



## COMMISSION APPROVES NEW \$94-MILLION SOLAR FARM FOR GUNNEDAH

25 July 2019

The state's Independent Planning Commission has determined to approve, subject to conditions, a new 110-megawatt solar farm near Gunnedah.

The Department of Planning, Industry and Environment referred a state significant development (SSD) application for the \$94-million Orange Grove Solar Farm to the Commission in April this year amid community opposition.

Chair of the Commission, Professor Mary O'Kane AC, appointed a three-member Panel, comprising Chris Wilson (Panel Chair), Andrew Hutton and Annelise Tuor, to determine the application. They met with the Applicant, Department and Gunnedah Shire Council and conducted an inspection of the site and surrounding area.

The Commissioners also held a public meeting in Gunnedah to listen to the community's views on the proposed development. Concerns raised by local residents centred around land use compatibility, potential amenity impacts, flooding and biodiversity.

Having considered all the evidence and weighed the community's views, the Commission has today (Thursday 25 July 2019) determined to approve, subject to conditions, the SSD on Orange Grove Road, northeast of the Gunnedah township.

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

- has been designed giving consideration to the modelled flood impacts... (and) would not result in any significant impact on adjacent properties and high value infrastructure in a flood event
- has been designed in order to mitigate visual impacts on surrounding residents through an increased setback and landscaping... (and) that any cumulative visual impacts from this Project and the recently-approved Gunnedah Solar Farm would be negligible due to the distance between projects and relatively low-lying nature of these developments
- site is on land with high quality soil and water resources capable of sustaining high levels of agricultural productivity (Biophysical Strategic Agricultural Land or BSAL) ... (and) that the Site can be rehabilitated back to its pre-existing agricultural capabilities after the solar farm is decommissioned
- would not result in significant impacts on the capacity, efficiency or safety of the road network, and
- will assist in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and climate change.

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The Commission stated the Project is in the public interest because it “will assist in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and climate change; would not result in a significant reduction in the overall agricultural productivity of the land and can be appropriately rehabilitated following decommissioning; 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.

**The Commission’s Statement of Reasons for Decision can be read in full here:**

<https://www.ipcn.nsw.gov.au/projects/2019/04/orange-grove-solar-farm-ssd-8882>

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