

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

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Submission to The State Development, Infrastructure and Works Committee.

To The Committee,

as a food producer directly impacted by the proposed Smoky Creek solar and battery hybrid complex, I can provide specific comment on this Bill, with particular reference to Renewable Energy Projects and their devastating impacts. I will therefore focus on;

106W Requirements for social impact assessment reports.

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

There is an unacceptable lack of mandated Social Licence requirements attached to RE projects that mines and all other projects are made to strictly adhere to. Compensation in any form, Base line soil, water and dust testing pre-construction, EIS and banking of a bond for rehabilitation to name just a few. The Queensland Solar Farm Guidelines that outline social licence requirements are not mandated and therefore ineffectual. We had no community meeting about Smoky Creek, instead we were kept in the dark by confidentiality agreements, unanswered phone calls, emails and even letters via Council and via a solicitor. We have not heard from this company since 2021 and discovered recently that a whole new BESS was to be added to the plans via public media announcement. This is disgusting and unacceptable, yet there will no doubt be no penalty for the proponent. We are now living in fear of 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. We have been offered no compensation of any kind, even in the event of contamination. 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.

Many of the RE projects are changing hands regularly between fly by night foreign companies. These companies have no interest in the good of local people on whom they are imposing, in fact they have no interest in anything other than fast profit. 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.

Workforce Management/ Local Business and Industry Procurement.

Promise of job opportunities from RE developments are false. 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, even the proponent admitted to this fact.

Housing and Accommodation

Local safety, peace and town function will be totally disrupted. Accommodation and services, already stretched in Banana Shire will be depleted further. Safety issues for school and the elderly will be of particular concern.

Health and Community Wellbeing

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. We have given feedback at Every REZ meeting in Biloela and at the Federal Government Inquiry in Gladstone into the RE Transition. This has been costly on our time and energy, yet we see no results or signs that any of the issues we have raised have been responded to in any way, by any government. Is it any wonder that we are sceptical about the current proposed Bill? We have noted the intentional delay in implementing the new rules and we are well aware that the delay is in favour of profit driven, mostly foreign corporations and at the expense of local, hardworking food produces, finite land and forests and our National Food and Energy security.

Yours Sincerely,

Keitha Tomlin. (Food Producer at Smoky Creek.)