



JAN KAMSTRA

OBJECT

Submission ID: 240045

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|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| Organisation: N/A | Key issues: <i>Traffic, Visual Impacts, Social Impacts</i> |
| Location: <i>New South Wales 2333</i> | |
| Attachment: <i>Attached overleaf</i> | |

Submission date: 19/02/2025 7:38

Submission Opposing the Proposed Solar Farm Development in the Muscle Creek Area

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to formally oppose the proposed solar farm development in the Muscle Creek area, currently being promoted by OX2.

1. Environmental Impact: Destruction of Natural Habitat

The land in question, previously rehabilitated from mining activities, is now home to regenerating vegetation, young trees, and important wildlife habitats. This area, which was once part of buffer land zoned for non-industrial use, is crucial for maintaining local biodiversity. The destruction of young trees and the removal of vegetation for solar panels will directly harm the local ecosystem, which is home to endangered species such as the wedge-tail eagle, spotted quoll, the endangered leg less lizard that is found at surrounding projects in the Singleton and Muswellbrook areas and several other bird species. The notion that these species will simply relocate or adapt to the industrial nature of the solar farm site is not only naive but dismissive of the critical importance of preserving their habitats.

The disturbance caused to these wildlife populations, many of which are already vulnerable, cannot be understated. The claims that the project will have minimal impact on local wildlife are deeply concerning and show a lack of understanding and consideration of the sensitive ecosystems in this region. Furthermore, no adequate plans have been presented to mitigate these impacts or restore the natural environment after the project's lifespan ends.

2. Lack of Proper Consultation and Transparency

The consultation process surrounding this project has been insufficient, and the lack of responsiveness from the developers has caused frustration among local residents. There has been a clear pattern of the developers only meeting with the community when it is convenient for them. Several attempts to organize meetings have been unsuccessful, and the developers' responses to questions have been vague and evasive. A recent community consultation at the local RSL club failed to provide satisfactory answers to critical questions, leaving residents feeling ignored and disrespected.

The ongoing lack of transparency regarding the full environmental, social, and economic impacts of this project further erodes trust. The lack of accountability and genuine community engagement leaves residents in a position where they are being asked to accept a major industrial development without sufficient information or consideration of their concerns.

3. Fire Risk and Safety Concerns

A significant concern with this project is the potential for electrical fires, as has been seen in other solar farm installations. Recent fires in Parkes and South Australia, linked to solar farms, highlight the risks associated with such large-scale electrical infrastructure. The proposed solar farm site is situated in a fire-prone area, and there is no clear plan in place to address how fires will be prevented or managed. While the developers claim that grazing sheep will manage the vegetation and reduce fire risk, it is evident that sheep will not be present due to the safety risks they would face in this environment.



In addition, the risk of fire is not confined to the solar farm itself. Electrical fires can quickly escalate into grass fires, putting the surrounding environment, homes, and infrastructure in jeopardy. The lack of detailed fire safety protocols and the failure to address the risks of fire escalation raise serious concerns about the safety of local residents and their property.

4. The Question of Rehabilitation and Long-Term Responsibility

A fundamental issue with this project is the lack of clear plans for the rehabilitation of the site once the solar farm reaches the end of its operational life. As residents, we are left wondering: who will be responsible for ensuring the land is fully restored to its natural state? The developers should be required to set aside funds for land rehabilitation in a legally binding agreement to ensure that no lasting damage is done to the environment. We cannot afford to repeat the mistakes of the mining industry, where land rehabilitation is often delayed or inadequately executed.

5. Impact on Local Infrastructure

The proposed solar farm will have a direct impact on local infrastructure, particularly roads. Muscle Creek Road, a dead-end road, is already in a state of disrepair due to the lack of maintenance that is meant to be provided by the Muswellbrook Coal Company. Years of build up of coal trucks running this road leaves the road flooded at the smallest shower of rain. The additional heavy traffic from construction and operation of the solar farm will exacerbate these issues, putting additional strain on local roads without adequate plans for their maintenance and repair. The developers should be held accountable for restoring the roads to their original condition, including any necessary upgrades to handle the increased traffic.

6. Noise Pollution and Visual Impact

This project will also introduce noise pollution and a significant visual impact on the surrounding area. The noise from transformers, battery storage systems, and the movement of panels will disrupt the peaceful, rural character of the area. The view from local properties will be significantly altered by the presence of large-scale solar panels, turning a once-green, natural landscape into an industrial eyesore. This is especially concerning given that the area is home to local wildlife and is known for birdwatching. The proposal to plant trees to screen the solar farm is inadequate, particularly given the low reimbursement offered to residents for the cost of these trees, which is a fraction of the actual cost to the community.

7. Broader Concerns Regarding the Feasibility of the Project

The viability of this project remains unclear. There is no substantial evidence that the solar farm will be able to deliver the promised energy output, particularly when considering the issues with energy storage and the efficiency of using solar power to fuel hydroelectric plants. We cannot afford to waste resources on a project that may not be as effective as claimed, especially when it comes at such a high environmental and social cost.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I strongly oppose the development of the solar farm in the Muscle Creek area due to its significant environmental, social, and economic impacts. The destruction of natural habitats, the fire risks, the lack of proper consultation, and the failure to ensure adequate rehabilitation and infrastructure maintenance are all major concerns that have not been adequately addressed by the developers.

I urge the relevant authorities to reconsider this proposal and to prioritize the long-term health of the environment, the safety of the local community, and the preservation of the region's natural beauty and wildlife.

Thank you for considering my submission.

Attached a photo montage of our view at the panels that has been described by experts from Melbourne as having no impact.



New South Wales Government
Independent Planning Commission

With the elevation of the land we are not sure how we should screen this out at a way that is financially viable.

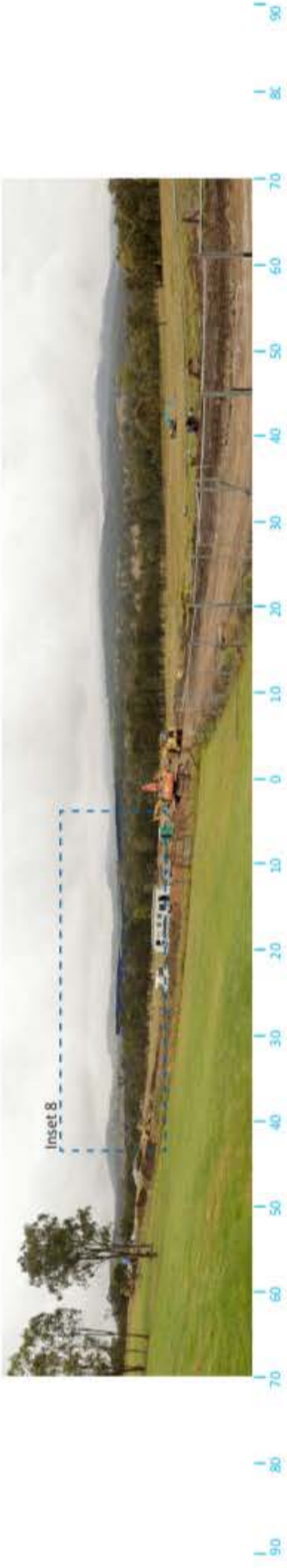
The support from OX2 is clearly something we don't have to count on.

Sincerely,

Jan Kamstra

A.8 Viewpoint 8 - Top Knot Place

Panoramic photomontage of the proposed development



Inset 8: Full-size 50mm image of the area with highest visual impact



Note: the full-size 50mm image used for this image provides a 40° horizontal field-of-view.