

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 neighbouring property owners and 5th generation food producers on the watershed below the proposed Smoky Creek solar factory, we are very happy to be able to contribute to this proposed, well overdue legislation to protect people like ourselves from the negative impacts of Renewable Energy projects. We are replying to this Inquiry into this Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 using our personal experiences from dealing with a RE company since 2018. We have had to deal with their total lack of consideration for our community and our land, which has gone unchanged due to a serious lack of legislation governing the activities of these RE proponents.

We would like to speak on aspects of the Legislation Amendment Bill as we have experienced.

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.

As neighbours to a project on a 9000 acre 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 our solicitor containing all of our concerns about environmental impacts of this project, (in 2021) has not even been responded to.

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 must have to object under current legislation.

In the Flynn electorate there are approximately 80 projects so far which will cost tens of billions of dollars and generate billions of dollars (despite whether they generate power or not) for investors. For these companies to be contributing next to nothing to help communities indicates a serious legislative omission has occurred. Mines and other developments, 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 an EIS and are exempt from the Vegetation Management Act and the Reef Regulations which we have to adhere to.

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 land should never be allowed.

Workforce Management/ Local Business and Industry Procurement.

The promise of great benefits in terms of employment and new opportunities, has proven to be false in other towns where RE factories have already been built. The workforce has been bought in from other areas and stretch the housing and medical services of these small towns even further. We have seen that the same contractors from interstate are just moving from one site to the next, not contributing anything to the local area. The project at Smoky Creek will create approximately 10 long term jobs, which is a very small number and will bring no benefit to the current local community.

Housing and Accommodation

Goovigen our small local town is set to become a mini donga town which will bring no benefit 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 and peace will be shattered as the Council has exempted workers camps from being 'Impact Assessable'. This means they can be rushed through without the usual environmental checks and detailed Development Applications. All these issues again clearly show that local, long-term residents are not taken into consideration at all.

Health and Community Wellbeing

Judging by our own experience the health and wellbeing of affected communities has not even been taken into consideration from our government. In our direct community, some families have already packed up their lives and moved away, while older farmers who have lived all their lives in the area 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

After reading through this Bill, unless it is back dated it will not protect the huge areas of land that are approved for destruction beyond rehabilitation that are already in the pipeline. We believe that unless something is done soon and that stronger legislation **is bought in and enforced** so much damage will be done to our prime land, forests and animal habitats that they will never recover.

Please help us, our children and our future generations before it is too late.

Yours Sincerely,

Arthur & Val Osborne
(Primary Producers and neighbours below the watershed to proposed Smoky Creek Solar Factory)