

MR C. WILSON: Good afternoon and welcome. Before we begin, I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet, the Kamilaroi People. I would also like to pay my respects to their elders past and present and to the elder and from other communities who may be here today. Welcome to the meeting today. Orange Grove Sun Farm Proprietary Limited, the applicant, is seeking approval for the development of a new 110 megawatt solar farm, approximately 12 kilometres northwest of Gunnedah in the Gunnedah Local Government Area. My name is Chris Wilson. I'm the chair of this IPC panel. Joining me are my fellow commissioners, Annelise Tuor and Andrew Hutton. Also in attendance is Brad James from the Commission Secretariat.

In the interests of openness and transparency and to ensure the full capture of the information, today's meeting is being recorded and a full transcript will be produced and made available on the commission's website. This meeting is one part of the commission's decision-making process. It will form one of several sources of information upon which the commission will base its decision. It is important for the commissioners to ask questions of attendees and to clarify issues wherever we consider appropriate. If you're asked a question and you're not in a position to answer, please feel free to take the question on notice and provide any additional information in writing, which we will then put on our website.

I request that all members here today introduce themselves before speaking for the first time, and for all members to ensure they do not speak over the top of each other, to ensure accuracy of the transcript. So I guess, council, we've had the benefit of your submission. And there were some issues raised there in relation to a proposal which may or may not have been addressed to your satisfaction in the response to submissions. I'm just wondering in terms – and particularly in relation to the conditions of consent – I'm just wondering if those residual issues have been resolved as part of the response to submission and are there residual issues? And maybe some comment on the recommended conditions that the commission is being asked to consider.

MR W. HUDSON: Wade Hudson. So I have had a look through the information regarding the flooding. So it doesn't really seem to be that the matters raised in the response to submission – that it does address that concern that was raised in that original submission. So that's something that I definitely have noted that it doesn't appear to have been addressed within those responses. But I don't know if Dan has actually seen anything regarding the traffic impacts that in the response has been addressed.

MR D. NOBLE: Yes. I can field that one, Wade. Yes. So Daniel Nobel, chief engineer, Gunnedah Shire Council. I'm responsible for development engineering, as well as some other things. I haven't seen a final road maintenance program, as is proposed by the developer. So we do know that what was originally proposed in the EIS was a road maintenance program that included the unsealed section of Orange Grove Road only. It didn't actually include any of the sealed sections of the haul

route or the proposed heavy vehicle route. From our point of view, being the road owner and the maintenance authority for those local roads, we would like to see those other local roads included in any road maintenance program.

5 We haven't seen any of that to date. So that would include Old Blue Vale Road and Kelvin Road to be included in that maintenance – as well as the sealed section of Orange Grove Road. I guess for the benefit of the panel, Old Blue Vale Road has recently been reconstructed by council and has now been upgraded to a 7.2 metre wide sealed road. However, that said, we wouldn't like to see this development go
10 ahead – sorry, we're certainly in favour of the development, but see the development go ahead and to see any damage caused to the reconstructed Old Blue Vale Road and not be compensated for those, or at least entered into some sort of maintenance arrangement with the developer.

15 MS A. TUOR: So – Annelise Tuor – condition 7 of the draft conditions, does that address your concern, where it says:

*The applicant must (a) undertake a dilapidation survey of the condition of the heavy vehicle transport route along Blue Vale Road, Old Blue Vale Road,
20 Kelvin Road and Orange Grove Road, in accordance with any relevant Australian standards and guidelines.*

And then it says criteria for when it has to be – the maintenance, an upgrading of those or have you – are you familiar with that condition?
25

MR NOBLE: I haven't seen that condition to date, no.

MS TUOR: So you haven't seen the draft conditions?

30 MR NOBLE: No.

MS TUOR: Okay. Because there's – they're the same as what – or very similar to the conditions that were put onto the Gunnedah Solar Farm, which had conditions about road upgrading, road maintenance and traffic requirements for a traffic
35 management plan.

MR NOBLE: My assumption is that if they're similar to those conditions, that they would be satisfactory. But, as I say, I haven't seen those to date. So if I could take that on notice, to confirm that post the meeting.
40

MS TUOR: Yes. Have you got a copy of the draft conditions?

MR WILSON: Well, they're on our website, but that's - - -

45 MS TUOR: They will be on the website.

MR HUDSON: They would be accessible on the IPC website.

MS TUOR: Yes. Yes. It's probably a good idea to try and have a look at them, you know, even before the public meeting tomorrow or something.

5 MR WILSON: Yes. If you get the opportunity, that would be good, just to confirm whether or not that addresses your concerns in your submission.

MS TUOR: And just also in relation to flooding, that you mentioned that it hadn't necessarily addressed the concerns in your original letter, my understanding – and maybe I'm wrong – is that I thought the application got amended from what was originally proposed, to pull it away from the overflow path. Are you aware of that or
10 - - -

MR HUDSON: No. I haven't been made aware of that. The area for the site is within the one in 100 event level, which – council's submission really identified the difference between one of the – it identified one of the flooding event levels in 1998. There was actually three flood events during that year. So council's submission was really just to make sure – to clarify which one of those three events that the applicant was actually referring to within their documentation.
15

MS TUOR: But the area of the site that floods is in – I think it's, what, the north-east corner, is it?
20

MR HUDSON: Yes.

MS TUOR: And they've pulled it away from there. So is that where your concern is about – is that the location that - - -
25

MR HUDSON: I think it was just to make sure that the references were clearly identified, rather than just identifying a flooding event in '98.
30

MS TUOR: Yes.

MR HUDSON: So that because each of the flooding events would have had different extents, so just to make sure the one that they're referring to is potentially the highest - - -
35

MR WILSON: Worst case.

MR HUDSON: - - - yes, of the three flooding events, rather than referring to comments on the lowest of the three.
40

MR WILSON: Have you got any more?

MS TUOR: No, not at the moment.
45

MR WILSON: Just in terms of contributions, you haven't made a recommendation. You didn't make a recommendation in your submission in relation to contributions. Is that - - -

5 MR HUDSON: So there's a recommendation for a section 94A contribution to be included as a condition and concern. So I think that's the final dot point on other impacts within the council submission.

MR WILSON: So it says here:

10 *It's requested that any requirement for the payment of contributions be included in the notice of determination.*

MR HUDSON: Correct.

15

MR WILSON: And is your contributions plan based on percentage?

MR HUDSON: Yes. Yes. So it's based on one per cent of the estimated development costs.

20

MS TUOR: So I think again the Gunnedah one, that didn't have a condition – a 94 condition, from memory, did it? Do you remember?

MR A. JOHNS: Andrew Johns, Gunnedah Shire Council. From memory, I believe that's correct. I guess there has been a fair bit happening in that space across the State in the last – I would say – 12 months, in relation to whether these types of developments do warrant section 94 contributions. And, I guess, the reason for that is a lot of councils had previously taken the position that as there was no impact on population, generally obviously you have a spike in population during construction phase, but operationally there's no additional population. But I believe there has been a couple of other even voluntary planning agreements entered into with solar farms across the State in the last 12 months or so. So I guess in that regard, council's position may have changed in relation to whether we believe that it's justified in this case.

35

MS TUOR: But your 94 plan specifically deals with solar farms and the nexus between the increased demand or - - -

MR JOHNS: No, it doesn't. It basically talks about development. It's in general terms. It's not specifically to types of development.

40

MR HUDSON: So council's 94A plan refers to being applicable to development applications and construction certificates over a certain value, so that value being 100,000.

45

MR WILSON: Okay. That needs to be considered.

MS TUOR: So – sorry – are you aware of any other – where it has actually been under (1)(a), as opposed to just through voluntary planning agreements or - - -

MR HUDSON: No. I'm not aware, not regarding solar developments.

5

MR WILSON: Is there expected to be – I think you may have already mentioned this already – is it unlikely there's going to be significant impact on services, particularly – I presume we had this discussion about during the construction period, maybe, so council has a view on that impact on services?

10

MR HUDSON: I'm not aware of any consideration.

MR JOHNS: But, I mean, I could probably step in there. I believe – and I'm sure we said this at the IPC hearing in relation to the Gunnedah Solar Farm as well, but Gunnedah is in a situation now where mining is booming in the town. We've got a number of mining developments either under construction or about to be under construction, as well as a number that are in operation. And that has put, you know, a toll, I guess, on our services – council's services, whether it be, you know, water and sewer, increase in population. You know, it has put a strain on residential housing prices. And I think that's fairly well-documented around the place. So I guess there's no doubt that, you know, an influx of X number of people will have some impact. You know, the town and its community has been pretty good at wearing that, I guess, influx. But there becomes a point where, you know, you have a lot of development in a town, it's going to take its toll.

25

MR WILSON: Okay. Just in terms of waste – and I think we're thinking more about waste should the facility be decommissioned – are there likely to be implications for management of council's resources or resource management? I presume council has a resource management strategy in place?

30

MR JOHNS: Well, obviously have plans around how we operate our waste facilities. I guess we've got two concerns in relation to waste. The first one is that obviously there's a lot of waste generated when these things are constructed. Solar panels come on pallets wrapped in plastic and cardboard, that type of thing. And, similarly, at the end of the day, which will probably see all of us out, you know, who knows what the waste area will be like in those – you know, in 20, 30 years time. So I guess we do have constraints, in that we operate a licenced facility. The facility is licenced by the Protection Authority. We've got an environmental protection licence. And that governs how much waste we're allowed to take in. So there's thresholds in place.

40

We have had other examples. There's another large State development happening at the moment, a bridge that's being built. And, you know, we need to be able to adapt to be able to take in a lot more waste from time to time. But it's always good to be ahead of the game and to have a bit of a, you know, line of site of the problem, I guess, and be really aware of what's coming in. And we can manage that. Going back to your question in relation to the end of the day, when this thing is

45

decommissioned, obviously, that would be a burden on the council at the time. You know, if they haven't found a way to recycle solar panels, obviously the metal components, I would image, would still be recycled, you know, in the future. As for the solar panels themselves, it's almost impossible to tell.

5

MR WILSON: Okay. Thanks.

MS TUOR: So in terms of waste, again, there's a condition, condition 27, which is pretty much the same as what was on the Gunnedah approval, which talks about, you know, minimising waste and being classified in accordance with the EPAs waste classification. And then there's also a condition in relation to decommissioning, that they do a decommissioning plan, so - - -

10

MR JOHNS: I think that would be – that would cover it. Yes.

15

MS TUOR: Yes. Okay.

MR WILSON: SEPP 34, koala habitat, there was the issue about the tree not being defined or identified inside or outside the development footprint. In my understanding, that has now been identified as being outside the footprint. Does that address that issue?

20

MR HUDSON: So SEPP 44, council's understanding is that relates to the entire development site. So if the tree is within the development lots, that should be identified under the assessment, rather than just being within the impact area for the development itself. So within the provisions of SEPP 54, it refers to the assessment being done on the development site, being the entire area. So if there is a tree or a number of trees listed within the schedule 2 as being koala feed trees, that should be included in the assessment.

25

30

MR WILSON: Okay. I think that nearly covers everything that we had in your – that covers the breadth of your submission. But I think – have you got any more questions?

35

MS TUOR: No.

MR A. HUTTON: No. No.

MR WILSON: So it would be really useful for us, though, for council to revisit the draft recommended conditions that have been provided to us and get back to us, to see whether or not they're adequate, in terms of your submissions to the department. And that would assist us in our final determination. Yes.

40

MS TUOR: Yes, definitely.

45

MR WILSON: Well, does council have anything more to add?

MR JOHNS: I don't. Wade, do you have anything to add?

MR HUDSON: No. I think we're happy.

5 MR WILSON: Okay. All right. Well, thank you very much for coming.

MR HUDSON: Thank you.

10 MR JOHNS: Thank you.

RECORDING CONCLUDED

[3.15 pm]