

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

Submission No:	337
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Publication:	Making the submission public but withholding your name
Attachments:	See attachment
Submitter Comments:	

Submission to The State Development, Infrastructure and Works Committee.

Dear Committee Members,

Based on personal experience with the impacts on my family of Smoky Creek Solar and Battery Project, I would like to give feedback on;

106W Requirements for social impact assessment reports.

Matters listed in the SSRC Act 2017 and the SIA Guideline 2018.

Community and Stakeholder Engagement

Using Smoky Creek as an example (and this seems to be common among many rural communities dealing with RE Proponents) I will describe the social licence (or lack thereof) of this company.

- 1) We were first notified of the proposed project by a letter box drop.
- 2) Hhosts, they had signed confidentiality agreements and could tell us nothing.
- 3) Objection period to the project was put over Christmas.
- 4) When a meeting was requested by locals, the proponent the sent a rep to meet with each concerned neighbour individually, they would not meet us a group.
- 5) Subsequent meetings, phone calls and emails were mostly arranged by us, and concluded with reps refusing to specifically address any of our concerns.
- 6) 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 no more than bribes used to con rural communities in the short term to appease opposition. 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.) Neighbours to the Smoky Creek project a project have been offered no compensation of any kind for the huge and devastating impacts associated, and the devaluation of land and beef breeding enterprises.

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. From what I can see, this new Bill, delayed to allow RE companies to get their hooks in before rule changes apply, will do little to address the immeasurable damage that is coming. It is 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, and that this new bill is nothing more than political image building. 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 oversight. RE developments do not even have to do and

EIS, are exempt from the Vegetation Management Act and also the Reef Regulations. Will the new bill require any of these? And will it be backdated to protect the hundreds of QLD communities facing environmental destruction?

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. Additionally, 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 there is no one legally committed to deconstruction or rehabilitation?

Workforce Management/ Local Business and Industry Procurement.

In spite of big promises of economic benefits and work opportunities from RE proponents, the reality is that labour is imported on a huge scale from elsewhere, stretching already poorly serviced towns further for medical services and available housing. Contractors from interstate are even being engaged for some projects. The project at Smoky Creek will create approximately 10 long term jobs, and these employees may be city based and work remotely, bringing no benefit or long term loyalty.

Housing and Accommodation

Goovigen, the small town close to Smoky Creek, is set to become a 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. Council has exempted workers camps from being 'Impact Assessable' so that they can be rushed through. This is unacceptable legislation made by people who do not have to see or suffer any of the impacts of these projects.

Health and Community Wellbeing

By no means unique to our community are the serious mental health issues that are arising as a result of this steamrolling of rural communities by faceless RE proponents. Some families have already moved away, while others (whose ancestors have worked and loved their land) are suffering serious stress related health complaints. The future of our land, our waterways, our livestock, our wildlife, our children's future and our physical health is all under threat, and this proposed Bill is unlikely to change any of this unless the laws about where these projects are allowed are changed to exclude them from valuable fertile soils, farming communities and areas of high biodiversity, and backdated to prevent the march of these toxic industrial zones across the face of the Eastern Sea board.

Yours Sincerely,

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