

September 24, 2026

Development and Planning Officer
Douglas Shire Council
Front Street
Mossman 4873

Dear Sir,

Re: MCUI 2026_5936 - Solar Farm 6868 Captain Cook Highway, Killaloe

This objection to the above development is being lodged during the Public Notification Period.

Whilst we acknowledge that change is required locally following the demise of the Mossman Mill, it remains critically important to retain the very special nature of the area and to support tourism, the largest income stream on which the area is dependent. Indeed, it was recently reported that Douglas Shire is the most tourism reliant council in the country. The site under discussion sits on the Great Barrier Reef Drive, an important tourist attraction. Tropical North Queensland state 'some of Tropical North Queensland's most famous spots are along the route, from World Heritage sites and national parks to luxury resorts'.

It cannot sustain such a description if Council continues to approve industrial sites along the highway leading to the Daintree. We already have the fish farm, the waste tip and maybe a solar farm in a short distance of each other. It's not consistent with the Shire's image or environment.

A substantive argument in the Application before Council is its ability to provide 'sustainable, viable options for the regional economy and workforce' indicating that it provides a pivotal transition away from sugar cane production .. Douglas Shire. It should be noted that the property subject to this application successfully pivoted from cane to grazing cattle and other cropping some time ago. Currently planted to grass, the land is well fenced and grazed by cattle which look to be thriving in their environment as can be seen in the attached photo. What a wonderful landscape for locals and tourists alike, as well as being an expanding and profitable business activity for an increasing number of farmers.

This is good agricultural land that should not be lost from agriculture. How can Council countenance approving this application having refused an application to plant trees on marginal land in the Daintree precisely to protect agricultural land. They don't make land any more.

It is entirely unclear how the lofty claims in the Application can be met:

- The creation of this solar farm creates no new jobs for members of the community displaced by the closure of the Mill.
- If this development is a 'catalyst for economic diversification', tell us how. It is hard to see how this can help with the realities facing people who have lost their jobs when no new workforce opportunities are created.
- A virtue is made of the 'proposed footprint (less than 2.0ha) being relatively small in comparison to the total area (88.11ha) of the site'. Approving this initial application will surely be the thin end of the wedge with owner expectations that expansion could follow.
- The 'introduction of renewable energy infrastructure can offer sustainable and practical use of former cane land'. So, does this imply an outbreak of such development approvals across the Shire -- it is not appropriate in an area of natural beauty and where the reality is that tourism is the major industry supporting our communities.
- A planting scheme has been provided to screen the site from the highway. Council does not have a good track record of enforcing such plans as evidenced by the years it has taken for any kind of screening, consistent with planning, to be implemented at the barramundi farm further along the highway. Why can any installation, if approved, not be further back from the road given the availability of marginal land and

- 
- size and depth of the land available? There is a very real risk that this becomes an eyesore on the Great Barrier Reef Drive.
 - The Application claims grazing sheep beneath the solar panels will be a natural, efficient land management strategy, and has been proven successful with other solar facilities within Australia. Where in Australia? There is a reason why we don't see sheep in this area other than on butchers' slabs – the heat and humidity of our climate just isn't suitable and should raise very serious questions about animal welfare.

We fear this is a development where Council may repeat the mistakes of the past. Some 10 years ago approval was given for the development of a prawn farm with conditions attached. Since then, there has been change of ownership and use.

The original approval for an aquaculture operation came with claims about employment opportunities for locals but these have not materialised and staff numbers are minimal. We have seen poor aquaculture practices impact our environment through inappropriate use of chemicals and inadequate management and burial practices for fish die offs requiring the involvement of the Department of the Environment.

Developing the proposed solar farm will not improve our local environment, create employment opportunities, or provide a template for successful farming diversification.

It appears little more than a money-making opportunity for a single farmer who will very quickly find a rationalisation to expand the solar site further. This really is the thin end of an unnecessary and inappropriate wedge.

In summary, we along with other local residents, oppose the approval of this Application. It is impossible to align with the claim that it provides 'a significant level of community benefit'. We see none.

Yours faithfully

