

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

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<b>Submitted by:</b>	<div></div>
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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 1 of 6 direct neighbour to a Solar Project in the construction stage, I appreciate the opportunity to contribute to this overdue legislation to protect others from the negative impacts of Renewable Energy Projects.

**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 Stake holder Engagement
- Workforce Management/Local Business and Industry Procurement
- Health and Community Wellbeing

**Community and Stakeholder Engagement**

Using my own experience with Bundaberg Solar we can describe the community engagement of the proponent with us as direct neighbours.

- As we don't currently reside on our property, we were first alerted to the project when our neighbour called us to let us know about the proposal to reconfigure the property behind us back in 2019.
- We received no correspondence at all from any parties involved and even had this clearly stated in our submission to council regarding the reconfiguration.
- It was a shock to us to learn that the Solar project had already been approved back in 2018 and we were told via council and legal advice there was nothing we could do as the project was classed code assessed.
- We learnt via social media on June 9 2024 that construction had started on the project.
- We arrived at our property to find that our back fence had been removed and a good 4-6 metres of our land had been cleared the entire length of our back boundary fence without our knowledge or our consent.
- There was no signage up at the site so we had no idea who was even in charge of the project.
- Our fence should never have even been touched as they are breach of their council DA as they haven't followed their own plans submitted and approved by council.
- Our farm fence was replaced with a 1.8metre chain link fence with an angled barb wire top that protrudes into our land. Our children have described it as a prison fence.
- This style of fence is not suited to a rural residential zoned area.
- This fence does not allow for the wildlife corridor down to [REDACTED] which the project backs onto.
- We have wildlife trapped in our land as the scat along the prison fence is evident.
- This fence will also have to display danger signage as per WHS standards. Who buys rural property to have a prison fence with WHS compliant danger signage in their property?
- Our property has an easement on it which can have up to 2 metres of water passing through it on a good rain event. The debris being washed through the easement will build up on this

chain link wire fence and cause it to be pushed over like the same fence around the Woolooga Solar project on January 2025.

- This style fence in a rural setting is a danger to land owners and property as easy access if needed will be hindered for firefighting activities as the poles are cemented into the ground.
- The first community meeting was held with the proponent on June 26 2024 well after construction and destruction of neighbouring properties had already started.
- What about bio security as the machinery went through and cleared all 5 properties in one go.
- When I confronted the proponents at the community meeting about the destruction of my land and property I was asked “If I had ever made a mistake before”
- Approximately 2 years ago we got soil testing and septic testing on the area we were to build our home. In February 2024, the developers were approved for a minor change to go from a from a fixed array to a tracking array and via the company’s own glare study our property will be impacted from glare now.
- I was told from the proponents in a meeting held with them in October 2024 that they will be using tube stock for the vegetation buffer. Their vegetation buffer as per DA is to be up to 15 metres high. How long will tube stock take to reach these heights?
- I was also told by the company when I confronted them about the glare on my property that they will consider some extra screening for me only when my house plans have been submitted to them for approval. Why do I have to submit my own personal plans for their approval? Their own glare study clearly shows their changes impact my property directly.
- In March 2025 the proponent applied to council for a minor change on their DA which is breach. The minor change was to give me a “dog leg” in the fence which we didn’t agree to. The council refused their application but the work was completed before the council had made their decision.
- When they removed our boundary fence, they also removed and burnt all our corner stay posts. When new neighbours purchased the property beside us, they asked for the corner stays to be reinstated. As they can’t go back into their original position due to the fence posts being cemented in, they placed the post in the spot they thought best and have in turn now given my neighbour some of our land due to changing our boundary fence line.
- It is now up to me to take them to QCAT and have my full boundary resurveyed at my own cost.
- As direct neighbours, we have been offered no compensation of any kind for the huge and devastating impacts associated and the devaluation of land.
- I have also been the target of online bullying from employees associated with this project.
- These global companies are allowed to behave this way as our own government has failed to ensure the protection of direct neighbours and communities by having no legislation in place to hold rogue developers to account.
- There are already large piles of broken panels lying about the front of the project. The local council won’t allow solar panels into general waste as it increases the chance of heavy metals including lead, tin, cadmium, copper and other harmful components leaching into the groundwater supply. What damage are these piles of broken panels being stored on the project doing?
- Has the Government even considered the problems that will arise from all the panels at end of life or when large storms pass through the area and all the damaged panels it will create? The area is prone to Tornados and in 1992 had Australia’s strongest tornado. This project backs onto Gin Gin creek which is part of the Great Barrier Reef Catchment area.

- There is no protection for neighbours and insurance. We currently have \$20 million public liability insurance, but this project is worth \$130 million.
- This project is not even completed yet and has already changed hands.
- There needs to be some very serious changes put in place to the location of these projects as bringing industrialised projects into rural residential areas should not be allowed.
- Legislation bringing this industry inline with Mining and Agriculture needs to be established to ensure the locals are being looked after.

#### **Workforce Management/Local Business and Industry Procurement.**

- This project stated it would use as much local hire as possible. I have an earthmoving business across the road from me and they were not even given the courtesy to quote. There is another 3 business' in the local area and to my knowledge they were not given the courtesy to quote either.
- There is only one entry into our property. If this project catches fire which is not uncommon at all and encroaches on neighbouring land, we are now potentially blocked in. Our safety was not taken into account when this project was approved with out our knowledge or even given the chance to raise our concerns.
- We are in the middle of a housing crisis and local families missed out on accommodation as the workforce which consisted of a lot of backpackers came to the area. These companies should be made to hire local and ease the burden on local housing if bringing in its own workforce.
- The local clean peaceful rural area has increased with litter from the project and traffic from work vehicles. We were nearly involved in an accident with 2 of the buses from the site speeding along the thin rural roads.
- Massive steel plates were placed across the road to prevent damage to pipes underneath. Our small rural roads are not set up to take the volume of heavy traffic and equipment these projects subject them to.
- Some contractors are from and this is not unusual on these projects.
- This project will have approximately 5 full time positions at the end of the construction and some of those will be remote positions.

#### **Health and Community Wellbeing**

- The past 11 months dealing with the deception and destruction this project has caused to our family has been horrendous. I would hate to think of the money and time that has been spent on getting advice, travel and overnight accommodation down to our property to check on the destruction, the endless phone calls, emails and correspondence that has been needed in our fight to preserve our property rights.
- The mental health issues these global companies inflict on long time local land owners is horrific to say the least. I would not wish the despair, agony, heartbreak, anxiety I have experienced in the last 11 months on my worse enemy.
- Having no one to help and Government departments and officials tell you constantly "We have never experienced an issue like this or we are sorry for your damage, experience but we don't have any legislation in place to help you" is beyond soul destroying.

## **Conclusion**

- All projects in all stages need to be called in immediately. All projects must go through a stringent process to ensure every aspect of the process is completed to Australian Standards to ensure the safety of community and direct neighbours.
- Legislation when developed and approved needs to be back dated.
- A level of hierarchy in Government to oversee these projects such as in mining should be developed.
- What help and support is out there for neighbours such as myself who are being over run by these global companies and having our property rights eroded?
- A moratorium needs to be called on all projects until legislation has been developed.

Yours Sincerely

