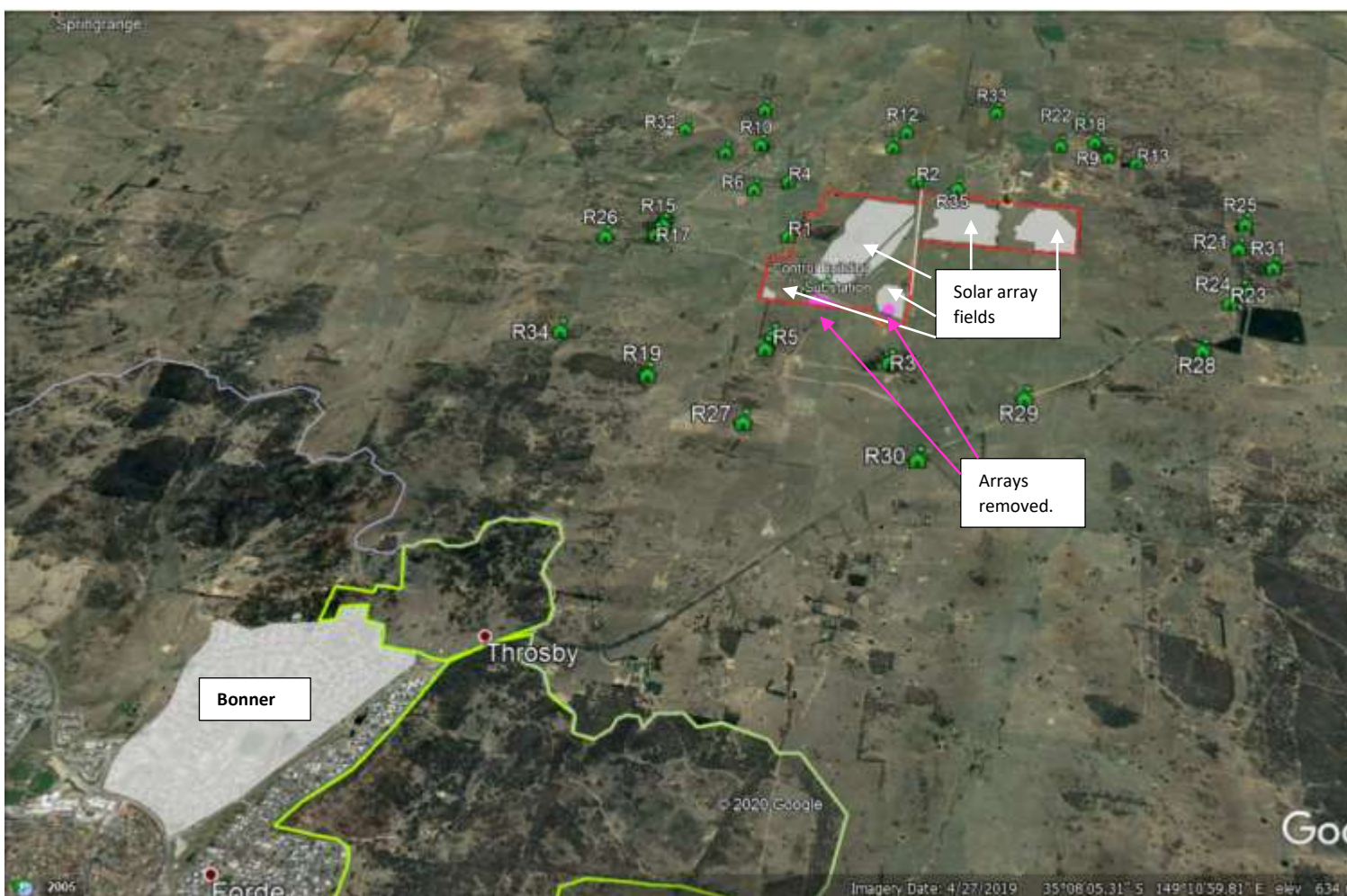
This resident has a totally uninterrupted view over the entire site. No amount of vegetation can hide their views.





Viewshed for R13 no topography or vegetation to hide visual impact, in fact, once trees onsite are removed it will be even more visible.

The DPIE claim that this type of development will not be out of place in our area, hence their low ratings. If you look at the image below, the large area of white shading in the bottom left-hand corner is the ACT suburb of Bonner. Now compare this to the white shaded areas surrounded by the 36 non-associated residences, and even with the 1.4% reduction in solar arrays (**pink areas**), it is still highly visible, and **a solar development of this magnitude WILL BE completely out of place in the area.**



[illegible]

NO Vegetation screening for road users of Tintinhull Road.

additional

The incorporation of well integrated screen planting along the proposed site boundaries to minimise the extent of the solar array when viewed from surrounding locations.

Existing endemism, vegetation and tree cover to be retained and protected, while providing screening of the Proposed.

Screening planting minimum 30 metres wide. Refer to Section 1 and 2 of L02 for typical details.

Vegetation screening has been removed.

and the floodplain

Vegetation screening here will just block water and wash away proposed screening.

GENERAL NOTES

- Refer to L02 for indicative plant schedule. Plant species to be sourced from local suppliers and locally collected seed where possible.
- Refer to Section 2 of L02 for typical planting procedures.
- Temporary stock proof fence to be provided around screen planting if guidelines to cover during planting establishment.
- Existing endemism vegetation and tree cover to be retained and protected.
- During planting establishment period, provide continuous weed control and apply approved non-residual herbicide if appropriate.

KEY

- 30 metres wide screen planting zone
- Endemism (non-Moths habitat) (see specific in proposed guidelines to be retained and protected)
- Endemism (non-Moths habitat) (see specific in proposed guidelines to be retained and protected)
- Potential (Proposed) Legume (see L02)
- Adjoining Site Boundary
- Water (see also including potential roads)
- Internal road
- Project Site

AECOM

Client: Renew Estate Project Name: Springdale Solar Farm ES
Date: 27/05/20 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

Landscape Plan L01

This is very true, because these developments are not usually located in valleys with many rural residential properties surrounding the site, and as Mr Hutton remarked during the site visit that this is not like other large-scale solar developments, other sites are quite flat, WHICH THIS SITE IS NOT!

AECON

Environmental Impact Statement
Springdale Solar Farm – Environmental Impact Statement

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Figure 4 Pile driven steel posts with tracker assemblies

Figure 5 A typical example of solar farm panel arrays

Solar energy, a growing part of the NSW energy mix

NSW is a leader in the development of large-scale solar projects. These solar farms support jobs and investment in regional NSW, help to diversify the State's energy mix and drive down costs for future large-scale solar developments.

There are seven major operating large-scale solar farms in NSW. Solar farms use the same technology as rooftop solar systems, but on a larger scale.

Traralgon Solar Farm
1,000 MW

Golden Grove Solar Farm
1,000 MW

Golden Grove Solar Farm
1,000 MW

Golden Grove Solar Farm
1,000 MW

Traralgon Solar Farm
1,000 MW

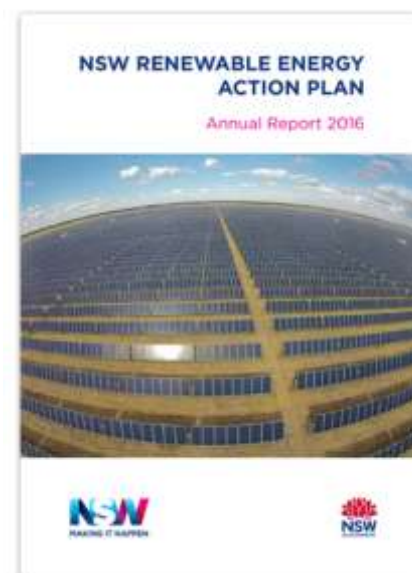
Traralgon Solar Farm
1,000 MW

Traralgon Solar Farm
1,000 MW

NSW government



Figure 4 Example of Nextracker system at the Moree Solar Farm in Northern NSW





60 MW installed capacity



69 MW installed capacity



102 MW Nyngan solar



Nothing like the previous images. This is the view from a R13 which looks over the entire site, the vegetation inside the yellow lined areas will be removed and the entire development will be exposed.

Effectiveness of proposed visual impact mitigation

Based on our research it seems that there are others that share our views on visual impacts and effectiveness of mitigation.

First, we refer to the O'Hanlon's Independent Review of the Jupiter Wind Farm where vegetation screening was proposed as a mitigation.

*... 'The **proposed mitigation** measures noted in the LVIA are **highly optimistic***

*In some locations **effective screening is likely to take at least a couple of decades to achieve and possibly much longer.***

*In my opinion **vegetation screening should only be used judiciously to reduce localised specific impacts** where the extent of the screening is limited **and the likelihood of creating a successful screen is high.***

Growth rates on slopes will be slower than average due to the variability of soil type, water run-off, plant maintenance and species selection. This is hard enough to achieve in well managed flatter areas.'

INDEPENDENT REVIEW, JUPITER WIND FARM O'Hanlon Design Pty Ltd

Below are some other of O'Hanlon's comments made in the above independent report.

- Our review is **based on existing conditions without modification for any possible mitigation.** *Same as Mr Noir Not at all like Springdale*
- The lack of significant agricultural undertakings on many recently subdivided properties: they tend to be more directed to private agricultural purposes only, *just like the Springdale site.*
- The prevalence of high quality 'lifestyle' developments on many allotments as distinct from predominantly rural uses, and *just like the Springdale site*
- The orientation of the recently constructed residences, many of which are located to take maximum advantage of the outlook afforded from their allotment. *just like the Springdale site*
- And this **'pastoral lands can have significant scenic quality and high sensitivity to change depending on the context and proposed change to the landscape character.'** *just like the Springdale site*

Then there's 'Cluttering effect' in wind developments to describe the visual effect of a number of turbines sited near each other and being able to see them all moving together.

While these developments aren't tall and don't continually move, to use the words of O'Hanlon 'the introduction of highly identifiable man-made elements into a predominantly rural landscape will change the visual balance of the landscape to what is a more industrialized landscape form.'

Secondly, we refer to the Rocky Hill Mine Decision [2019] NSWLEC7.

Mr Moir who appeared for the NSW Minister for Planning made these comments.

97. Mr Moir explained that the assessment of the visual quality of the landscape has regard to the following parameters:

- “- visual quality increases as relative relief and topographic ruggedness increases.
- visual quality increases as vegetation pattern variations increase
- visual quality increases due to the presence of natural and/or agricultural landscapes
- visual quality increases owing to the presence of water forms in the landscape (without the water becoming a featureless expanse) and related to water quality and associated activity.
- visual quality increases with increases in land use compatibility.”

99. Mr Moir assessed that residential uses, whether residences in a township or rural residences, would have a **high visual sensitivity within 0km to 2km...**

137. ... the visual effect is to be assessed at a **particular point of time. If there is no mitigation at that point of time, the visual effect is to be assessed at that point of time without considering the mitigation.**

Mr Moir and O'Hanlon's assessments have both been considered with the proposed mitigation, which is reasonable considering these are purely theoretical, no guarantees, unlike the Springdale development. They believe everything the developers says, blind faith.

The same can be said for land uses and 'vicinity' which also deals with visual impact.

58 Mr Darroch who also appeared for the Minister in the Rocky Hill mine case, agreed that 'from a planning perspective, *the "vicinity" of the development extends beyond the land directly abutting the site of the Rocky Hill Coal Project. Determining the uses of land in the vicinity involves consideration of not only the proximity or nearness in space of the uses of land to the proposed mine, but also visual considerations and*

“demographic and geographic features of the area” (Abley v Yankalilla District Council (1979) 22 SASR 147 at 152-153; (1979) 58 LGRA 234 at 239-240).

- 61 *‘Mr Darroch further observed that one should not take a static approach to the land uses in the “vicinity” of the proposed Rocky Hill Site as “the occupants and visitors to the valley are never fixed in any area”. He provided the example of a resident of the Forbesdale Estate, who will not just **experience the impacts** of the proposed mine statically from their living room window or front yard, but who will **be impacted by the mine as they move through the whole of the space characterised as the “vicinity”**. Indeed, many of the objectors referred to their enjoyment of their rural properties by reason of their ability to horse ride and walk around the large parcels of land.’*

Clearly this type of thinking has not been used for the Springdale project, it demonstrates how different planning developments are assessed. Why is this? A complete double standard!

Large scale solar energy generating facilities assessment does not consider current, future or historical land uses like they do for mining. There was no consultation with any of the landowners to gather information for the LUCRA, it was nothing more than a last-minute tick and flick exercise undertaken by a consultant for the developers who are paying for their services. Hardly an objective assessment.

It was mentioned in the LVIA and the LUCRA that it cannot be seen from the village of Sutton, to us this is saying if the village could see it, it would be a problem, but we are not considered as important as them.

But by far, the most insulting is the following comment from the LUCRA page 12, *‘the solar farm would remain visible for some receptors despite screening vegetation proposed around the perimeter. This potential conflict is however expected to ease over time for most receptors as screening vegetation matures and people become accustomed to the development*. **This is a personal attack; how impertinent can they be!**

Another comment in the LUCRA is on page 4 which states *‘... given the benign nature of the project...’* **What is it with the assumptions of RES, the DPIE and AECOM that because the structures are not high or ‘benign’ that this makes it any less visually intrusive? As we’ve shown these so called ‘benign’ structures cover a vast area, how is this not visually offensive.**

Why is it that Minister’s own expert says 0km – 2km constitutes high visual sensitivity and the DPIE’s own independent assessor considers pastoral lands are highly sensitive to change, yet the DPIE comes up with completely different reasoning to assess this development? Why is that? Why are we being treated so differently?

As for the comment in 137 above about visual effect, how can you assess something that doesn’t exist when the assessment is undertaken? Yet the DPIE accepts RES’s manipulated images of what it might look like in the future.

How is it Mr Moir and Mr Darroch’s reasonings are accepted as being correct in the LEC, but the DPIE has some other completely different standard to assess visual impact! What is it and why does DPIE consider their assessments is better?

As for visual impact and proposed vegetation screening again DPIE’s independent expert as well as Phil Gibbons from the ANU both state that re-vegetation is not likely to be achieved even under favourable conditions. How will the developer ensure the vegetation and screen plantings are going to be effective at reducing the impacts? They are nothing more than aspirational statements.

Glint and Glare

We have been told repeatedly that solar panels do not reflect light they absorb it and do not create glint and glare. However, we have found that this is **FALSE**.

Our research has shown that other countries such as the United States are far more advanced when it comes to large-scale solar energy development research.

The following is taken from one such study the *Utility-Scale Solar Energy Facility Visual Impact Characterisation and Mitigation Study Project Report*, prepared by Robert Sullivan and Jennifer Abplanalp, Environmental Science Division, Argonne National Laboratory, 2013 http://blmwyomingvisual.anl.gov/docs/SolarVisualCharacteristicsMitigation_Final.pdf

The large-scale solar developments in this study are comparable in size to the proposed Springdale development. Perhaps Australia needs to do more research, rather than stick to their current mantra. Take note of the findings.

GLINT and GLARE



Figure 5.1-4. NSO and CM Facilities as Seen from a Mountaintop Viewpoint 9–11 mi (14–18 km) North of the Facilities.

- Viewpoint is approx. 1000m above the facilities.
- Distance to the NSO is 15km.
- Distance to Copper Mountain is 18km.

Findings

- Even at this distance, shapes and colours contrast noticeably with surrounding vegetation.
- Even at long distance the facilities are prominent features and attract visual attention.

Utility-Scale solar Energy Facility Visual Impact Characterization and Mitigation Study Project Report, Prepared by Robert Sullivan and Jennifer Abplanalp, Environmental Science Division, Argonne National Laboratory, 2013 http://blmwyomingvisual.anl.gov/docs/SolarVisualCharacteristicsMitigation_Final.pdf

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Utility-Scale Solar Energy Facility Visual Impact Characterisation and Mitigation Study Project Report. Prepared by Robert Sullivan and Jennifer Abplanalp, Environmental Science Division, Argonne National Laboratory, 2013 http://blmwyomingvisual.anl.gov/docs/SolarVisualCharacteristicsMitigation_Final.pdf

5.2 Copper Mountain Solar Facilities One and Two



Figure 5.2-1. Black PV Panels at CM 1 and 2 Facilities Appear White When Low-Angle Sunlight is Reflected from the Panels (Background), and the PCU's look black.



Figure 5.2-2. Brown and White PCUs at CM 2 facility (Foreground) and White PCUs at CM 1 (Background).

More findings:

- Large arrays of identical components and the regular geometry is a dominant visual feature that contrasts strongly with natural landscapes.
- Due to the large size and unique characteristics of solar facilities, the visual impacts are often large, and mitigation on this scale is very difficult.
- The largest contrasts and resulting impacts from solar facilities cannot be mitigated effectively, except through siting facilities in other locations.



Swan Hill solar facility



Regardless of what developers claim these images show that there is glint and glare from panels.

Computer modelling is static, humans aren't.



NOISE AND VIBRATION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The SEARS requests the construction and operational noise impacts be assessed using the following :

Disclaimers

Interim Construction Noise Guideline (ICNG)

- EPA

1.2 What the Guidelines cover

...The types of construction regulated by DECC under the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997 (POEO Act)

NSW Industrial Noise Policy (2000) (NSWINP)

- EPA

1.3 Scope of the policy

The policy is specifically aimed at assessing noise from industrial noise sources scheduled under the new Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997 (POEO Act)

EPA Submission for proposed Springdale development

....The EPA notes that Solar Farms are not a scheduled activity under Schedule 1 of the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997 and therefore, an Environmental Protection Licence will not be required for the proposal. As such, the EPA does not have a formal role in the matter and accordingly does not have any comments to make on the proposal....



"The assessment of noise impact is complex and subjective, and is rarely (if ever) able to be considered in isolation from other social and economic aspects of a development or activity."



"The EPA has compiled this policy in good faith, exercising all due care and attention. No representation is made about the accuracy, completeness or suitability of the information in this publication for any particular purpose.

Noise and Vibration Report quotes:

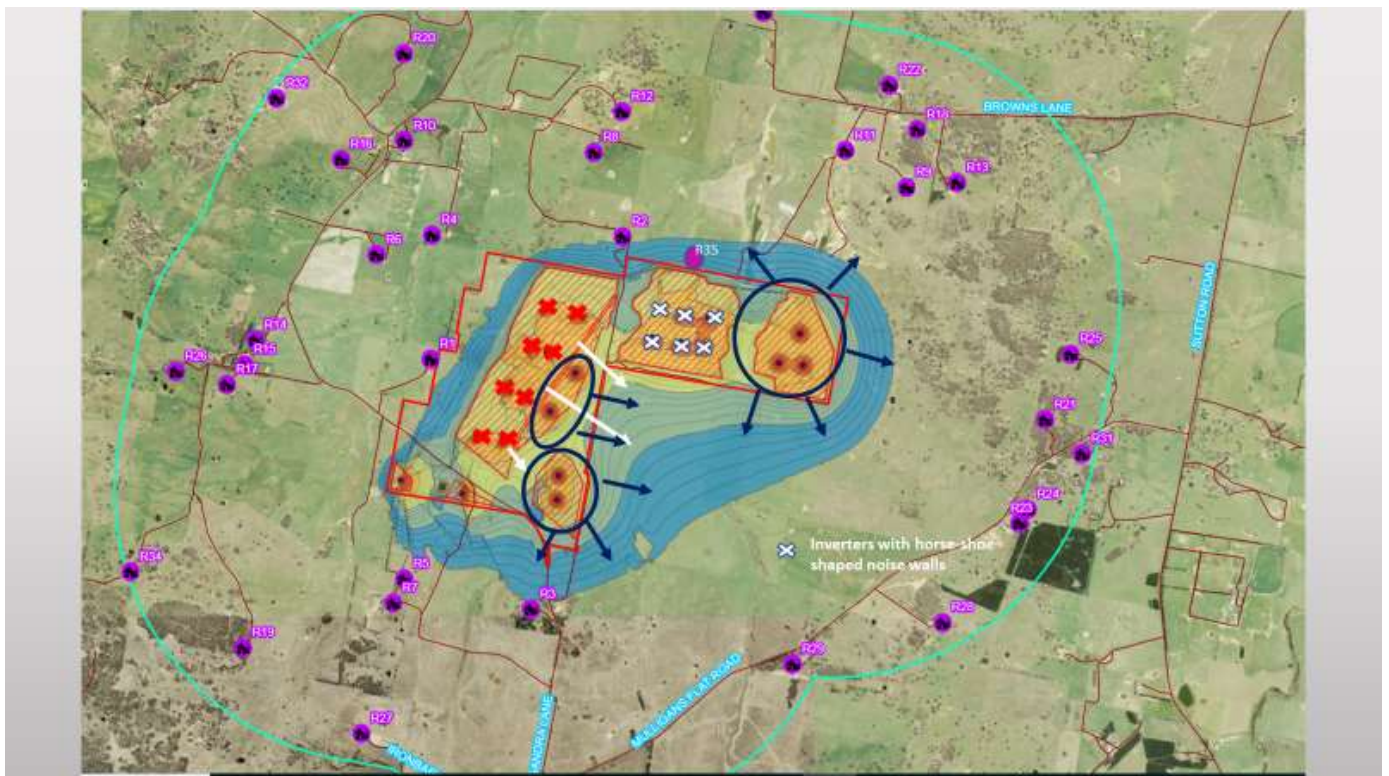
- ... "Neutral atmospheric conditionise. relatively calm, no wind.
- It can be expected that there may be differences between predicted and measured noise levels due to variations in instantaneous operating conditions plant in operation during the measurement and also the location of the plant equipment
- background noise logging levels undertaken by AECOM at other remote rural areas in south west NSW and are considered to be generally representative.
- operational noise contours ..These contours are indicative only and should not be referred to for noise levels at specific receiver locations." ...

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As for noise levels, even the developers state not to rely on the data in the report. Additional Information document page 2 of the Updated Noise Impact Assessment

This makes this report meaningless because it's not an assessment based in reality, it's just some computer modelling, yet it is being used to assess how we will be impacted!

Based on their computer modelling which as we've stated is a work of fiction, and like the vegetation screening RES has also chosen to **reduce the noise mitigation.** The original EIS had allowed for all these marked as **X** to have 'horse-shoe shaped walls' around the inverters closet to the residences. Now only those with white crosses will have 'horse-shoe shaped walls' around the inverters. **This is not an improvement!**



Quiet inverters?

'The easiest and least expensive form of noise control at a solar facility is to locate the sound-producing equipment in the center of the facility.'

While quiet transformers and inverters exist, due to premium cost, it is generally not a specification point the solar facility designers are willing to consider. Therefore, the second line of noise control would be noise barriers.' [Yes, Solar Farms Can Produce Noise! - Acentech](#)

This would not usually be an issue because large-scale solar energy generating facilities are not located in the middle of rural residential areas. If there needs to be barriers put around to reduce noise then perhaps, they can purchase more suitable inverters? OR chose a different location for the development, somewhere where there are less constraints!



The indicative height of the 40' containers is 4m

The three sided "horse-shoe" shaped noise walls are 2 m high,



Questions

If noise walls are half the height of the containers, what benefit will they be?

Are they open like this example in the EIS (assume they are open for ventilation), which three sides would be shielded?

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In other words, the noise assessment has no probative value.

If you look at the images above taken from the EIS, these containers are approx. 4m high, how is it that a 2m high three-sided structure will reduce noise to the surrounding residents, especially since they will be in the lowest part of the valley and sound will carry upwards and over these 'noise barriers'.

Again, we state that noise mitigation has been reduced, which along with landscaping shows the proposed development is NOT lessening the impacts, it is making the situation worse for those living around this proposed development.

Aboriginal heritage impact

- The SSAG was aware that the OEH submission in response to the EIS recommended that sub-surface archaeological testing (SSAT) be done over **the entire site pre-approval**.
- The SSAG emailed the DPIE 5 December 2018 asking when the Response to Submissions was likely to be lodged.
- Between that date and the 7 April 2020, when RES notified us *that 'RES has **acquired** the development assets of the Springdale solar....'* the DPIE on five occasions told the SSAG that the delay in Renew Estate lodging the RTS was because they were still finalising the additional SSAT.
- The additional SSAT was never undertaken by Renew Estate.
- In a phone conversation on 30 April 2020 with Mr Mike Young of the DPIE he admitted that not only had Renew lied the SSAG but to the DPIE as well.
- We also note that in RES's Request for Further Information Report that OEH's letter dated 18 June 2020 **again reiterated the key concern that the SSAT testing should be done pre-approval** in response to the Nugunawal and Ngambri Elders significant concerns over the site.
- A letter to the SSAG from the DPIE dated 20 August 2020 informed the SSAG that following a request in May 2020 from RES to conduct the additional testing post-approval, the **DPIE agreed to this**.
- **There seems to be either a complete turnaround by the OEH, and for what reason? OR the OEH was over-ruled by the DPIE. DPIE was unable to provide an explanation to the IPC as to the change.**
- **We note the Ngunawal and Ngambri Elders submission states their rejection of the reports in the EIS and express great concern about the possible destruction of cultural artefacts.**
- **If the developer is truly genuine and fully committed to undertaking these studies, why not do them pre-approval? It can't be about the cost because they say they are going to do them anyway; the only reasonable explanation could be they are concerned about what may be found that will prevent approval, OR they don't want to spend the money because they are going to sell it should it be approved. Just because other sites have done them post-approval doesn't mean this one should be done that way. After all each development is supposedly assessed on its own merits.**
- **There should be a truly independent inquiry into the DPIE's conduct in relation to the Springdale solar development, which will include misleading the public about the 'elusive sub-surface archaeological testing'.**

Water

- On page 18 line 34 -40 of the DPIE transcript Prof Lipman raised a question about water usage and that this development proposes to use the same amount of water during construction as they do during operations, which is only two megalitres, as opposed to the normal solar farm, which would be about 20. DPIE was asked for their opinion on if just two megalitres would be adequate to deal with the dust that's going to arise from the construction, and perhaps for vegetation maintenance?
- The DPIE stated that *'because we are on the sealed road network for quite a lengthy period and there's only that short 150 metre of gravel resheeting, compared to some other projects, the water usage, which is mainly for dust suppression, is predicted to be lower than some of the other projects that we have assessed.'*
- Prof Lipman then asked if **the area's being cleared, surely, to put in the panels**, there would be a lot of dust arising from that, that would have to be dealt with. So, you'd think that there would be more water usage for dust suppression during construction than operations.
- **Both representatives of the DPIE present at the meeting are obviously very unfamiliar with the area surrounding the proposed site. Tintinhull Road runs through the middle of the site, who will provide dust**

suppression on that road. Likewise, the remainder of Tallagandra Lane to the west (which is where the prevailing winds are from) will be a continual source of dust across the project but isn't considered.

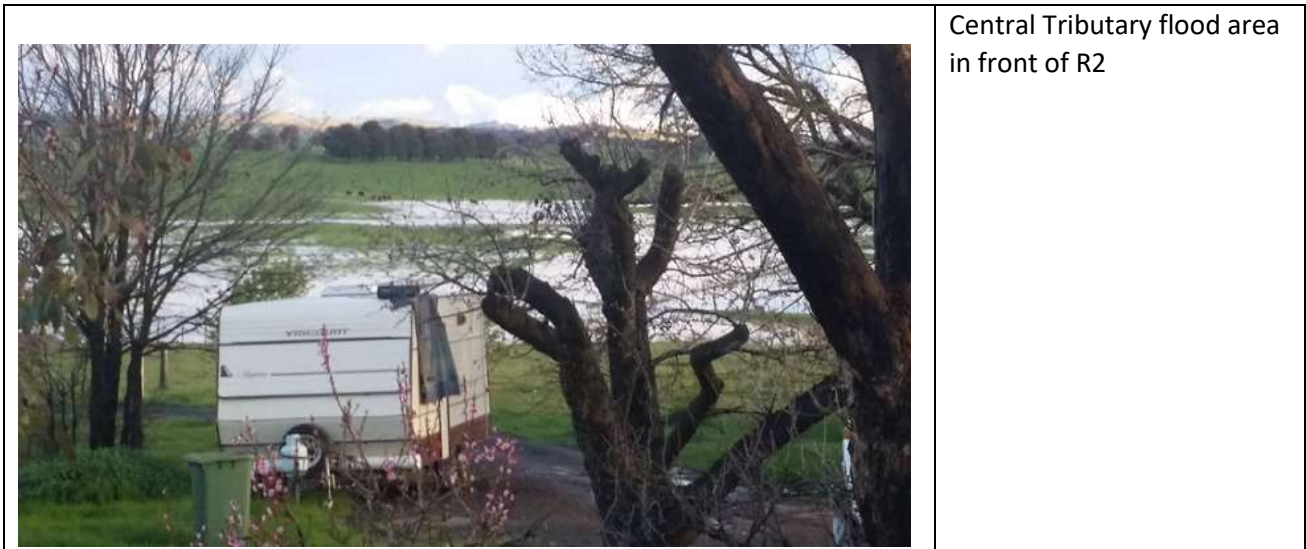
Water is not just for dust suppression and cleaning panels. If one of the conditions of approval is to establish and maintain a mature vegetation screening, how will this be achieved without a substantial irrigation system throughout the site? Likewise, to establish ground covering that the developer has committed to replace after construction, this is highly unlikely to grow without irrigation. Water is a big issue that hasn't adequately been answered.



Dust on Tintinhull Road

Flooding and Erosion

Flooding is not considered an issue for the site, there have been three significant flood events in the past 12 years.





Same as above, water can remain for days.



Central Tributary and northern fence line of proposed site in flood area



Driving along Tintinhull Road towards R2



Debris left on fence, the fencing around the proposed development will impede water flow and who knows what the danger is of having high voltage equipment siting in flooded areas.



Central Tributary, northern boundary of the proposed site.

This is **not a 1 in 100-year** flood which is considered to be worse.

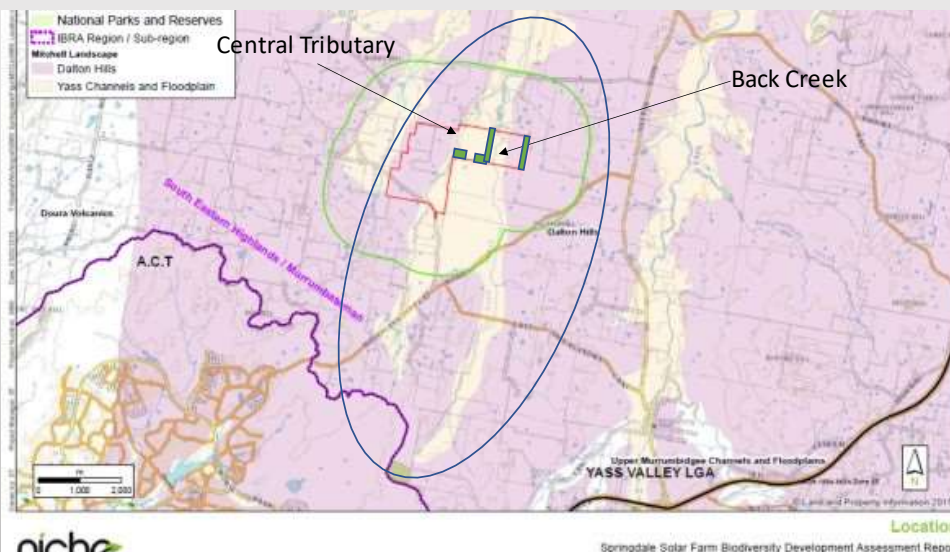


Driving north along Tintinhull Road, showing flooding of Central Tributary and northern section of proposed site.

Two separate flood events and as you can see there is quite a lot of water through the site. This will be exacerbated once the current dams are filled in to make way for the development.

Erosion Risk

'most construction activities do not involve the removal of the surface layer and exposure of the erosion prone B horizon within higher risk areas such as Back Creek and the other unnamed creek that runs through the Site.' (EIS page 120)



'Notwithstanding this, a geotechnical study is currently being completed which includes an analysis of potential issues regarding slope stability and erosion at the Site. The erosion and sediment control sub-plan would be developed to respond to any potential soil erosion issues identified through the study.' (EIS Page 121)

No studies have been done, once approval is given, it will be too late to undo the damage! The area around Back Creek is a high erosion area.

Back Creek flooding





The next image shows the profile of the area looking east of these pines, notice the large erosion cutting, this is a result of the volume of water that runs through this site, developers state no problem removing these pines! **THIS IS A SIGNIFICANT EROSION RISK**





Looking south through the old quarry 'lakes' up Back Creek to the pines on the right.



Does this look anything like the images of large scale solar we've shown earlier. NOTE the dip in the middle is Back Creek and the large erosion area.

The Springdale EIS states 'The construction of the project has limited potential to result in increased levels of soil erosion, as most construction activities do not involve the removal of the surface layer and exposure of the **erosion-prone B horizon within higher risk areas such as Back Creek and the other unnamed creek that runs through the Site.** The proposed project is located in an area of lightly undulating terrain and predominantly cleared grazing land, and as such no major earthworks would be required.' Springdale EIS page viii This is hard to believe.

How do you take out these large pines in this area and not create an erosion risk?

Solar resource/site suitability

- RES meeting transcript page 5, line 4 RES stated that 'the proposed site has **excellent sun resource** – it's not Queensland but it's definitely – you know, it's a good resource.'

- The following slides are from a report prepared for the NSW Government by AECOM in 2010 to determine suitable areas in NSW for large-scale solar development. This area was not amongst the suggested areas. **The Springdale EIS prepared by AECOM claims the area to be one of the best solar resources in the world!**

Pre-feasibility study for a solar power precinct Final Report, 17 December 2010

This study was issued by NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (DECCW), to be overseen by a Steering Committee consisting of the Clinton Climate Initiative, Transgrid, Industry & Investment NSW, NSW Department of Planning and the Land and Property Management Authority (LPMA).

<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/communities/pre-feasibility-study-solar.pdf>

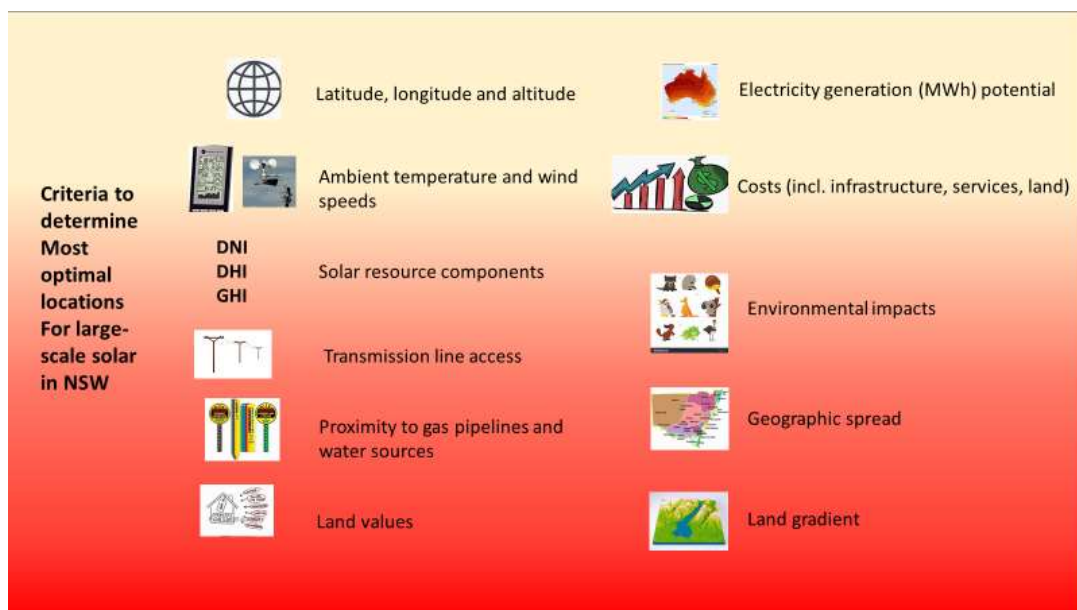
Aims of the study:

Determine feasibility of large-scale solar projects in NSW, and test the concept of co-location with other sources to share infrastructure;

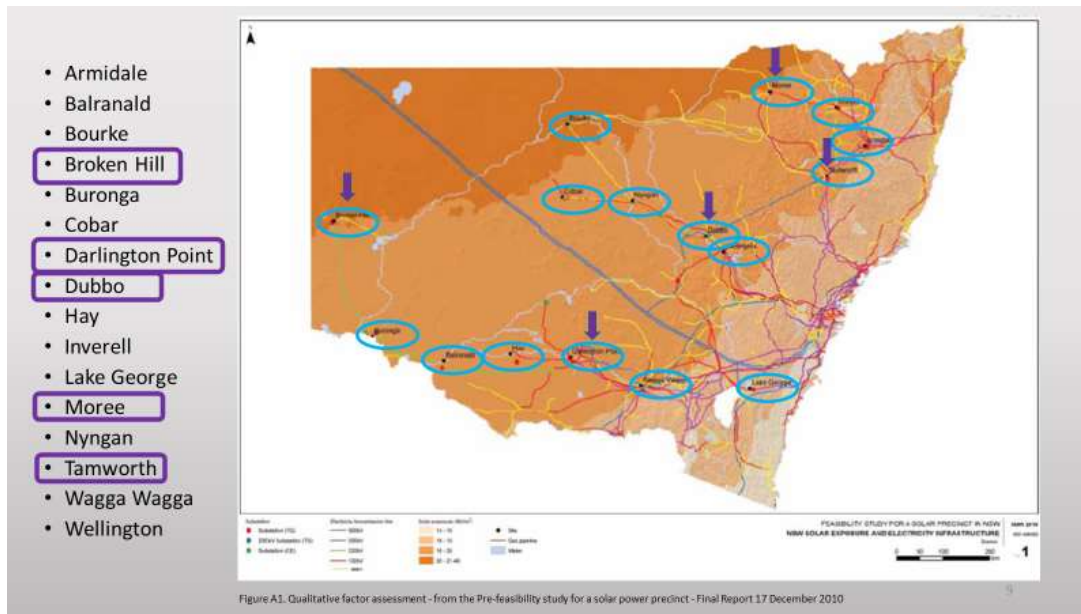
Identify potential areas for solar precincts in NSW

7

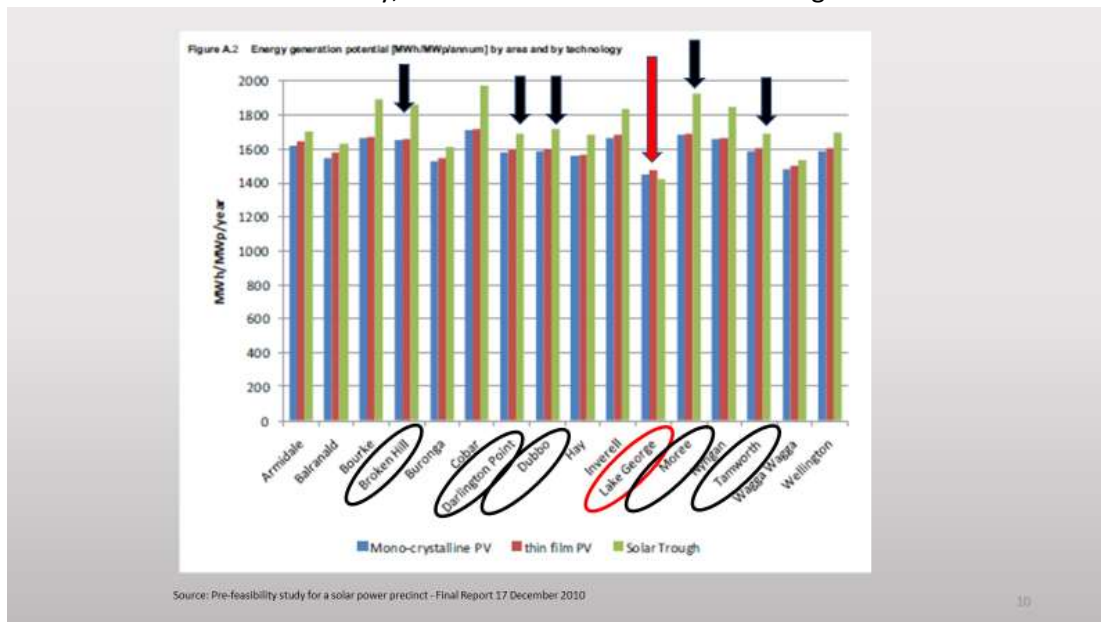
The is the criteria used to determine the most likely areas to study.



Based on the criteria above these are the 16 areas selected for the study.

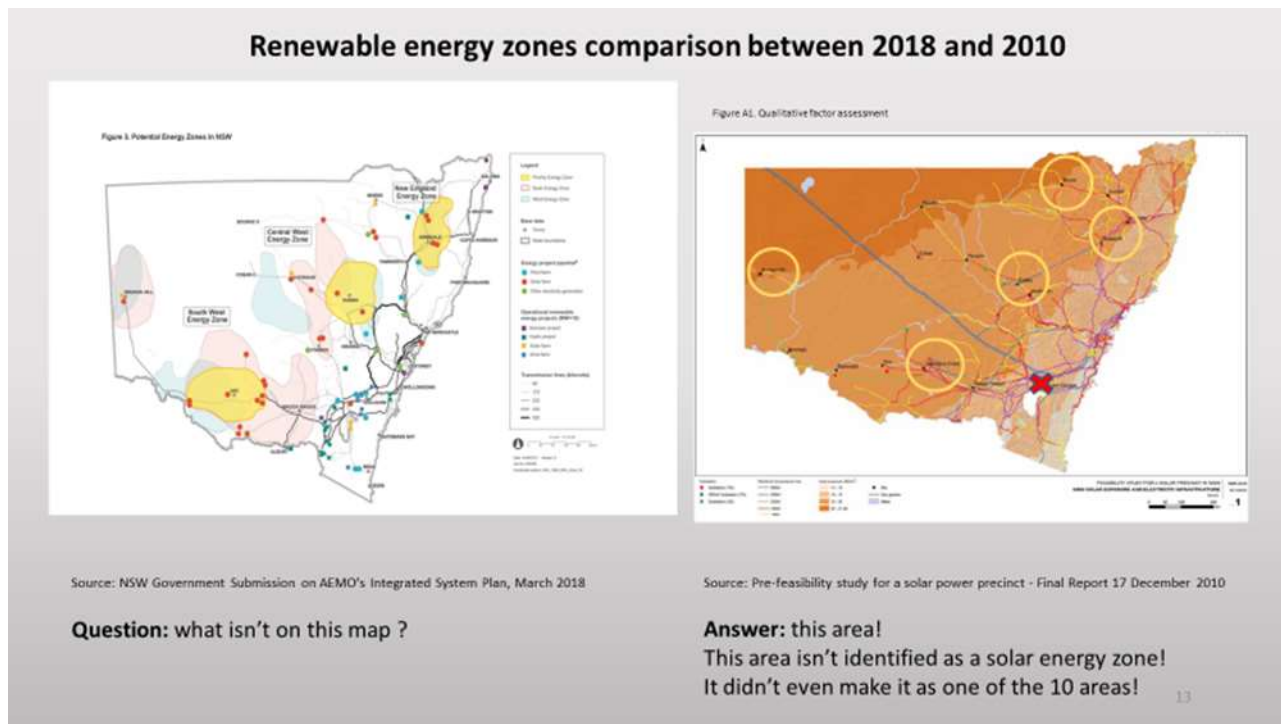


These are the results from that study, the area closest to us is Lake George and rated 16th out of 16.

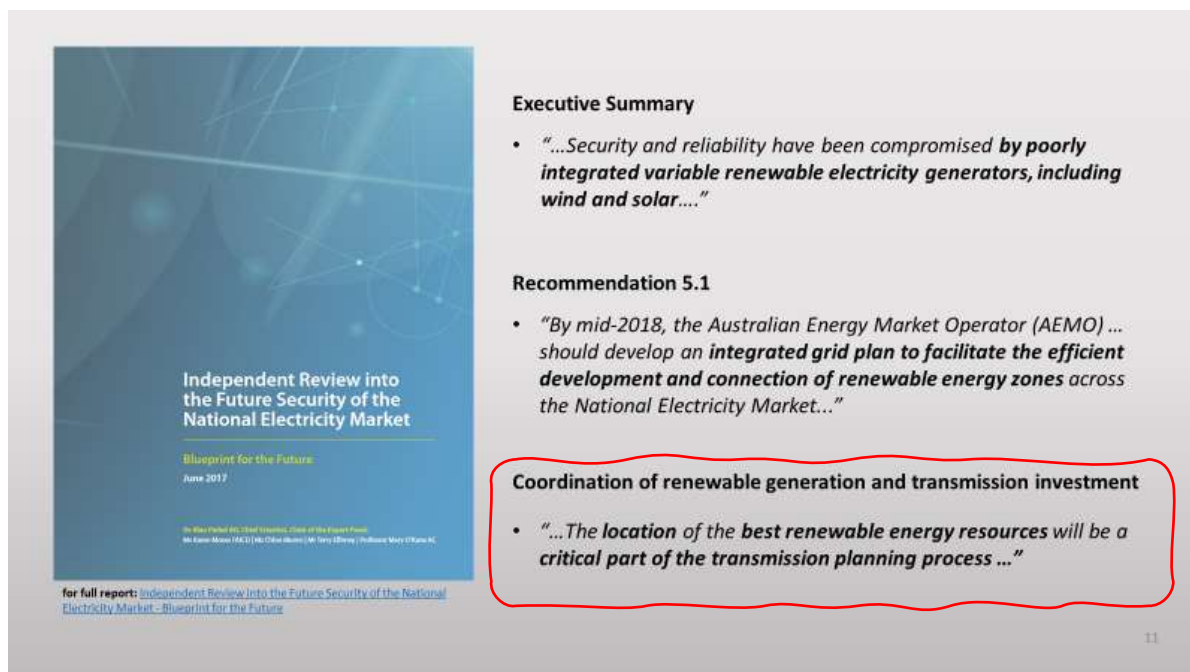


Based on the results above the five areas in the **right-hand image** were suggested by AECOM as the areas for further study.

The image on the left is from the NSW Submission to AEMO's 2018 ISP, note that the areas nominated in 2010 for further study are the same put forward by the NSW government in 2018.



These same areas were also shown in the 2017 Finkel Report as being potential REZ's, note Finkel's comments.



Point 3 above says exactly what we say, the location is critical. The developer's reason for location is a willing landowner and a 132kv power line.

The lower voltage 132kv lines are a least cost option for the developer, not the best for renewable energy generation integration. The other reason is near load centres, this reason is now rather moot, especially considering projects in the NT and WA propose to send renewable energy via underwater cable to Singapore!

2.2.2 Renewable Energy Zones (REZs)

- "...The intention of making this information publicly available was to **enable interested parties, such as investors or governments, to make informed decisions about where to plan new renewable generation capacity...**"

3.6 Indicative high scoring zones for solar

- "...In the central and northern regions of NSW ..."

<https://www.aemo.com.au/Electricity/National-Electricity-Market-NEM/Planning-and-forecasting/Integrated-System-Plan>

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The REZ's identified in the 2017 Finkel Report are no different to those from 2010 and are the same again in 2018.

What we also note is that the Sth Tablelands area is identified as a wind area.

Note the comments circled above, for interested parties to make informed choices. This choice was convenience not best for renewable energy.

"the site has a **high level of solar resource** and ideal climatic conditions for a commercial scale solar farm".

"The region has among the **best solar resources** in the world."

What is interesting is these comments in the Springdale EIS are totally inconsistent with the same company's findings from 2010

RES and the DPIE both say that while it isn't in a designated renewable energy zone it is near a 132kv power line. If this was all that was needed then why has the NSW i.e Dept of Energy and Cth governments gone to such much trouble to determine how large-scale renewable energy should be integrated i.e. the ISP's. The recently released NSW Energy Roadmap again shows the same REZ's.

AEMO who controls the NEM certainly does not advocate for these types of developments to be placed anywhere, in fact they have stated on a number of occasions that the **placement is important to helping provide stability in the grid.**

RES did state that the **2018 ISP** included REZ 11 which is the Sth Tablelands & ACT, however when you look a little deeper, they also **rated solar in this area as poor.**

Also, in the **2018 Transgrid reported that they had 5000MW of enquires for renewable energy connection** in this same region and that **there was only 1000MW** of capacity. We note that **connection to the grid does not guarantee generation output**, as we have seen in the south western parts of NSW and also in Victoria, where developments have been either unable to generate or have been severely curtailed. Our concern is that as time passes this could become a white elephant and if the developer no longer considers it profitable, they will walk away and this infrastructure will be here for good.

The **2020 ISP** has reduced numbers of REZ's in NSW and the Sth Tablelands is now N4 and has **still rated solar as poor and renewable potential is 0 MW.**

According to AEMO and Transgrid this is not a great location for solar, and as we have already stated Transgrid's only obligation is to connect if there is capacity, but that doesn't mean the facility will generate as we also state above. However, it seems the DPIE knows better. An ill-considered choice just because it is near a 132kv power line.

Preston CJ of the NSW Land and Environment Court said in his judgement of the Rocky Hill mine case on 8 February 2019 which stated a very relevant point:

*, ... A development that seeks to take advantage of a natural resource must, of course, be located where the natural resource is located. **But not every natural resource needs to be exploited...***

*A dam can only be located on a river, **but not every river needs to be dammed.** The **environmental and social impacts of a particular dam may be sufficiently serious as to justify refusal** of the dam'.*

*Seaside residential development can only be built at the seaside, but **not every seaside development is acceptable to be approved.**' Gloucester Resources Ltd v Minister for Planning [2019] NSW LEC 7 686-690*

In summing this up, given that AECOM conducted these studies in 2010 and Renew Estate claim they are renewable energy experts why would you propose to build where you know the energy generation potential is the lowest in the state. **What is the imperative that this needs to be built here, what is so critical that it outweighs all the constraints that we raised?**

Agreements with 15 landowners

- On page 9 line 28, of the RES IPC transcript Prof Lipman asked if the offers to 15 neighbouring landowners had been agreed.
- Mr Reid stated that there are **no agreements in place**, they still haven't formalised the offers.
- Even after all this time they (Renew/RES) haven't been able to secure support from those surrounding the site. How interesting! There is no support in this community for this proposed development, because it doesn't belong in this location.

Amendments



The DPIE likes to use percentages to show how minimal impacts are. Let's look at the amendments that are supposedly such large considerations of community objections by the developer. The areas in **pink** in the image above are where panels have been removed from the drawings. The area is 2.6ha in the south of the project. If the proposed development footprint is 185ha. This means that the so-called reduction is a whole 0.014 of the total area, this is not a huge reduction in visual impact. Moving the substation is a benefit and the residents of R5 are thankful for this, but **the overall visual impact still remains, nothing has changed for them.**

Real Estate

It's evident that this area is an attractive place to live and below is a valuation prepared for the Yass Valley Council which clearly shows the housing market in this area is highly desirable and values have increased significantly.

The images of looking over rural landscapes are what people come here for and expect to see based on the zoning legislation of the region.

They don't move here to look at 300,000 solar panels. This development will have a detrimental impact on rural property prices.

DPIE and the developers say there is no evidence to support our objections that it will harm real estate values. We say to them, can they prove it won't.

As for the DPIE and RES's comments about not standing out, look at the low number of industrial entries in this region. The majority of the 4,000km² of the Yass Valley area is open agricultural landscapes, not industrial complexes full of large sheds. This development will be a huge contrast to its surroundings and as we've shown it can't be hidden away.



QV Australia

Yass Valley LGA

Final Report 2015

Date: 16/11/2015

QV Australia

Provides valuation and property consultancy services within New South Wales to a broad range of clients, including state and local government, and the corporate sector.

Rural Zone Land

- The value per hectare of Rural Land within the Yass District varies widely, with values per hectare being the highest a short distance from Canberra and declining toward the Northern and Western limits of the District.

Summary of Valuation Changes to Rural Land

Changes since previous General Valuation (2013)

- The Yass Valley LGA is a highly regarded rural locality due to its temperate climate, elevation, soil quality, location close to the coast and its reliable rainfall.
- The most common rural land use in terms of land area is rural grazing with rural home sites and hobby farms predominating in terms of the number of properties.

Changes since previous Valuation Year (2013)

- The broad acre rural property market has experienced increases of approximately 10% over the past 12 months. This trend has been consistent across lifestyle grazing/hobby farms, rural-residential and rural retreat holdings throughout the LGA.

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Land close to the ACT/NSW border is highly regarded and desirable and is predominately used as lifestyle properties. The Yass Valley Council 5km buffer zone enhances the prospect of living in this area.

Industrial properties make up a small minority in the Yass Valley area (see next image) and this development **will not blend in with the surroundings. We've shown the area surrounding this site is farmland with homes, not massive infrastructure as DPIE claim. Why do they say such ridiculous things when clearly, they don't know anything about our area.**

Properties Valued and Total Land Value							
Zone	Zone Code	No. of Entries	2015 Total Land Value	Prior Annual Valuation (2014)	% Change	Prior Local Government Valuation (2013)	% Change
Residential	(R1, R2, R3, R5, RU5)	4411	994,593,156	981,730,630	+1.31	951,200,050	+4.56
Rural	(RU1, RU2, RU3, RU4, RU6, W1)	2371	1,404,518,040	1,356,299,610	+3.56	1,278,836,690	+9.83
Commercial	(B1, B2, B5, B6)	282	65,590,730	64,571,330	+1.58	61,396,600	+6.83
Industrial	(IN1, IN2)	8	4,526,000	4,467,000	+1.32	3,351,000	+35.06
Infrastructure	(SP1, SP2)	50	14,310,590	14,297,590	+0.09	14,297,590	+0.09
Environmental	(E1, E2, E3, E4)	168	69,016,690	68,224,790	+1.16	66,140,790	+4.35

NSW towns the most popular regional areas in Australia for rural property investment

July 20, 2018

[Pauline Morrissey](#)

According to Yass Real Estate's Sales Manager, Edwina Brown, "buyers are drawn to Yass and the surrounding areas as they are able to have a **rural lifestyle**, within easy reach of Canberra, Sydney and other regional hubs throughout NSW, while still being part of a **fully functioning rural town**."

1. **Yass, NSW**
2. Goulburn, NSW
3. Mildura, VIC
4. Bathurst, NSW
5. Cooma, NSW
6. McLaren Vale, SA
7. Orange, NSW
8. Dubbo, NSW
9. Mudgee, NSW
10. Singleton, NSW

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The Canberra Times



Yass Valley enjoyed house price growth of 14.7 per cent last year. Photo: Karleen Money

Yass queen: The NSW region defying trends

LUCY BLADEN | FEB 10, 2019

- According to Domain data, **Yass Valley experienced a 14.7 per cent growth in house prices over 2018**
- "With Canberra and Sydney's increasing unaffordability, **Yass Valley's country lifestyle is popular for those seeking space and a rural pace with a sense of community**."
- "Over the past 10 years, **Yass Valley has had a strong and consistent population growth** of around 2 per cent per year and enjoys **one of the lowest unemployment rates in Australia at around 2.5 per cent**," said Yass Valley Council Business Development and Tourism Manager, Sean Haylan.

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Community Consultation

Much has been said by the DPIE, Renew and RES about how important community and consultation is and how they have been very diligent in doing this task. It just sounds and looks good on paper.

Below is our log of community consultation going to 2017 (see table below) when we first became aware of the proposed development. **The lack of consideration given to this community by all of the above is reprehensible.** The mental health of the community has been severely impacted by this long-drawn-out process.

Following the close of submissions, the developer made contact via email to some landholders in September 2018. From then on until 7 April 2020 there has been no communication from developers.

If Renew Estate and RES were truly genuine in engaging with the community, they have had three channels of communication available to them to engage with the Sutton and Gundaroo communities to which they have not availed themselves. There is the Sutton Chatter, the Gundaroo Gazette, and there are Facebook pages for both communities, as well as regular meetings of the Sutton District Community Association Inc. (except during COVID-19 restrictions).

Using COVID-19 restrictions is a poor attempt at an excuse RES could have used any of the above ways to engage with this community. They choose not too.

We are aware that a Renew Estate employee did attend one Landcare meeting shortly after the project was announced, and we also note that some funding was made to the Gundaroo Common Association and the Sutton RFS. This is the sum total of community engagement.

As stated earlier in the Aboriginal Heritage comments we mentioned that the SSAG has in every case had to contact the DPE/DPIE to find out what was going on with this development. When Mr Reid mentioned that this project has been 'elongated' is because the DPE/DPIE did nothing to follow up with Renew Estate as to how they were going with preparing the RTS.

We are also aware that the DPIE now put on their website a letter to applicants with a date of when the DPIE expect the RTS to be completed by. **Curious how this seems to have happened since the SSAG made such a noise about the lack of oversight of the DPIE of their own processes.**

Our level of frustration with the lack of action by the DPIE led us to approach our local member Ms Wendy Tuckerman to see how she may be able to assist us. Ms Tuckerman thought our concerns warranted a meeting with Minister Rob Stokes, which Ms Tuckerman arranged for 1 April 2020.

Members of the SSAG spoke with Minister Stokes at length via the telephone (COVID-19 protocols precluded face to face meetings), also present were Ms Tuckerman and Mike Young-DPIE. Minister Stokes continually apologised for the distress that this community had suffered and requested his department expedite the matter.

It is an amazing coincidence that RES sent their correspondence about 'acquiring' the Springdale assets just six days after we reported on our meeting with Minister Stokes. Here we are now just 55 days short of another year since our meeting with the Minister in 2020 and another year of mental anguish.

DATE	Actions by RENEW ESTATE/RES	ACTIONS BY THE SSAG	ACTIONS BY DPE/DPIE, APA, AECOM etc	ACTIONS BY LOCAL MEMBER and NSW MIN FOR PLANNING ROB STOKES
14 September 2017	Renew Estate first contact with adjacent landholders			
30 November 2017	Newsletter 1			
5 December 2017	1st meeting with adjacent landholders & Renew Estate			
7 December 2017	Renew Estate's Drop-in session 1			
15 December 2017	Newsletter 2			
15 February 2018		pamphlet/letterbox drop 1		
22 February 2018		SSAG Community Meeting 1		

DATE	Actions by RENEW ESTATE/RES	ACTIONS BY THE SSAG	ACTIONS BY DPE/DPIE, APA, AECOM etc	ACTIONS BY LOCAL MEMBER and NSW MIN FOR PLANNING ROB STOKES
27 February 2018	2nd meeting with adjacent landholders & Renew Estate			
1 April 2018	Newsletter 3			
10 April 2018	3rd meeting with adjacent landholders & Renew Estate			
5 May 2018		Sutton Chatter - Springdale update by SSAG		
5 June 2018		Sutton Chatter - Springdale update by SSAG		
29 June 2018			APA Safety Management Study Report for Renew Estate for Springdale dated 29/6/18	
5 July 2018		Sutton Chatter - Springdale update by SSAG		
10 July 2018	Newsletter 4			
19 July 2018	EIS lodged and public exhibition commences Missing from EIS is acknowledgement of the Canberra to Dalton HPGTP			
29 July 2018		SSAG pamphlet/letterbox drop 2		
2 August 2018		SSAG Community Meeting 2		
5 August 2018		Sutton Chatter - Springdale update by SSAG		
7 August 2018	4th meeting with adjacent landholders & Renew Estate		AK & NH visited site and met with A & SH, MO, PG, D & JH and DB	
8 August 2018	Drop-in session 2			

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29 August 2018	EIS public exhibition close		APA's submission on the EIS states ' <i>Renew Estate did not engage with APA during preparation of the EIS. However, subsequently Renew Estate engaged with APA and commissioned a SMS ...</i> ' Refer to document link at right, shows the SMS was done in June 2018 and Renew Estate was represented at this meeting!	
5 September 2018		Sutton Chatter - Springdale update by SSAG		
7 September 2018	Newsletter 5			
5 October 2018	IN THIS TIME RENEW ESTATE CLAIMED TO BE STILL WORKING ON THE RESPONDE TO SUBMISSIONS AND THAT THE SUBMISSIONS DOCUMENT WAS BEING HELD UP DUE TO FINALISING ADDITIONAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL STUDIES	Sutton Chatter - Springdale update by SSAG		
25 October 2018			AECOM states Renew Estate received a working draft on this date	
5 November 2018		Sutton Chatter - Springdale update by SSAG		
12 November 2018		SSAG reps meet with Member for Goulburn Pru Goward to discuss problems we are experiencing with the development		Pru Goward met with SSAG reps, MO, MB and DB
5 December 2018		SSAG emailed DPE re ETA for RTS - FIRST TIME		
10 December 2018			AECOM states DPIE agreed to methods for archaeological surveys	
10 December 2018			DPE responded to SSAG email 5/12/18 by phone (NH) RTS not expected until NY, RE still working on additional archaeological survey	

DATE	Actions by RENEW ESTATE/RES	ACTIONS BY THE SSAG	ACTIONS BY DPE/DPIE, APA, AECOM etc	ACTIONS BY LOCAL MEMBER and NSW MIN FOR PLANNING ROB STOKES
24 January 2019	AS ABOVE	SSAG emailed DPE re ETA for RTS - SECOND TIME		
29 January 2019			DPE responded to SSAG email 24/1/19 (NH) informed SSAG by email that RE still preparing the RTS	
5 February 2019		Sutton Chatter - Springdale update by SSAG		
5 March 2019		Sutton Chatter - Springdale update by SSAG		
21 March 2019		SSAG emailed OEH, L&W, NRAR and YVC re water crossings, erosion, site access and dust CC'd DPE		
26 March 2019			M Saxon (OEH) responded to SSAG email 21/3/19 email, cannot talk to us, passed his comments onto Planning	
5 April 2019		Sutton Chatter - Springdale update by SSAG		
11 April 2019		SSAG emailed DPE re ETA for RTS and reminded DPE about email of 21/3/19 see above link THIRD TIME		
11 April 2019			DPE (AK) by phone informed SSAG that RE still working on additional archaeological survey	
1 May 2019		SSAG emailed DPE flood images to support email 21/3/19		
5 May 2019		Sutton Chatter - Springdale update by SSAG		
5 June 2019		Sutton Chatter - Springdale update by SSAG		
23 June 2019		SSAG Website goes live		

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23 June 2019	AS ABOVE	SSAG's Post to subscribers		
30 June 2019		SSAG's Post to subscribers		
2 July 2019		SSAG's Post to subscribers		
5 July 2019		Sutton Chatter - Springdale update by SSAG		
9 July 2019		SSAG's Post to subscribers		
5 August 2019		Sutton Chatter - Springdale update by SSAG		
9 August 2019		SSAG's Post to subscribers		
31 August 2019		SSAG's Post to subscribers		
5 September 2019		Sutton Chatter - Springdale update by SSAG		
13 September 2019		SSAG's Post to subscribers		
4 October 2019		SSAG's Post to subscribers		
4 October 2019		SSAG emailed DPIE re ETA of the RTS FOURTH TIME		
5 October 2019		Sutton Chatter - Springdale update by SSAG		
24 October 2019			DPIE responded to 4/10/19 email (NB) informed SSAG reason for delay of the RTS is finalising additional archaeological survey work and that RTS would be provided by late November 2019	
5 November 2019		Sutton Chatter - Springdale update by SSAG		
23 November 2019	SSAG's Post to subscribers			

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4 December 2019	AS ABOVE	SSAG emailed DPIE to see if RE lodged the RTS and again to inform the DPIE that RE had not contacted the SSAG. FIFTH TIME		
5 December 2019		Sutton Chatter - Springdale update by SSAG		
15 December 2019		SSAG's Post to subscribers		
19 December 2019			DPIE responded to SSAG email of 4/12/19. DPIE informed SSAG that RE DID NOT LODGE the RTS. RE reminded about keeping community updated. DPIE said RE would provide project update by end of year. DPIE informed the SSAG possible action in NY may be to assess project without RTS or project update.	
20 December 2019		SSAG responded to DPIE email of 20/12/19 to inform the DPIE that possible course of action would be agreeable with the SSAG.		
23 December 2019	Renew Estate emailed adjacent landholders only after two requests from DPIE for RE to contact local community			
5 February 2020	AS ABOVE	Sutton Chatter - Springdale update by SSAG		
5 February 2020		SSAG's Post to subscribers		
10 February 2020		SSAG met with new local member Wendy Tuckerman . Ms Tuckerman told the SSAG that she would organise for us to meet the Min for Planning Rob Stokes		SSAG met with Wendy Tuckerman and Alicia Croker. Ms Tuckerman will organise meeting with Min Stokes
5 March 2020		Sutton Chatter - Springdale update by SSAG		

DATE	Actions by RENEW ESTATE/RES	ACTIONS BY THE SSAG	ACTIONS BY DPE/DPIE, APA, AECOM etc	ACTIONS BY LOCAL MEMBER and NSW MIN FOR PLANNING ROB STOKES
1 April 2020	AS ABOVE			Due to COVID-19 restrictions SSAG had telecon with Minister Stokes, Wendy Tuckerman MP, Mike Young DPIE. Min Stokes asked for Mr Young to liaise with Ms Tuckerman & Dianne Burgess (SSAG)
1 April 2020		SSAG's Post to subscribers		
5 April 2020		Sutton Chatter - Springdale update by SSAG		
7 April 2020	CONTACTED BY RES-GROUP INFORMING US THEY HAD 'ACQUIRED' THE PROJECT. Email distributed to unknown number of residents. phone calls to some adjacent landowners requesting that RES take some photos, two new residents obliged. Since initial email and a few phone calls RES-Group has not engaged with the surrounding residents or the community that we are aware of.		RES's 1st Newsletter & Email to individuals – RES claims projects have been on hold since Summer 2018/19	
9 April 2020		SSAG's Post to subscribers informing them of the 'new' developer		
30 April 2020		SSAG rep DB spoke by phone with DPIE Mike Young re RES and ETA for the RTS to be lodged.		
5 May 2020		Sutton Chatter - Springdale update by SSAG		
13 May 2020		Through Ms Tuckerman's office the SSAG wrote to Min Stokes seeking an opportunity to update DPIE on any additional information since submissions lodged. The letter was forwarded to the MO		Ms Tuckerman's forwarded the SSAG letter to Min Stokes office.

DATE	Actions by RENEW ESTATE/RES	ACTIONS BY THE SSAG	ACTIONS BY DPE/DPIE, APA, AECOM etc	ACTIONS BY LOCAL MEMBER and NSW MIN FOR PLANNING ROB STOKES
26 May 2020		SSAG's Post to subscribers		
29 May 2020	<p>RES lodged RTS and Amendment Report RTS claims: - project on hold since Summer 18/19</p> <p>- SEE 29/6/18 above - Canberra to Dalton HPGTP SMS for Springdale dated 29/6/18. Refer Appendix E- QRA report</p> <p>Renew Estate and Wirsol employees were present during the SMS meeting: Tom Harrison and Will Stone</p> <p>- SEE 29/8/18 above - APA submissions states Renew Estate did not engage with them during preparation of the EIS !!</p>			
2 June 2020		SSAG's Post to subscribers		
3 June 2020		SSAG's Post to subscribers		
4 June 2020		SSAG (DB) spoke by phone with DPIE (AK) seeking clarification about assessment process and how submissions are evaluated		
5 June 2020		Sutton Chatter - Springdale update by SSAG		
26 June 2020			Teleconference between DPIE represented by Mike Young, Nicole Brewer, Anthony Ko, Natasha Homsey and the SSAG represented by J Hassall, M O'Shea, A & S Hardwicke, D & M Burgess. The meeting discussed the list of concerns that the SSAG had provided the DPIE earlier.	

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6 July 2020		Sutton Chatter - Springdale update by SSAG		
16 July 2020		SSAG emailed DPIE following up from teleconference and issues we raised that the DPIE will follow up and respond to the SSAG		
25 July 2020		SSAG's Post to subscribers		
28 July 2020				Minister Stokes response to meeting in April and DPIE telecon
4 August 2020		SSAG's Post to subscribers		
6 August 2020		Sutton Chatter - Springdale update by SSAG		
20 August 2020			Email from DPIE in response to the teleconference and the SSAG email of 16 July 2020	
1 September 2020			Sutton Chatter - Springdale update by SSAG	
11 September 2020	RES requested a meeting with an impacted landowner about moving the substation.	Landowners met with RES representatives Stephen Reid and one other to discuss the possibility of moving the substation. Mr Reid acknowledged that the landowner is probably the most impacted visually.		
30 September 2020		SSAG emailed DPIE to see if they had completed the Springdale Assessment		
1 October 2020	RES submitted Request for Information Report			
2 October 2020		Sutton Chatter - Springdale update by SSAG		

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8 October 2020		SSAG emailed DPIE to follow up to SSAG email of 30/9/20 asking when DPIE will finalise their assessment as well as comments on the RFI submitted by RES on 1 October		
7 December 2020		SSAG meet with Ms Tuckerman to discuss the disappointing recommendation to approve and to ask for the IPC meeting to be postponed to after Christmas		Ms Tuckerman met with SSAG members and organised to change meeting date. to more suitable time will be now 29 Jan 2021
29 January 2021			IPC Public meeting	
5 February 2021			Submissions close for IPC	

Dianne Burgess

On behalf of the Sutton Solar Action Group