

Planning (Social Impact and Community Benefit) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025

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**Inquiry Into Planning (Social Impact and Community Benefit) and other Legislation Amendment
Bill 2025.**

Submission to The State Development, Infrastructure and Works Committee.

Dear Committee Members, as a property owner and food producer adjacent to a proposed large solar and battery hybrid complex, above our land on the watershed, I appreciate the opportunity to contribute to this proposed overdue legislation to protect people like ourselves from the negative impacts of Renewable Energy projects. We respond to this Bill using personal experience from dealing with a RE company since 2018, and their total lack of consideration for our community and our land, which has gone unpunished due to a serious lack of legislation governing the activities of these RE proponents.

Based on our experience, I would like to focus on aspects of

106W Requirements for social impact assessment reports.

An Impact Assessment report will be able to address the 5 key matters listed in the SSRC Act 2017 and the SIA Guideline 2018.

- Community and Stakeholder Engagement
- Workforce Management/ Local Business and Industry Procurement
- Housing and Accommodation
- Health and Community Wellbeing

Community and Stakeholder Engagement

Using our own experience at Smoky Creek we can describe the community engagement of the proponent with us as direct neighbours.

- We were first notified of the proposed project by a letter box drop.
- When we questioned the neighbours who were signed up as hosts, they had signed confidentiality agreements and could tell us nothing.
- The short objection period to the project was put over Christmas so that we only learned of it in hindsight.
- When we insisted on meeting with the proponent they sent a rep to meet with each concerned neighbour individually, they would not meet us as a group.
- Subsequent meetings, phone calls and emails were mostly arranged by us, and concluded with reps answering our questions by saying they couldn't confirm anything about the development.
- Since 2021 they have refused to reply to any phone calls or correspondence, even to Councillors and a solicitor on our behalf.
- Under current legislation there is no penalty for this dreadful lack of social license.

Community Benefit funds from RE proponents are a short term bribe used to deceive rural communities that some benefits will be attached to large toxic industrial zones in their midst. The proponent of the proposed Solar Factory beside us gave a \$20 000 dollar donation towards a new post office building in the nearby town of Goovigen. We do not know of any other community

benefits to date, (although we do know of a dementia group that applied for a grant from them and were unsuccessful.) For a project worth over 1 billion dollars, does this seem acceptable?

From speaking to locals where RE factories already exist, it is clear that these projects provide no lasting (positive) legacy, and that any money invested in the short term is only done in a highly public and visible way (for example donating marquees with company slogans emblazoned on them.) As neighbours to a project on a 9000acre site, we have been offered no compensation of any kind for the huge and devastating impacts associated, and the devaluation of our land and beef breeding enterprise. In fact, a letter we sent to the proponent via solicitor containing all of our concerns about environmental impacts of this project, (in 2021) has not even been responded to.

RE companies are allowed to behave this way, because the government has failed its people in establishing measures that will ensure communities receive recompense from these large, often foreign companies that will be syphoning Australian taxpayer's money offshore. To find ourselves being treated as collateral damage in favour of these developments has left us very bitter and disenchanted with a government that should be protecting productive, resilient food producing communities at all costs. In fact it has become clear to us that the process of approval and assessment of these projects is deliberately designed to speed up the rollout of renewable energy projects and silence those directly affected, allowing confidentiality agreements with hosts and gagging clauses to ensure communities lose any small power they have to object under current legislation. For elected governments to stand by and allow Australian people and landscapes to be steamrolled for RE (which has failed miserably as a viable source of power generation in other G20 countries) is now inexcusable.

In the Flynn electorate there are approximately 80 projects so far which will cost tens of billions of dollars and generate billions of dollars (in spite of whether they make power or not) for investors. For these companies to be contributing next to nothing (in the short term) and committing to nothing (long term) to help communities indicates a serious legislative omission has occurred. Mines and other developments, (viable and profitable industries - unlike RE) have many more regulations, and also rehabilitation requirements such as bonds to comply with before they can even begin construction. RE developments do not even have to do and EIS, are exempt from the Vegetation Management Act and also the Reef Regulations. This is beyond belief for an industry that claims to be in favour of the environment.

Many of the RE companies disappear overnight. The Collinsville solar farms have already changed ownership more than once, and the community is then at the mercy of the whim of whichever foreign company owns the factory at any time. Overseas (eg California and Scotland) defunct RE factories are left to disintegrate because the proponents no longer exist and the host cannot pay for the dismantling of infrastructure. A new question has been added to our LPA Accreditation regarding proximity of our cattle to Solar and Wind Factories. Data has now come from Europe about the contamination and condemnation of meat due to the existence of micro-plastics and other chemicals in meat from exposure to RE factories. This contamination of land is not reversible, and for the government to be allowing this invasion to go full steam ahead on our most productive and biodiverse areas is tantamount to serious treason.

Has the government even considered the problems that will arise when all of the RE factories reach end of life with a few years of each other, and the companies that built them (while the pickings were so good with a short-sighted ill-informed Australian government) have disappeared?

Workforce Management/ Local Business and Industry Procurement.

RE companies promise great benefits in terms of employment and new opportunities. Again, this has proven to be completely untrue in other towns where RE factories have already been built, where labour is imported on a huge scale from elsewhere, (often backpackers) flooding small towns that are already stretched for medical services and available housing. We now know that the same groups of people are travelling from project to project, and they are certainly not locals. Contractors from interstate are even being engaged for some projects. The project at Smoky Creek will create approximately 10 long term jobs, but as we have now seen, the employees are often city based and work remotely, bringing no benefit or long term loyalty to the community.

Housing and Accommodation

Our small local town, Goovigen, is set to become a 'donger city' of temporary workers quarters which will bring no benefit, and much disturbance to the local community. Our roads will be congested with the travel of 400 workers at peak building time, and this project is set to take more than two years to build. Our local safety, peace and visual amenity will be destroyed and the Council has exempted workers camps from being 'Impact Assessable' so they can be rushed through without the usual environmental checks and detailed Development Applications. All of these issues again clearly show that local, long term residents are simply being written off as collateral damage to a green ideology being demanded by people in cities who do not have to suffer any of the impacts of these projects.

Health and Community Wellbeing

Judging by our own experience of battling with this looming toxic and industrial development being allowed on A Grade food producing land, the health and wellbeing of affected communities has not even rated as worthy of the slightest notice from governments. In our direct community, of most concern are the serious mental health issues that are manifesting, not just among direct neighbours to this site but in general. Some families have already packed up their lives and moved away, while older farmers (some intergenerational on this land) are suffering serious stress related health complaints. The feeling that we have been totally abandoned after more than 400 letters to all levels of government, asking for help, has taken a heavy toll on our families, our quality of work and mental health. The future of our land, our waterways, our livestock, our wildlife, our children's future and our physical health is all under threat, while the government to date is happy to stand by and ignore our explicit requests for representation and legislations to preserve not only our own livelihoods, but our nation's precious and finite food producing land and food security.

Conclusion

Unfortunately after scrutiny of this Bill I see too little too late. This legislation, unless it is back-dated, will not serve to protect all the hundreds of Queensland communities, vast tracts of land and areas of high biodiversity that will be destroyed beyond rehabilitation if the approved projects are allowed to proceed. Does the government really believe, in good conscience, that this destruction is

warranted for a method of energy generation that has proved itself to be a monumental and astronomically costly failure in other G20 countries? If the Crisafulli government is going to do more than pay lip service to urban voters, and prevent prostitution of our beautiful land to foreign, profit driven RE companies, then much stronger legislation with the power to halt these developments, when prime land and forest is under threat, must be introduced without further delay.

Yours Sincerely,

Therese Creed. (Primary Producer, Teacher, Author.)