



**ANDREW CONNOLLY**

**OBJECT**

Submission No: 179385

Organisation: <i>Country Women's Association of NSW</i>	Key issues: <i>Land use compatibility, Visual impact, Traffic and transport, Social impacts, Temporary accommodation</i>
Location: <i>New South Wales 2020</i>	
Submitter Type: <i>I am a member of the community with a view about the proposed development</i>	
Attachment: <i>CWA Submission</i>	

Submission date: 6/13/2024 3:59:43 PM

*Please refer to the submission documentation attached.*



# Country Women's Association of NSW

*Incorporated in 1931 by an Act of NSW Parliament  
Constituent Society of the Associated Country Women of the World*

ABN 82 318 909 926

14 June 2024

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Independent Planning Commission NSW  
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## **RE: SSD-29508870 Planning Approval for the Birriwa Solar Farm**

Dear Chair,

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Country Women's Association (CWA) is the largest women's organisation in Australia. It aims to improve conditions for country women and children. The CWA does this by advocating for its members, helping local communities, creating a network of support and meeting together in towns and cities across Australia. The CWA of NSW has thousands of grassroots members and hundreds of branches across the state. Our members have a strong interest in policy decisions that affect communities, families and country people and can be viewed as an important stakeholder of government at both state and national levels. A key aim of CWA of NSW is to improve the conditions of families especially in country areas, as well as enhance the value of country living.

CWA of NSW is NSW's largest rural issues advocacy group. With well over 8000 members and close to 400 branches across NSW, there is no other member-based organisation that has the breadth and depth of membership on matters affecting country people. Our policy positions and prioritised advocacy areas are determined by our grassroots members, via a democratic process.

CWA of NSW advocates for positive action on climate change, and for transitioning away from fossil fuel production and use to an environmentally sustainable economy through the following policy statements:

- *That the policy of the CWA of NSW shall be to support positive action on climate change by calling for and supporting the implementation of a plan for transforming regions, communities and workers from fossil fuel extraction, processing and burning sectors to new, inclusive and sustainable economies.*
- *That CWA of NSW urge the Federal Minister for Environment and Heritage, and the state minister for Environment and Conservation and the state minister for Natural Resources to encourage the use of renewable energy resources in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.*
- *That the policy of CWA of NSW shall be to advocate for research, development, and investment into renewable energy in rural Australia as a way of adapting and reducing the risk of climate change in rural areas while scoping and establishing, additional, yet sustainable, productive industries for rural populations.*
- *That the CWA of NSW lobby the NSW Government to urgently develop a gas decarbonisation roadmap for NSW, enabling business, industry and households to be resilient and sustainable in a decarbonising world.*

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CWA supports a planned and well executed renewable energy strategy recognising that it has the potential to transform regions, communities and workers from fossil fuel extraction, processing and burning to inclusive, renewable economies however this must not impact on food and fibre production.

*That the policy of CWA of NSW be to oppose large-scale solar plants on prime agricultural land to protect food and fibre productivity.*

## **PROJECT OVERVIEW**

ACEN Australia proposes to develop the Birriwa Solar Farm, a State significant project located approximately 15 km south-east of Dunedoo in the Mid-Western Regional Local Government Area. The project includes:

- A generating capacity of approximately 600 megawatts (MW).
- A 300 MW / 1200 MW-hour battery energy storage system (BESS).
- An on-site substation connecting to the proposed CWO REZ Merotherie Energy Hub.

During the exhibition of the environmental impact statement (EIS), the Department received substantial objections from the community and the Warrumbungle Shire Council, which highlighted significant concerns about the cumulative impact of renewable energy projects in the region.

## **ASSESSMENT**

The CWA of NSW supports a well-planned renewable energy strategy. CWA of NSW acknowledges the potential of such projects to transform regions from fossil fuel reliance to inclusive, renewable economies. Nonetheless, this transformation must be meticulously planned to protect agricultural land and ensure community benefits.

The CWA of NSW support the Warrumbungle Shire Council's request to defer the determination of the Birriwa Solar project until the cumulative impacts of over 40 large-scale renewable projects in and around the Central West Orana Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) are comprehensively assessed and adequately addressed.

The specific concerns include:

1. *Environmental Impacts:* The environmental footprint of numerous large-scale projects needs careful evaluation to prevent significant, irreversible damage.
2. *Social Impacts:* The influx of thousands of workers and increased traffic will strain local infrastructure, including roads, healthcare, and emergency services.
3. *Economic Impacts:* The local economy must be compensated for the potential disruption to agricultural productivity and other local industries.

## **CONCLUSION**

The scope and magnitude of renewable energy projects in the Central West Orana REZ will significantly impact the Warrumbungle Shire and surrounding areas. The cumulative environmental, social, and economic costs must be thoroughly evaluated and addressed before proceeding with the Birriwa Solar Farm.

CWA of NSW urge the Independent Planning Commission to show leadership in ensuring that local communities do not bear the brunt of these impacts without adequate compensation and safeguards. Therefore, we join the Warrumbungle Shire Council in calling for the deferment of the Birriwa Solar project's final decision until these critical issues are resolved.

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