



New South Wales Government
Independent Planning Commission

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

RE: GLANMIRE SOLAR FARM (SSD-21208499)

DEPARTMENT MEETING

COMMISSION PANEL: DR SHERIDAN COAKES (Panel Chair)
CHRIS WILSON
RICHARD PEARSON

OFFICE OF THE IPC: BRAD JAMES
OLIVER COPE
CALLUM FIRTH

DPE REPRESENTATIVES: NICOLE BREWER
IWAN DAVIES
JOE FITTELL
NESTOR TSAMBOS

LOCATION: VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE

DATE: 9.00AM ON WEDNESDAY, 22 NOVEMBER 2023

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DR SHERIDAN COAKES: So before we begin, I'd like to acknowledge I'm speaking to you from Worimi land and acknowledge the traditional owners of all the country from which we virtually meet today and pay my respect to their Elders past and present. Welcome to the meeting today to discuss the Glanmire Solar Farm case currently before the Commission for determination. The Applicant Elgin Energy proposed to develop the Glanmire Solar Farm. The project involves the construction of a solar farm with a generating capacity of approximately 60 megawatts along with the upgrading and decommissioning of infrastructure and equipment over time.

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The project also includes a 60 megawatt / 120 megawatt hour battery energy storage system and onsite substation with connection to an existing transmission line operated by Essential Energy via an underground powerline. My name is Dr Sheridan Coakes, I'm the Chair of the Commission Panel and I'm joined by my fellow Commissioners, Mr Chris Wilson and Richard Pearson. We're also joined by Brad James, Oliver Cope and Callum Firth from the Office of the Independent Planning Commission. In the interests of openness and transparency and to ensure the full capture of information, today's meeting is being recorded and a complete transcript will be produced and made available on our website. This meeting is just one part of the Commission's consideration of this matter and will form one of several sources of information upon which we will base our determination.

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It is important for us to ask questions of attendees, to clarify issues whenever it's considered appropriate. If you are asked a question and you're not in a position to answer, please feel free to take that question on notice and provide any additional information in writing which we will then put on our website. We've all introduced ourselves so thank you for that and we will now begin. So thank you for providing us with the presentation yesterday. Who is going to walk us through that this morning?

30 MS NICOLE BREWER: Thank you, Chair. I'm going to present this morning. Perhaps share the slides.

DR COAKES: Yes, lovely. Yes, we can see that clearly.

MS BREWER: Thank you. So good morning, my name's Nicole Brewer, I'm the Director for Energy Assessments at the New South Wales Department of Planning and Environment. I'm here today with my colleagues Ewan Davis, Director; Joe Fittell, Team Leader; and Nestor Tsambos, Senior Environment Assessment Officer. I would also like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we all join for today's meeting and I would like to pay my respects to their Elders past, present and emerging and extend that respect to any Aboriginal and Torres Islander people here today.

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So I'd like to begin with a few very brief comments about the context of the project and engagement undertaken and then very briefly identify what we believe are the key issues associated with the proposal. I'll then provide some further details on the key assessment issues and our evaluation of the project and, in particular, the key reasons for the Department's recommendation to the Commission to approve the project.

The Applicant proposes to develop a 60 megawatt solar farm about 10 kilometres east of Bathurst in the Bathurst Regional Council Local Government Area. The project would include the 60 megawatt, 120 megawatt hour battery energy storage system or BESS and an onsite substation and connection to the existing transmission line operated by Essential Energy. The existing transmission line currently operates at 11 kilovolts and would need to be refurbished by Essential Energy for a distance of approximately seven kilometres to operate at 66 kilovolts. These refurbishment works would be subject to a separate assessment under part 5 of the EP&A Act.

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First I think it's important to provide some strategic context about the project in relation to its location and access to the existing electricity network. The site's bounded by the Great Western Highway to the north and Brewongle Lane to the east and the existing transmission lines located adjacent to the northern boundary. The development footprint has been designed to avoid constraints such as items of heritage value, water courses and native vegetation and it does not contain land mapped as biophysical strategic agricultural land or BSAL.

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There are five proposed and approved SSD renewable energy projects within 50 kilometres of the project and they are the Central West Pumped Hydro, Lake Lyall Pumped Hydro and Mount Piper BESS which are all in the early stages of the planning process and the Wallerawang BESS and Great Western BESS which are both approved. Since our referral to the Commission for Glanmire Solar Farm a scoping report and request for Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements has been lodged for Brewongle Solar Farm which is around two kilometres south of the project and the SEARs are currently being prepared.

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Noting that all coal-fired power plants in New South Wales are scheduled for closure in the next 20 years the project would assist in providing large-scale renewable energy generation to meet increased electricity demand. The Department considers that the project is consistent with the relevant national, state and local policy documents which identify the need to diversity the energy generation mix and reduce the carbon emissions intensity of the grid while also providing energy security and reliability.

MR RICHARD PEARSON: Sorry, Nicole, can we just ask a question about the Brewongle Solar Farm because I think - I think we thought that project had kind of disappeared but you're saying it's back on the books and the SEARs are under preparation, was that what you said?

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MS BREWER: Correct. So it had been proposed and then was withdrawn but we've since received a scoping report and request for SEARs. That is correct.

MR PEARSON: Thank you.

DR COAKES: And, Nicole - sorry.

MR PEARSON: And it's Brewongle - two kilometres to the south of this project?

MS BREWER: Sorry, I missed what you said then.

MR PEARSON: Sorry, I'm saying it's down Brewongle Lane two kilometres south of this site and how big's that project, do you know how many megawatts?

MS BREWER: I'd need to check that. Perhaps if the team has that information.

MR JOE FITTELL: I don't have it with me but I can look it up.

10 DR COAKES: And just while Joe's looking that up, Nicole, just in terms of the previous - that project previously, what was the reason for that not continuing at that time?

MS BREWER: That was a decision made by the Applicant to withdraw that request.

DR COAKES: O.K.

MS BREWER: Yep.

20 DR COAKES: Thank you.

MS BREWER: O.K. Are you O.K. for me to continue?

DR COAKES: Yes, that's fine.

MS BREWER: Thanks. So there are also some additional considerations from a regional context perspective that the project site would benefit from. It has access to the electricity network via Essential Energy's existing transmission line. The transport route for the site would require minimal road upgrades. The site's located in a rural area and the Department considers there would be no significant visual impacts on residences and the rural character and visual quality of the area and the periphery of the regional city of Bathurst would be preserved as far as practicable.

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The site is located on land that's not mapped as biophysical strategic or agricultural land, that is BSAL, and predominantly on land that has a land and soil capability of class 4 which is defined as land with moderate to severe limitations for agricultural purposes. The land's currently used for cropping and grazing. So overall the Department considers the site to be appropriate for the project and is consistent with the large-scale solar energy guideline.

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The project would also provide flow-on benefits to the local community including up to 150 construction jobs and contributions to Council of \$18,000 per annum for the life of the project through a voluntary planning agreement. There would be broader benefits to the state through an injection of \$152 million in capital investment into the New South Wales economy. The Department considers that the project would result in benefits to the state of New South Wales and the local community and is, therefore, in the public interest and approvable.

The Department exhibited the EIS from 18th of November until the 15th of December, 2022 and received 143 public submissions consisting of 133 objections, nine supporting submissions and one comment. Advice was received from 14 government agencies along with comments from Council and the Department also consulted with Council and the relevant government agencies throughout the assessment and inspected the site and met with the Glanmire Action Group in August 2022.

10 A community consultative committee was also set up in accordance with the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements with an independent Chair, representatives from the community and the Applicant that met during preparation of the EIS. None of the agencies or utility providers objected to the project and some recommended the implementation of appropriate mitigation and management measures.

20 The most common matters raised in public objections were land use compatibility including the loss of agricultural land, visual amenity including impacts on the surrounding landscape and residences and social impacts including insurability of surrounding residences and land devaluation. Submissions in support generally raised the benefits of transitioning to renewable energy sources, the sustainable use and diversification of agricultural land and economic benefits to the local community.

So now I'm going to talk about what we consider to be the three key issues for this assessment and they are energy transition, land use compatibility and visual amenity. Firstly on energy transition. The project has the capacity of 60 megawatts which would generate enough energy to power about 23,000 homes. Solar generation is consistent with the New South Wales Climate Change Policy Framework of achieving net zero emissions by 2050.

30 Although the project's not located in a renewable energy zone it is in an area with access to the transmission network with available capacity and abundant solar resources. The project would play an important role in increasing renewable energy generation and capacity and contributing to the transition to a cleaner energy system as the coal-fired generators retire.

40 As I mentioned earlier, the existing transmission line currently operates at 11 kilovolts and would need to be refurbished by Essential Energy to operate at the required 66 kilovolts. The Applicant and Essential Energy propose that these refurbishment works would be subject to a separate assessment under part 5 of the EP&A Act. Although this is a valid assessment pathway under the EP&A Act the Department notes that the project would not be viable without these works being undertaken. Therefore, the Department has recommended the inclusion of a deferred commencement condition to ensure that the relevant approvals are obtained for these works prior to the development consent commencing for this project.

The site's located on land within RU1 primary production zone which is a permissible land use with consent under the Bathurst Regional Local Environmental Plan. The site's located on the periphery of the regional city of Bathurst as identified in the Transport and Infrastructure and SEPP and there are specific considerations for wind

and solar projects with respect to certain regional cities. The Department's assessed the project against those provisions and considers that it would not conflict with existing or approved residential or commercial uses of land surrounding the development and it would not have a significant impact on the regional cities for capacity for growth given that the site and its wider locality have not been identified for future growth by Council or the Department in any strategic planning documents.

10 Surrounding developments, both residential and agricultural, are protected by setback distances and intervening vegetation and other nearby land users including the Bathurst Regional Airport and the main western railway line are unlikely to experience significant impacts due to their distance from the project which was acknowledged by Council. The project is also consistent with the region's plans including the Bathurst Region Economic Development Strategy 2018 to 2022 and the Bathurst Regional Council Renewable Energy Action Plan 2020 and also the Central West and Orana Regional Plan 2041.

20 A number of community submissions raise the concern around the loss of agricultural land as a result of the project and around the productive capability of land including a review of the agricultural study and EIS that was commissioned by a community interest group. In response to these submissions, the Department engaged an independent soils expert Dr David McKenzie to review the soils assessment and requested the Applicant undertake additional work to address the deficiencies identified in the methodology. Dr McKenzie's review of the updated soils assessment confirmed that the methodologies applied were adequate and the revised land classification was appropriate.

30 Although the project would include disturbance to a small area of class 3 land of approximately 39.5 hectares the inherent agricultural capability of the land would not be affected given the relatively low scale of the development and the Applicant's commitment to return the land back to existing levels of agricultural capability following decommissioning.

40 The site also represents a very small fraction of agricultural land in the Central West and Orana region and the Department has included requirements to maintain the site's current land capability including groundcover within the development footprint, where practicable, during construction and operation of the project. Neither Council or DPI Agriculture raised concerns that the project would comprise the long term land use of the land for agricultural purposes and importantly, the loss of a small area of agricultural land in the region must be balanced against the broader strategic goals of the government along with environmental and economic benefits of solar energy. The Department - - -

DR COAKES: Sorry, Nicole, just to jump in there. Just for clarification, you mentioned - so did the action group actually seek additional advice on the - on the land capability assessment work? Was I correct in hearing that?

MS BREWER: Correct. So the action group commissioned their own study.

DR COAKES: O.K.

MS BREWER: In response to that peer review provided by the action group the Department commissioned its own independent expert.

DR COAKES: Thank you. Thanks for that. Sorry, I've interrupted your flow.

MS BREWER: No, no, that's all right. So concerns about visual impacts in public submissions included the proximity of the project to surrounding residences and potential impacts on the scenic quality, landscape and rural outlook of the locality. The Department visited the site and nearby non-associated residences to understand the visual impacts and to further understand resident's concerns. The Applicant's incorporated a number of measures into the project design to minimise its visual impacts and these include a 300-metre buffer between the solar arrays and the Great Western Highway locating the substation, the BESS and operations and maintenance facility to the south of the natural rise in the landform. Use of single portrait panel arrays up to 3.5 metres high rather than the double portrait up to five metres high. Setting a four degree resting angle during backtracking to reduce potential glare on surrounding residences. Use of underground cabling to connect to the Essential Energy infrastructure at the northern end of the site. Planting of vegetation screening around the full perimeter of the site and retention of vegetation within the riparian zone of the main water courses which traverse the site.

So views for the project for vehicles travelling in both directions along the Great Western Highway into and out of Bathurst would be largely shielded due to the 300-metre setback of the northern frontage from the highway and are predicted to be very low. Although the visual impacts along Brewongle Lane were predicted to be moderate without mitigation they would be reduced to low following the implementation of proposed vegetation screening along the eastern boundary of the site. The Department recognises that the introduction of the solar farm to a rural setting would result in a change to the local landscape but considers that the development would have a limited impact beyond the project's immediate vicinity.

In relation to the views from nearby residences there are a total of 34 residences within two kilometres of the site and of these 11 warranted a detailed assessment in accordance with the preliminary assessment tool in a large-scale solar energy guideline and the results of the detailed assessment confirmed that there were potential visual impacts predicted at eight residences. All of these eight residences were predicted to experience very low or low impacts due to the presence of intervening vegetation. These impacts would all be further reduced by the implementation of the perimeter screening proposed by the Applicant.

In relation to glint and glare impacts, one residence R7 was predicted to experience a yearly total of 100 minutes of glare prior to the implementation of proposed vegetation screening. With the establishment of the proposed screening vegetation along the north-western boundary the views from this residence of the solar farm would be reduced over time and glare impacts are predicted to reduce to nil.

To assist further with mitigating these impacts, the Department has recommended a condition requiring the Applicant to limit the resting angle of all solar panels during backtracking to a minimum of four degrees to reduce the potential glare risk associated with the project. The Department has also recommended a condition that offsite lighting impacts of the development are minimised, external lighting is installed as low intensity lighting except where it is needed for safety or emergency purposes and it does not shine above the horizontal.

10 There are only two approved renewable SSD projects within 50 kilometres of the project and they are the Wallerawang BESS and the Great Western BESS and both are located approximately 40 kilometres north-east from the project. The Department has considered the potential cumulative impacts of the project with all other projects that have been approved are not yet constructed as well as those currently under assessment. So the key cumulative impacts considered with a potential impacts on agricultural land and visual impacts.

20 In regard to agricultural land use, the project would include a disturbance to a small area of class 3 agricultural land; however, the inherent agricultural capability of the land would not be affected given the relatively low scale of the development and the Applicant's commitment to return the land back to the existing levels of agricultural capability following decommissioning. Additionally, DPI Agriculture did not raise any concerns following their review of the submissions report.

30 In regard to visual impacts, the project is not in close proximity to other energy projects in the surrounding locality and there are no locations where the project would be able to be viewed simultaneously with other projects. The refurbishment of the existing transmission line may require poles up to six metres higher than the existing line. The Department considers that this is unlikely to result in a significant visual impact including cumulative impact relative to the existing infrastructure. The project also includes the 300-meter buffer between the solar arrays and the Great Western Highway and would incorporate screen planting along the entire perimeter.

40 In consideration of the limited developments within the area and the existing and proposed vegetation screening the Department considers that the cumulative impacts with the Glanmire Solar Farm would be minor. The Department considers that the Brewongle Solar Farm is too early in the process to be a matter for consideration for this project; however, if Brewongle Solar Farm continues through the assessment process it's EIS would be required to consider all the cumulative impacts with the Glanmire Solar Farm.

The operational life of this project is about 40 years but there is potential for it to operate for a long period of time if the solar panels are upgraded over time as permitted under the recommended conditions of consent. The large-scale energy solar guideline identifies four key decommissioning and rehabilitation principles for circumstances where an Applicant ceases operating a project which are that the land must be returned to pre-existing use, infrastructure including underground infrastructure must be removed if operations cease, the land must be rehabilitated and

restored to pre-existing use and that the owner or operator of a solar energy project should be responsible for the decommissioning and rehabilitation.

10 With the implementation of objective-based conditions the Department considers that the solar farm would be suitably decommissioned at the end of the project's life or within 18 months if operation should cease unexpectedly and that the site be appropriately rehabilitated. Regarding decommissioning bonds. It's the New South Wales Government's policy that financial assurances should not be required by conditions of consent and that any financial assurances should be dealt with in commercial arrangements outside of the planning system.

20 The Department also considered a number of other issues in its assessment for the project. For the purposes of this briefing I'll cover the items outlined in the Commission's agenda. Regarding biodiversity, the site has been subject to decades of clearing for agricultural use and is compromised predominantly of paddock trees with exotic pasture. A total of 0.8 hectares of native vegetation would be cleared for the project. The native vegetation that occurs within the site, however, is of poor quality and so no ecosystem credits are required to be retired. Potential impacts to two threatened species would be offset via species credit offsets.

The Department considers that there's unlikely to be serious and irreversible impacts to any biodiversity values. The Department's recommended a number of conditions to mitigate the residual impacts including retiring the relevant biodiversity credits prior to carrying out any development that could directly or indirectly impact the biodiversity values in accordance with the Biodiversity Offset Scheme. Preparing a biodiversity management plan in consultation with BCS including measures to protect and manage vegetation and fauna outside the approved disturbance area.

30 Regarding traffic impacts, the main increase in traffic would occur during the 12-month construction period. The estimated peak daily movement would be up to 60 vehicles and 107 light vehicle movements. The primary heavy vehicle transport route during construction is from Port Botany via the Great Western Highway and Brewongle Lane. Site access would be restricted to Brewongle Lane. The traffic assessment confirmed that the state road network has sufficient capacity to accommodate the construction traffic and the project in conjunction with projects that are proposed and approved but not yet constructed.

40 The Applicant committed to seal the length of Brewongle Lane between the Great Western Highway and the project access point in accordance with the requirements of Council's guidelines for engineering works. The Department's recommended conditions for a dilapidation survey and repair of any development-related damage to Brewongle Lane. The Department's also recommended conditions requiring a traffic management plan including provisions for managing light vehicles.

Regarding Aboriginal cultural heritage, surveys identified two Aboriginal sites. A culturally-modified tree within the riparian corridor which would be avoided by the project and an isolated artefact within the development footprint of low significance. Prior to the commencement of construction and in consultation with the registered

Aboriginal parties the isolated artefact would be relocated. If Aboriginal artefacts or skeletal material are identified during construction of the project all work would cease and an unexpected finds procedure would be implemented.

10 Regarding historic heritage. There would be no impacts to any world, national, state or locally-listed historic heritage items. The nearest locally-listed heritage item is Woodside or formerly the Woodside Inn, a cottage located at the northern end of the site. The operational area of the solar farm would be located a minimum of 300 metres from Woodside. Existing vegetation would be supplemented across the entire northern extent of the operational area at a width of 10 metres in order to limit views of the operation from Woodside and the Great Western Highway. This would screen the view of the solar array from the road and the Applicant's heritage consultant confirmed this would ensure the environmental context of Woodside remains intact.

20 Regarding bushfire risk. The site is not mapped as bushfire-prone land; however, there are some small areas of mapped bushfire-prone land around the subject site. The Department consulted with Fire and Rescue New South Wales and the Rural Fire Service throughout the assessment process. To actively manage the bushfire risk the Applicant would implement a range of management measures including, but not limited to establishing a 10-metre asset protection zone around all project infrastructure, complying with the requirements for RFS's planning for bushfire protection and standards for asset protection zones, providing water tanks with a minimum 20,000 litres reserved for fire-fighting purposes at locations agreed with the RFS and prepare a Fire Safety Study and also an emergency plan consistent with the recommendations of Fire and Rescue New South Wales.

30 Regarding socioeconomic impacts, the project would provide benefit to the community by providing 150 construction jobs, expenditure on accommodation and businesses in the local economy by workers and goods and services. Although Council did not raise any issues about the availability of workforce accommodation the Applicant has committed to source workers from the local community to reduce accommodation and service pressures. To ensure this occurs the Department has recommended that the Applicant be required to develop an accommodation and employment strategy in consultation with Council. I think it's important also to note that given the project is not located inside a designated renewable energy zone there is less pressure on local accommodation relative to other recent solar farm applications.

40 The Applicant's also reached an in-principle agreement with Council to enter a voluntary planning agreement consisting of an annual payment of \$18,000 for the life of the project which is consistent with the upper limit of \$300 per megawatt per annum provided in the large-scale solar energy guideline for community benefits. There would also be broader benefits to the state through an injection of \$152 million in capital investment into the New South Wales economy.

So in summary, electricity-generating works on the site are permissible with consent in accordance with the Bathurst LEP. Although the project would include disturbance to a small area of class 3 land approximately 39.5 hectares we consider that the agricultural capability of the land would not be affected and the overall agricultural

productivity of the region would not be significantly reduced. The site has good solar resources, direct access to the road network and access to the electricity network. The project has been designed to largely avoid site constraints including remnant native vegetation, on site water courses, farm dams and BSAL while maintaining its ability to utilise the existing electricity infrastructure and road network.

10 The project would assist in transitioning the electricity sector from coal and gas-fired power stations to low emission sources and it consistent with New South Wales policy. It would generate over 132,400 megawatt hours of clean electricity annually to power about approximately 23,000 homes and save over 127,150 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions per year.

20 The Department considers that the project achieves an appropriate balance between maximising the efficiency of the solar resource development and minimising the potential impacts on surrounding land user and the environment. Through job creation and capital investment and a planning agreement with Council the project would also stimulate economic investment in renewable energy and provide flow-on benefits to the local community. On balance, the Department considers that the project is in the public interest and is approvable subject to the recommended conditions of consent.

30 DR COAKES: O.K. Thank you, Nicole. That was a good - great overview of the project. I guess, just a question to kick off and then I'll hand to Richard and to Chris as well if they've got any questions but just in relation to the decommissioning and removal of all infrastructure obviously this has been quite an issue from a community perspective and, you know, we're hearing, I guess, differences in terms of removal, you know, 500 - of underground infrastructure, 500 metres down or a metre down. What's the Department's view - view on that? I mean, obviously from a community perspective there is a request that all infrastructure be removed should the farm be decommissioned.

MS BREWER: So our objective-based conditions refer to making the site safe, stable and non-polluting upon - upon decommissioning to minimise the visual impact of any aboveground ancillary infrastructure and that the solar farm and ancillary infrastructure would be decommissioned and removed and that the land use capability would be restored to pre-existing productive capacity and that it would be safe at all times.

DR COAKES: O.K. O.K. Thank you. Richard? Chris?

40 MR PEARSON: Thanks, Sherrie. Look, just thanks, Nicole, for that. Just a question on the agricultural use of the land and we spoke to the Applicant yesterday about the ability to continue to have an agricultural use during the 40 years that the solar farm is in operation. So there is a condition, I think, recommended by the Department which, from memory, Brad, was C9 in relation to preserve - in relation to allowing the continued agricultural use of the site.

I suppose given that it's a key issue raised in submissions and the potential for the dual use of the site for agriculture and solar - and the solar farm I guess the condition C9

that I've mentioned does , I guess, encourage its continued use and I think it uses words like "where practicable", for example. I'm just thinking we might want to have a closer look at that or I may want to have a closer look at that just to the extent that it actually maximises the encouragement for them to continue agricultural use on the site because I think in some respects the easiest thing would be for them just put in the solar farm and do their core business of solar farming and not worry about running sheep or whatever and, I mean, there will be a reduced agricultural capability, no doubt, during the operation phase but, I guess, my question after that longwinded preamble is, has the Department - what's the Department's experience in terms of
10 current solar farms that have been constructed and the agricultural use that is occurring on those sites? Are they being productively used or maybe we're a bit in the infancy here and we're kind of - kind of testing the waters a bit but are they being productively used for agriculture or are they just saying, you know, we're solar farmers and that's what we're going to do, we're not too interested in sheep or whatever because I think it's a really important thing for maintaining the agricultural productivity of the region but also for some greater potential acceptance of solar farms going forward if it can be demonstrated that they can continue to be used for agricultural purposes at the same time. Have you got any - you or your team got any comments on that?

20 MS BREWER: Look, I think I'd probably start with the fact that we consider that it's a very small fraction of the agricultural land within the region anyway. So ultimately we don't consider that it's going to have a significant impact on that agriculture within the region. We have - there are - I'm aware that there are some solar farms that may be implementing grazing under panels but they would've had similar, if any, kind of conditions of consent on those projects that have been approved. So I think we've - to a certain extent it is possible and I think maintaining the groundcover is also a - you know, a way of maintaining that agricultural capability of the land as well but certainly it is possible and I think that - but should it not occur I think our - our
30 assessment has shown that we don't think that that's going to be a significant impact to the agricultural capability in the region.

MR PEARSON: Thank you.

DR COAKES: Chris, any questions?

MR CHRIS WILSON: Yes, I've got a couple of questions.

DR COAKES: Yes.

40 MR WILSON: Nicole, just in relation to the subdivision pattern. We understand the application includes subdivision of the land. Can you just confirm if that subdivision pattern relates primarily to the substation and the BESS?

MS BREWER: My understanding is that it does relate to the substation, yes, so that the - so that it could be transferred to Essential Energy at some point down the line.

MR WILSON: So it is just the BESS - sorry, it is not the BESS, sorry, it's just the substation, nothing else?

MS BREWER: My understanding is it's the substation - - -

MR WILSON: If you could just confirm that one way or another because we're just trying - I'm just trying to understand when the development ceases that there's minimal fragmentation of what is agricultural land, yes? So I'm just trying to understand how - what that subdivision pattern is.

MS BREWER: O.K. We can get back to you on that, Commissioner.

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MR WILSON: Yes. Thanks. Just in terms of water availability. I mean, I understand that there's going to be a need to be a fire management plan or whatever they call it in relation to firefighting. Is the Department satisfied there's - there is enough water available for bushfire and dust suppression? Is that something that's been considered?

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MS BREWER: So the water usage is predicted to peak during the construction phase where the water requirements would total approximately 28 megalitres for about 12 months of that construction period. The operational water usage would be significantly lower than that and the three nearest water resources have a total share of about 10,900 megalitres. So the 28 megalitres of water required for construction represents only a small percentage around 0.3 percent of the available unregulated water from these resources.

In addition, there's also the possibility, you know, to use harvestable rights from the dams on site, it could be used to supplement those purchased water arrangements and the Applicant confirmed that those harvestable rights could provide around 12 megalitres. DPE Water didn't raise any concerns regarding the availability of water supply.

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MR WILSON: O.K. So from what you're understanding there's sufficient water available in the - in the event of a bushfire, yes?

MS BREWER: Yep.

MR WILSON: Yes. Just in relation to the glare. The four percent - the resting angle of the solar panels, what's the implications of that? That doesn't - that doesn't negate the - or doesn't mitigate the 100 minutes that - from that one dwelling, does it? It's - it's more or less to ensure that those impacts aren't any greater, is that correct? What are the implications of the four percent?

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MS BREWER: It's four degrees.

MR WILSON: Four degrees, sorry.

MS BREWER: Yeah. Yeah. No, no, that's all right. So - so the assessment concluded that it would experience a total of 100 minutes of glare prior to the implementation of the vegetation screening.

MR WILSON: Yes.

MS BREWER: So together with that minimum four degrees of that resting angle during backtracking as well as the - the vegetation that's proposed between that residence and the solar arrays that that would minimise the glare impacts of that residence.

MR WILSON: O.K. Thanks. Last question is, you said 107 light vehicles on any one day, is that correct?

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MS BREWER: Yes.

MR WILSON: That's 107 movements or - your definition - your definition of movements is one in and one out, I'm just trying to work out, I mean, how much - I mean, that's a lot of vehicles parked on site, I'm just wondering - some other solar farms you've recommended transport from regional towns and so forth, is that something you considered?

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MS BREWER: So we did consider that and we added that to the - there are requirements in the traffic management plan around consideration of the - the light vehicles and potential use for shuttle buses.

MR WILSON: O.K. All right. That's all from me, Sherrie, thank you.

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DR COAKES: Another one from me, Nicole. Obviously the issue around insurability and the impacts on local landholders of greater insurance costs. I just wondered - this is obviously an issue we're seeing - has been raised in submissions here and in others. Just the Department's view around that. We note that in the Agricultural Commissioner's report there had been made a recommendation, recommendation 22 around Applicants actually covering additional public liability insurance costs but just interested in the Department's view on that issue given it's one that's consistently bubbling, yes.

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MS BREWER: Yes, there were a number of submissions that - that stated that the project might impact insurance premiums and their ability to obtain insurance. In - you know, in the event that the risk of a fire could spread from their properties to the site. The Department's considered that the risk of fire spreading into the site from an adjoining property or from the solar arrays and infrastructure to an adjoining property would be adequately mitigated with the implementation of the measures that are included as part of the bushfire risk and emergency planning and adherence to those recommended conditions of consent.

So, I guess, we acknowledge that insurance premiums and availability can vary to take into account different factors where there is an increased bushfire risk. The Department considers that with the recommended conditions that there would not be an increased bushfire risk.

DR COAKES: Thank you. And the last one from me. Just around the VPA. So you noted obviously that the commitment by the Applicant in this case with Council is consistent with the large-scale solar guideline. We are seeking obviously differing - differing levels of support provided. Is there any further advice from the Department around just where that should sit or is that - that's the latest in terms of the most recent large-scale solar guideline? We just had, you know, comments that it may be up to \$850 per megawatt.

10 MS BREWER: O.K. So that is the amount that's in the draft guidelines that are currently on exhibition but what's been proposed by the Applicant here is consistent with the current large-scale solar guidelines and, in fact, it's consistent with the upper end of the range that is provided in the current large-scale solar guideline. The other are draft guidelines that have not yet been made.

DR COAKES: O.K. So you wouldn't be expecting any applicant to be applying that guideline that's currently on exhibition for comment?

20 MS BREWER: I think it's entirely reasonable that they've made it consistent with the upper end even of what's in the current guideline.

DR COAKES: O.K. Thank you. Thank you. O.K. So any further questions? Any questions from Brad or the - - -

MR PEARSON: Can I - just one - just one final thing, Sherrie, from me.

DR COAKES: Yes.

30 MR PEARSON: In relation to the Brewongle proposal, so will you come back to us on the - on how big that project is? And I think - sorry, and I think but confirm if I'm right, you said that that project would have to take into consideration the cumulative impact rather than - rather than the current proposal that we're considering taking into consideration the Brewongle proposal given its infancy and the assessment process, so is that what you said?

MS BREWER: Correct. So I can confirm that the Brewongle Solar Farm is proposed to be 90 megawatts but, yes, due to the timing of the request for SEARs the later application would need to consider the ones in the system currently. So Brewongle would need to consider the cumulative impacts with the Glanmire Solar Farm.

40 MR PEARSON: Thank you. One more, Sherrie, if that's O.K. and then - - -

DR COAKES: Yes.

MR WILSON: Nicole, just in relation to deferred commencement condition, so are you satisfied that once approval's - approval has been - or should approval be granted for the transmission line that that's sufficient - sufficient to - to warrant - there's a risk - I guess there's - there is an inherent risk in terms of the proposal not proceeding before or after that consent has been granted. I mean, consent might be granted for -

or approval might be granted for that transmission line. So then are you satisfied then the risk is borne by the Applicant in terms of whether to proceed or not?

10 MS BREWER: Yes. I mean, I think it's the - the deferred commencement condition, you're right, does allow for that consideration that that approval of the - that component is provided. This was something that the Applicant and Essential Energy discussed and this was the pathway that Essential Energy had - had sought for that upgrade but, yes, I think that we consider that that draft deference commencement condition provides, you know, a level of certainty such that this project could proceed.

MR WILSON: Yes. O.K. I'm just - I guess is it sufficient safeguard in terms of ensuring that you get orderly development of the land, I guess, because, I mean, there is a risk that it may not be on anyone's funding program or whatever. How does it work because does the Applicant actually pay for that upgrade through Essential Energy's - or is there a provider that does it?

MS BREWER: I think that's something you'd have to ask the Applicant around those kind of commercial arrangements they would have with Essential Energy.

20 MR WILSON: O.K. All right. Thanks.

DR COAKES: O.K. Well, thank you. Thank you, Nicole, for the presentation. You and Joe and Nester for being with us this morning, we do appreciate your time and I'd just like to call the meeting closed and, yes, thanks again and if we can get those couple of questions that you're going to get back to us on that would be appreciated.

MEETING CONCLUDED