



**ELISA AND JOHNNY ROSO**

**OBJECT**

Submission No: 189628

Organisation:		<b>Key issues:</b> <i>Land use compatibility, Visual impacts, Traffic, Heritage, Erosion and sediment control, Water, Noise, Waste, Dust, Hazards and risks, Community benefit, Cumulative impacts, Decommissioning and rehabilitation</i>
Location:	<i>New South Wales 2618</i>	
Submitter Type:	<i>an individual making a submission on my own behalf</i>	
Attachment:	<i>Roso Submission 31.08.2024 0.4.pdf</i>	

Submission date: 7/31/2024 3:33:12 PM

*Please refer to find attached letter.*

Dear Commissioner,

Re: Reference # SSD9261283, Development of a 100 MW solar farm and associated infrastructure, including battery storage

I am writing to formally object to the proposed development of the Wallaroo Solar Farm (WSF), located in Wallaroo, NSW 2618. While I understand the importance of renewable energy and the need for sustainable infrastructure, I have several concerns regarding this particular project that I believe warrant consideration.

**1. Environmental Impact:**

The proposed site for the solar farm is home to diverse flora and fauna, some of which may be vulnerable or endangered. I am concerned that the construction and operation of the solar farm would disrupt local ecosystems, harm wildlife habitats, and lead to the loss of native vegetation. It is crucial to thoroughly assess the environmental impact and explore alternative locations that would have a less detrimental effect on the local environment.

**2. Visual and Aesthetic Concerns:**

The construction of a large-scale solar farm in this area would significantly alter the landscape and aesthetic appeal of Wallaroo and neighbouring ACT communities. The visual impact of such a development would detract from the natural beauty and rural character of the region. This is a concern for both residents and visitors who appreciate the scenic views and tranquil environment. Our property currently has uninterrupted views on to the proposed WSF site. If the proposal is approved our view will be significantly diminished. We are also concerned about potential glare from the solar panels.

We also note that the proponent attended our property and made an astonishing remark that our views were going to be significantly impacted.

**3. Property Values and Local Economy:**

I have great concerns that the construction and operation of a solar farm could have a significant negative impact on local property values. This concern stems from the visual and aesthetic changes to the landscape, which may be seen as less appealing compared to natural or undeveloped land. Potential buyers could be deterred by the industrial nature of the development, leading to a decline in demand and market prices. Additionally, the construction phase would disrupt local businesses and tourism, which are vital components of the local economy. In speaking with local real estate agents and experts, we understand that local property values could decrease by up to 20% as a result of the construction and operation of the WSF. This would cause us a significant economic loss of approximately \$3 million. This is a great concern for our family in both the short and long term.

**4. Noise and Traffic Concerns:**

The construction and maintenance of the solar farm would lead to increased noise levels and traffic congestion. The arrival of heavy machinery and construction vehicles poses safety risks and disrupt the daily routines of residents. Wallaroo functions effectively as a cul-de-sac, with a single entry and exit point via the Barton Highway, where commuters travel at 100 km/h. Crossing the verge is a nerve-wracking experience for drivers, as vehicles coming from the west crest a hill with limited visibility. Adding additional construction vehicles increases these pre-existing risks to unacceptable levels with the current infrastructure.

In addition, Wallaroo Road and Gooromon Ponds Road are both single lane roads, with narrow lanes which is a concern for potential accidents due to the increased construction traffic, including heavy vehicles. These roads are reportedly as narrow as 3 meters, with no shoulder or verge. It is not uncommon for weekend traffic on the large sweeping bend of Gooromon Ponds Road, heading towards the winery region, to force a resident or oncoming car to pull aside. Additionally, a bridge on Wallaroo Road is not rated for B-double trucks. Residents have frequently raised concerns about this rural road, where they walk their dogs, children catch the school bus, and wildlife regularly crosses.

#### **5. Impact on Water Resources:**

The development and maintenance of the WSF could place additional strain on local water resources. The area may require significant amounts of water for dust suppression during construction and for maintaining the solar panels. This demand could deplete local water supplies, impacting agriculture and domestic use, particularly as it has been reported that we are expecting an 'El Nino' event and therefore may experience water resource hardship in a time of potential drought.

#### **6. Impact on Cultural Heritage:**

The Proposal Area is situated within the traditional lands of the Ngunnawal people, who belong to the Ngunnawal language group.

The ACHA details the notice published in the Canberra Times on November 21, 2020, with correspondence sent to various organisations identified by Heritage NSW.

In contemporary society, placing a notice in a printed newspaper does not meet the community standards of 'reasonable' communication. The Canberra Times has a circulation of less than 20,000 copies, reaching less than 5% of the population.

Given that this is a cross-border project, it is also a mistake for Heritage NSW or the developer not to consider the register of Ngunnawal organisations, most of which are likely based in the ACT due to the geography of Ngunnawal country.

#### **7. Limited Local Economic Benefits:**

While the construction phase of the solar farm may provide temporary employment opportunities, the long-term economic benefits to the local community will be limited. Solar farms typically require minimal staffing for operation and maintenance. There would be a lack of sustainable job creation for local residents, and the economic benefits will not outweigh the negative impacts on the community and local tourism.

#### **8. Proximity to Residential Areas and Incompatibility with Zoning Laws:**

The proposed WSF is located too close to residential properties and the town centre, which raises significant concerns regarding land use compatibility and adherence to zoning regulations. Solar farms, being industrial facilities, can pose challenges when situated near residential zones due to potential noise, visual impact, and decreased quality of life for residents. This proximity can also conflict with local planning instruments and guidelines that aim to protect the character and amenity of residential areas.

## **9. Fire risk**

The installation of WSF brings inherent fire risks, particularly during the dry season when the landscape is more susceptible to bushfires. The presence of electrical components and high-voltage equipment can potentially ignite fires if not properly maintained or if faults occur. Solar batteries, which store energy generated by the solar panels, add an additional layer of risk. These batteries can overheat or experience thermal runaway, leading to fires that are difficult to control. The accumulation of dry vegetation around solar panels, batteries, and other equipment further exacerbates the risk, as it provides ample fuel for fires to spread rapidly. We have experienced bushfires in our local area in the past and have great concerns about the increased fire risk and potential safety for our family, including young children, pets and livestock, and the surrounding environment.

In addition, in the event of a fire at a solar farm, there is a significant risk of chemicals from the solar panels leaching into the adjacent river. Solar panels contain various hazardous substances, such as cadmium, lead, and other toxic materials, which can be released when the panels are damaged or burned. The runoff from firefighting efforts, combined with heavy rainfall, can carry these contaminants into the river, posing a serious threat to water quality. This contamination can have detrimental effects on aquatic ecosystems, harm local wildlife, and compromise the health and safety of communities relying on the river for drinking water and recreation.

## **10. Inadequate Community Consultation Process:**

The community consultation process for the WSF project has been poorly conducted, lacking transparency and meaningful engagement with local residents. Many community members, including myself, feel that we were not adequately informed or given sufficient opportunity to voice our concerns and opinions. The limited dissemination of information, insufficient notice for public meetings, and lack of accessible channels for feedback have left residents feeling excluded from a decision-making process that directly affects our community. A robust and inclusive consultation process is essential to ensure that all stakeholders have a chance to participate and that the project's potential impacts are fully understood and addressed.

We are also disappointed that we have not received any response to past feedback in respect to our concerns raised, which included the indigenous history and artifacts that exist on the proposed site.

In light of these concerns, I respectfully request that the planning authorities carefully reconsider the approval of the Wallaroo Solar Farm project. I propose that alternative sites be considered and that more thorough consideration is given to the concerns raised in this objection to reject the proposed development.

Thank you for considering my objection. I look forward to your response and hope that our community's concerns will be taken into account in the decision-making process.

Yours sincerely,

Elisa and Johnny Roso

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Wallaroo, NSW 2618