John Hamparsum
[redacted]

4th June 2019

Submission to the Independent Planning Commission –
Smithurst Theatre,
Gunnedah Civic Centre
83 Chandos Street, Gunnedah NSW 2380

Re- Orange Grove Solar Farm SSD 882- D557-19

I, John Hamparsum, am an irrigated crop farmer near Breeza NSW on the Liverpool Plains. I live approximately 21 kilometres from the proposed Orange Grove Solar Farm and as a result I am not directly impacted by the solar farm. I present here today in support of the project for the following reasons:

I am a member of Farmers for Climate Action which is an inclusive movement of farmers, agricultural leaders and rural Australians working to ensure that farmers, who are on the frontline of climate change, are part of the solution. FCA's vision is for 'farming forever'. In practical terms, FCA is supporting farmers to build climate, carbon and energy literacy and advocate for climate solutions both on and off farm.

I am also here as a farmer that sees very positive outcomes from solar farms in our region.

Solar power is good for our environment. The most commonly known fact about solar energy is that it represents a clean, green source of energy. Solar power is a great way to reduce our carbon footprint. There's nothing about solar power that pollutes mother nature. Solar power doesn't release any greenhouse gasses hence, it's safe and environmentally-friendly.

On our farm we use a considerable amount of power to pump our irrigation water to the surface. The traditional electricity that we use relies heavily on fossil fuels such as coal and natural gas. Not only are they bad for the environment, but they are also limited resources. This translates into a volatile market, in which energy prices alter throughout the day and considerably add to the cost of farming. Solar farms in our region will help to gradually replace energy produced from fossil fuels and thereby reduce our impact on climate change.

Solar farms produce power from an infinite resource- the sun will never cease and it won't increase its' costs and it gives our region energy security.

You only have to travel through the Hunter Valley and the Queensland Gas fields to see the immediate impact that fossil fuel mining has had on our environment. Then there is the long-term impact of increasing carbon in our atmosphere which in turn impacts our climate. Farmers are at the frontline of climate change and I believe we are currently experiencing climate anomalies as a direct result of climate change. For me as a farmer, I encourage as many renewable energy projects as possible to reduce our carbon footprint and I see the Orange Grove Solar farm as a very positive step towards a renewable energy future for both this generation and generations of the future.

Electricity needs to be transported from big power plants to end-consumers via extensive networks. Long distance transmissions equal power losses, the more solar farms we have in regional Australia the less power that is lost in transmission as compared to having large centralised power stations based where the fossil fuel source is, e.g. in the Hunter Valley.

Solar power improves grid security. When there are more solar power farms, we are less likely to experience blackouts or brownouts during the daylight hours. Every solar farm functions as a small power plant. This, in turn, provides us with a greater electricity grid security, especially in terms of natural or human-caused disasters. In the near future power storage solutions will be more available and we will see even better grid security.

Having Solar Farms in our community boosts our local economy, initially with the original construction build and then the ongoing income stream to local landowners that have these farms on their land. There are also ongoing maintenance costs that will also provide employment in our local community.

There are many benefits in having solar farms in our community with almost no drawbacks. The future of our climate is dependant on our economy moving away from fossil fuels and this Orange Grove Solar Farm is one step towards our renewable energy future. I fully support the building of this solar farm and hope that there are many more to come.

Thank you

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John Hamparsum