



COMMISSION GIVES GO-AHEAD TO \$200-MILLION GUNNEDAH SOLAR FARM

12 March 2019

The state's Independent Planning Commission has given the go-ahead to a \$200-million solar farm near Gunnedah.

Gunnedah Solar Farm Pty Ltd (the Applicant) lodged a state significant development (SSD) application with the Department of Planning & Environment for a new 150-megawatt solar farm and associated infrastructure on a 795-hectare site on Orange Grove Road.

The matter was sent to the Commission for determination because the Department received more than 25 public objections.

Chair of the Commission, Professor Mary O'Kane AC, appointed a three-member Panel, comprising Mr Andrew Hutton (Panel Chair), Ms Annelise Tuor and Mr Tony Pearson, to examine the application and make a final decision.

The Commissioners met with the applicant, representatives of the Department and Gunnedah Shire Council, and visited the proposed site and neighbouring properties.

They also held a public meeting in Gunnedah in November last year to listen to the community's concerns which centred around potential flood risks, land-use compatibility, heavy vehicle movements, and negative impacts on visual amenity and local property prices.

Following careful consideration of all the evidence and weighing the community's views, the Commission has today (Tuesday 12 March 2019) determined to approve the state significant development application, subject to conditions.

In its Statement of Reasons for Decision, the Commission found:

- the Project's modelled flood impacts would comply with the assessment criteria under the relevant flood management plans and the Gunnedah Local Environment Plan 2012
- the setback of the solar panels from the project boundary, the height of the solar panels and the proposed vegetation screening would appropriately screen the site, reducing visual impacts
- the heavy vehicle route can safely accommodate traffic movements associated with the Project; and the Commission has amended the conditions of consent to ensure that local roads, at the time of any future upgrading or decommissioning, would be upgraded as necessary to support such activity

.../2

- the Project site represents an area of mapped Biophysical Strategic Agricultural Land; and the Commission has amended the conditions to require the Applicant to prepare a decommissioning and rehabilitation plan to ensure that the site is restored post operation to its pre-existing agricultural capability, and
- the Project will assist in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and climate change and achieves a reasonable balance between maximising the use of the solar resource and managing potential impacts on the environment and on surrounding landowners.

The conditions of consent imposed by the Commission are “designed to prevent, minimise and/or offset adverse environmental impacts and impacts on the community.”

Disclaimer

This media statement has been prepared by the Commission’s media unit for general information only. It does not form part of the Commission’s Statement of Reasons for Decision, and should not be read as part of, or as a substitute for, that Statement of Reasons for Decision.