

Oral Submission

Thank you for the opportunity to be heard. I want to acknowledge the enormous responsibility this panel has to protect the environment and community here when assessing this application and any negative impact it might have on the people and environment we live in.

Regenerative energy is seen as a solution to reducing carbon emissions and the heating of the planet beyond levels that can sustain human existence. It is I believe the single most important issue facing humankind. The Paris Accord, the Kyoto Agreement, and UN directives are the result of people from all around the world collectively creating a path forward to address this crisis. It is also the reason for a NZ National Directive to local government to 'push through' regenerative energy projects.

However a national Directive to local government is NOT a licence to allow further environmental damage, increase risk to human health from contamination of water and soil, nor be at the expense of food production. That would simply be a nonsense and in direct contravention of the Paris Agreement NZ is a signatory to.

I am opposed to an industrial solar installation of this size being built in the location proposed.

Overseas installations of industrial scale solar plants are beginning to reveal their downsides, the negative impacts on environment, property values and people.

In seeking out the pro's and cons of such projects overseas it became clear to me there was a great deal of literature promoting them and very little evidence of the effects of them on environment, neighbours, communities, other businesses and peoples health and wellbeing. Much of what I read was in my view, unbalanced and failed to address what appeared to be obvious questions and concerns.

What research has been carried out has shown that damaged solar panels can leach harmful heavy metals into the soil and aquifer. These heavy metals have the ability to cause cancer and impair brain development in children. The effects are irreversible.

To expose a town's water supply to the known risk of irreversible contamination is to sign off on people's lives.

No amount of safeguards can give a 100% guarantee this will not occur and anything less is to knowingly expose innocent people to harm.

I do not believe for one minute New Zealanders are willing to sacrifice people's health and children's brain development, for this.

Nor do we need to

There is increasing support internationally for a move away from industrial solar plants which cover rural land to placement of panels on existing industrial structures in industrial zones, where there were increased services available and the placement of panels in situ of the electricity demand.

New Zealand is well placed to move regenerative solar power into a more environmentally conscious and responsible space, learn from the now gathering international evidence that leans away from rural land usage, toward existing structures in industrial locations. To be at the forefront of sustainability rather than the tail end of environmentally disastrous 'solar farms'.

I have formed the view from extensive researching that this proposal is the wrong thing in the wrong place.

I am also extremely concerned about the potential for voluntary liquidation of this company. With Blackrock as a shareholder this cannot be overlooked. NZ is a small country with a weak economy and any business, bank or institution that becomes reliant on this project for any income will be exposing itself to risk and financial loss.

In November last year, SolarZero owned by Blackrock was placed into voluntary liquidation owing more than \$40m to over 700 creditors and staff.

BlackRock is a multinational investment company, and the world's largest asset manager. With over \$12.5 trillion in assets under management as of 2025, It plays a significant role in global financial markets.

Reports indicate the surprise liquidation of SolarZero in November had nothing to do with Solarzero itself which was tracking as anticipated. The

BlackRock Global Renewable Power 3 (GRP3) fund, is a 4.8b US \$ fund. It purchased SolarZero amongst others around the world.

BlackRock reportedly lost some USD1.2b from its GRP3 fund on a start up company, NorthVolt, a Swedish start up battery manufacturer that went bankrupt. This led to an across the board review of the investments that BlackRock's GRP3 fund had made and board room decisions made as to what to continue investing in and what not to.

New Zealand's SolarZero was axed, swiftly and suddenly, despite it having 40% of the residential solar market share in NZ and it tracking largely to what was set out in its Information Memorandum.

Employees and contractors were locked out immediately and left to suffer the losses.

There is nothing altruistic in the way it deals.

Another company, Solar Group Limited, owned by Blackrock, went into liquidation in July 2025 owing hundreds of creditors more than \$3 million, including Kiwibank and Inland Revenue.

The second major solar company in New Zealand to collapse within the space of eight months. New Zealanders cannot afford to continue to take these hits.

Alarm bells should be ringing.

Blackrock is in the business of making money. It has shown us that NZ solar projects are vulnerable to voluntary liquidation, despite any assurances that may be given. It would be naive to assume this could not happen to this project.

BlackRock has proven itself an unreliable investor. With a small change in policy or direction in New York they cancelled a major investment in our New Zealand economy. A tiny blip for them a major impact in a small country like New Zealand. We cannot make the same mistake again. Fool me once, fool me twice. Will this be a third?

What then the cost to our people, our environment, to Council and we as ratepayers. What of secured and unsecured creditors? What of other businesses reliance?

Large scale solar projects in NZ have the potential to be harmful. Not only environmentally but financially too. And who is left to carry the losses? What will happen to all of those solar panels containing lead and cadmium situated over land and aquifer. Will they be left unmaintained? Left to breakdown and leach these heavy metals? Who will remove this toxic waste? The landowner? Council? Ratepayers? Where will the specialist removers come from and who will pay them?

Your assessment of the negative impacts and potential hazards of this application must be thorough if you are to meet your obligations to protect the people and place. Grand statements such as 'taking NZ to carbon zero' are just that and I implore you not to be gullible. I am sure those who invested in Solarzero and Solar Energy Limited believed the rhetoric.

My own assessment has led me to conclude the risks and potential hazards of this proposal far outweigh any benefit.

The health of people, soil and the food chain are of greater priority and importance than any other factor.

No amount of money can repair the damage caused.

Placing reliance on a company with Blackrock involvement poses an unsupportable risk. To livelihoods, to ratepayers, to the Council who have now been made aware of those risks. You would be exposing yourself and hence all ratepayers in the CODC to potential future liability.

This is an ambitious plan to use rural land to make large profits which could be axed any given day. It is a proposal to spoil the natural landscape, the peace and quiet for those who live here, reduce the communities property values, expose the drinking water to potential heavy metal contamination, negatively effect other existing businesses including quality food production, place NZ in a position of breaching its obligations as a signatory to the Paris Accord and allowing the very rich to get even richer at the expense of those who can least afford it.

This panel bears the responsibility for all of it. You are the protectors of those who live and work here.

Solar power works in the right place, on the right scale, proportionate to optimal protection of land, water and air. This is not that.

There are many paths to carbon zero. Many paths that will not sacrifice so much, risk so much and damage so much.

Kia Kaha (Stay strong)