

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

Submission No:	335
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Publication:	Making the submission and your name public
Attachments:	See attachment
Submitter Comments:	

Submission to The State Development, Infrastructure and Works Committee.

To The Committee,

as a primary producer adjacent to the proposed Smoky Creek solar and battery hybrid complex, I feel well equipped to comment on this Bill so that what we have suffered from lack of proper regulation can be prevented in future in rural communities who have Renewable Energy projects approved in their midst. I am most qualified to comment on;

106W Requirements for social impact assessment reports.

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

1) Community and Stakeholder Engagement

As neighbours of the Smoky Creek project I can attest to a serious lack of Social Licence by the proponent (which continues to this day) as they have refused to address our concerns raised by us initially, and then via solicitor when we received no response in 2021. The proponent has still not responded to these concerns. There is apparently no legal penalty for this dreadful lack of social license, as the Queensland Solar Farm Guidelines that outline social licence expectations are not mandated. The Guidelines are not worth the paper they are written on unless they become mandated.

The threats attached to the project are numerous, contamination of soil, water and livestock, dust and noise pollution, weed spread, erosion, photovoltaic heat island, destruction of visual amenity and devaluation of property to name a few. In contrast, the 'community benefits' these RE companies love to spruik about have not yet been seen apart from a few token donations in public arenas.

The government has failed to establish measures that ensure communities benefit in some way as compensation for the huge imposition on their lives and livelihoods. In addition the secret and sneaky process of approval of these projects seems to be allowed to speed up the rollout of renewable energy projects and silence communities. Even our local Council was not game to block this project even though they knew of the local opposition to it, because they believed it would be overruled in the planning court at great expense to local ratepayers. Are we living in a communist age where local Councils are merely puppets to lull people into a sense that bigger authorities care about the grass roots?

Many of the RE projects are changing hands regularly between fly by night foreign companies. The government has abandoned communities and left them to deal with the various ethics of these companies with very little legislation to ensure protection of people, natural environments and businesses. No compensation agreements are required to protect people who risk the loss of their very viabilities on the land. Contamination of food due to the existence of micro-plastics and other chemicals in meat from exposure to RE factories is now being discovered in Europe. How can a responsible government allow this risk to be imposed on not only individual food producers, but Australia's very Food Security?

2) Workforce Management/ Local Business and Industry Procurement.

In spite of promises of career opportunities and boosting of local economies, we are seeing that labour is imported from elsewhere, overtaxing small towns that are already stretched for medical care and housing. The project at Smoky Creek will only provide a handful of permanent jobs.

3) Housing and Accommodation

Towns have become, and are set to become giant worker's camps, full of people with no connection or loyalty to the culture of communities. Roads will be congested at peak building time, and local safety, peace and town function will be totally disrupted. Safety issues for school and the elderly will be of particular concern.

4) Health and Community Wellbeing

To date, community health and wellbeing has not only been ignored by proponents but by governments as well. The ten neighbouring people around the Smoky Creek Project, have between the written more than 400 letters to layers of government and met with numerous politicians and government panels. All to no avail. Serious mental health issues are appearing as a result of this complete disregard by the government.,

Conclusion

This bill appears to be a weak beureacratic bandaid to allow the State Government to tick some boxes and have answers to public questioning about the negative impacts of renewables. In reality, this Bill will do nothing to change the march of this destruction, as the approved projects (more than 80 in Flynn alone) will not be impacted at all. We also understand that the legislation was moved to a later date to allow current projects time to complete their approvals before and restrictions were put in place. Hearing this disgusts and infuriates the affected communities and exposes the government's true motives for introducing this Bill.

Yours Sincerely,

Rick Tomlin. (Second Generation Food Producer at Smoky Creek.)