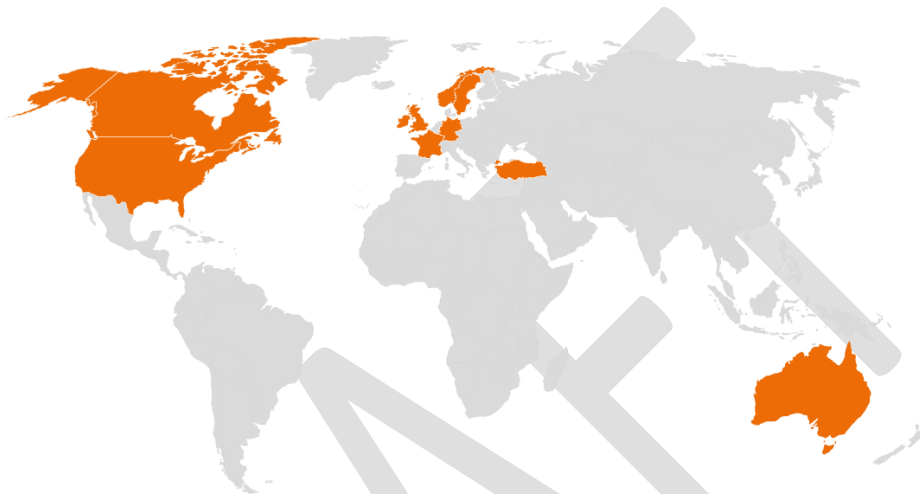


## SPRINGDALE SOLAR FARM

Independent Planning Commission

Request for Information (RFI) Report



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Author	Steven Reid
Date	05 February 2021
Ref	04317-2039267

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## Revision History

Issue	Date	Name	Latest changes
01	05/02/2021	Steven Reid	First Created
02			

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

RES Australia Pty Ltd (the proponent) is proposing the construction, operation and decommissioning of the Springdale Solar Farm near Sutton, NSW (the Project). RES, the world's largest independent renewable energy company, announced its acquisition of the Springdale Solar Farm from Renew Estate (the former proponent) in April 2020.

The project is classified as State Significant Development (SSD) under *State Environmental Planning Policy (State and Regional Development) 2011* and requires development consent under Part 4 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act). An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was prepared by AECOM Australia Pty Ltd (AECOM) to support the development application and assessed the environmental and social issues associated with the Project. The EIS was submitted to the DPIE and placed on public exhibition from 18 July 2018 to 29 August 2018. During the exhibition period, the public and government agencies were invited to make submissions. Following the close of the exhibition period, the proponent was required to submit a report detailing responses to issues raised in the received submissions, as well as provide additional information to support the assessment of the Project by the Department of Planning, Infrastructure and Environment (DPIE).

A Response to Submissions (RtS) was submitted on 31 May 2020. The report sought to address the requirement that all submissions received are appropriately considered, and if required, changes made to the Project to accommodate these submissions. An RFI report was submitted on 1 October 2020 to the DPIE, following which the DPIE issued their Assessment Report with recommendation for Approval (dated 25 November 2020).

The Project was referred to the Independent Planning Commission (IPC) for determination, having exceeded the threshold for objections (50 objections). The proponent and IPC Commissioners have met twice to discuss the Project, the first of which being a videoconference. The second of these meetings was a visit to the Project site, carried out alongside members of the community. Following this visit the IPC Commissioners provided a request for information (RFI) to the Proponent. This report responds directly to this request for information, providing additional further information requested by the IPC Additional contextual information, such as updated plans and documents have also been provided where relevant.

## 2 Project Further Information

### 2.1 RFI & proponent response

IPC - RFI	Proponent Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <u>Biodiversity corridor</u>: please provide maps.</li> </ul>	<p>See plan attached at Annexure 3.1</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <u>Conservation area</u>: what works are proposed to enhance the area? How will grazing regimes be managed?</li> </ul>	<p>The conservation area referred to is assumed to be the Golden Sun Moth (GSM) conservation area located to the western side of the main solar array. This area comprises 60 ha set aside and managed for the benefit of GSM.</p> <p>As outlined in the EIS, the project was substantially redesigned to avoid key areas of GSM habitat within the Project site following expert ecological survey. This avoidance is the key element of the Proponent's response to conserving this species within the Site for the duration of the solar farm's operation.</p> <p>In addition to this, measures proposed with view to enhancing the habitat and success of this species within the Site include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management of grazing regimes during operation to maintain optimal grass species, height and coverage. This will include specific management of the type of livestock (likely sheep) and the density of stocking to maintain key habitat values relevant to the species' long term success. Specifically, the Proponent will seek to maintain tussock levels between 3 and 15 cm by regulated grazing, with shorter heights achieved by October before the GSM flying period, and lighter grazing from November to January if the season is dry.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where grazing is not deemed practical or is constrained by other factors optimal grass heights would be maintained by slashing</li> <li>• Pasture improvement practices that may result in detrimental effects upon GSM, such as the use of fertiliser and sowing of exotic pasture grasses, would be discontinued within the GSM conservation zone</li> <li>• Existing grassland areas throughout the Site subject to disturbance during construction would be rehabilitated using locally sourced Wallaby and Speargrasses</li> <li>• Weed management would be maintained within the GSM conservation zone to control broad-leaved weeds that may shade out grasses providing GSM habitat</li> <li>• Provision of high quality and suitable fencing around both the site and the GSM conservation zone to prevent stray livestock entering (from both other parts within the Site and adjacent landholdings) and potentially damaging the conservation area through direct trampling and/or localised overgrazing</li> </ul> <p>The above measures would be included within a GSM-specific sub-plan of the Biodiversity Management Plan, as required by the draft conditions of consent. This plan would be developed in consultation with Alison Rowell, the leading local expert on the ecology and conservation of this species.</p> <p>Implementation of the GSM sub-plan would be undertaken by the Proponent, with the assistance of the existing landowner, whom the Proponent will permit to maintain grazing activities over the Site in accordance with the GSM sub-plan.</p>
<p>Updates to the Main Constraints map:</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <u>Water usage</u>: please provide information on water usage during construction and operation.</li> <li>–</li> </ul>	<p>Water consumption rates for solar farms vary substantially depending on local climatic conditions and the specific technology implemented. It is noted that the EIS states that 2 ML and 1.6 ML of water would be required annually during construction and operations, respectively.</p>

The operational consumption figure presented in the EIS of 1.6 ML per annum is a conservative estimate based upon broad experience with solar farm developments elsewhere. It should be noted that this figure also includes approximately 900 kL for the planting and establishment of screening vegetation around the Site. Noting that DPIE have provided a draft condition requiring this planting to occur prior to the commencement of construction, this figure may be removed from the operational total and applied to the construction water use total. Further to this, a full clean of the panels of the entire solar array may be nearer to 350 kL in total. Based upon typical rainfall patterns for the site the project may only require a single panel clean per year, in which case total operational consumption would be 350 kL per year. The number of full panel cleans may be greater in particularly dry years where dust may affect the generation ability of the panels.

During construction water would be required for dust suppression and the operation of site welfare facilities such as the site office and staff amenities. As outlined above, the estimated annual water usage during this phase would need to increase to account for the planting and maintenance of screening vegetation, which is estimated at 900 kL per annum. This would continue for 2-3 years until vegetation is established and can rely on rainfall for ongoing water needs. This period may extend to account for the re-establishment of vegetation that dies during the initial establishment period.

Water consumption during construction can vary substantially depending on the construction techniques utilised. The 2 ML volume provided in the EIS may increase somewhat to account for soil and climatic conditions (which affect the degree of dust suppression required), as well as for the inclusion of water for the establishment of vegetation. Based upon RES's updated estimates, including the need to account for watering of screening vegetation during the construction stage and for dust suppression on internal and external roads, the potential water consumption during construction may be closer to 5-6 ML. The number of additional water cart movements associated with this volume of water would be equivalent to less than one additional movement per day over a 12 month construction period.

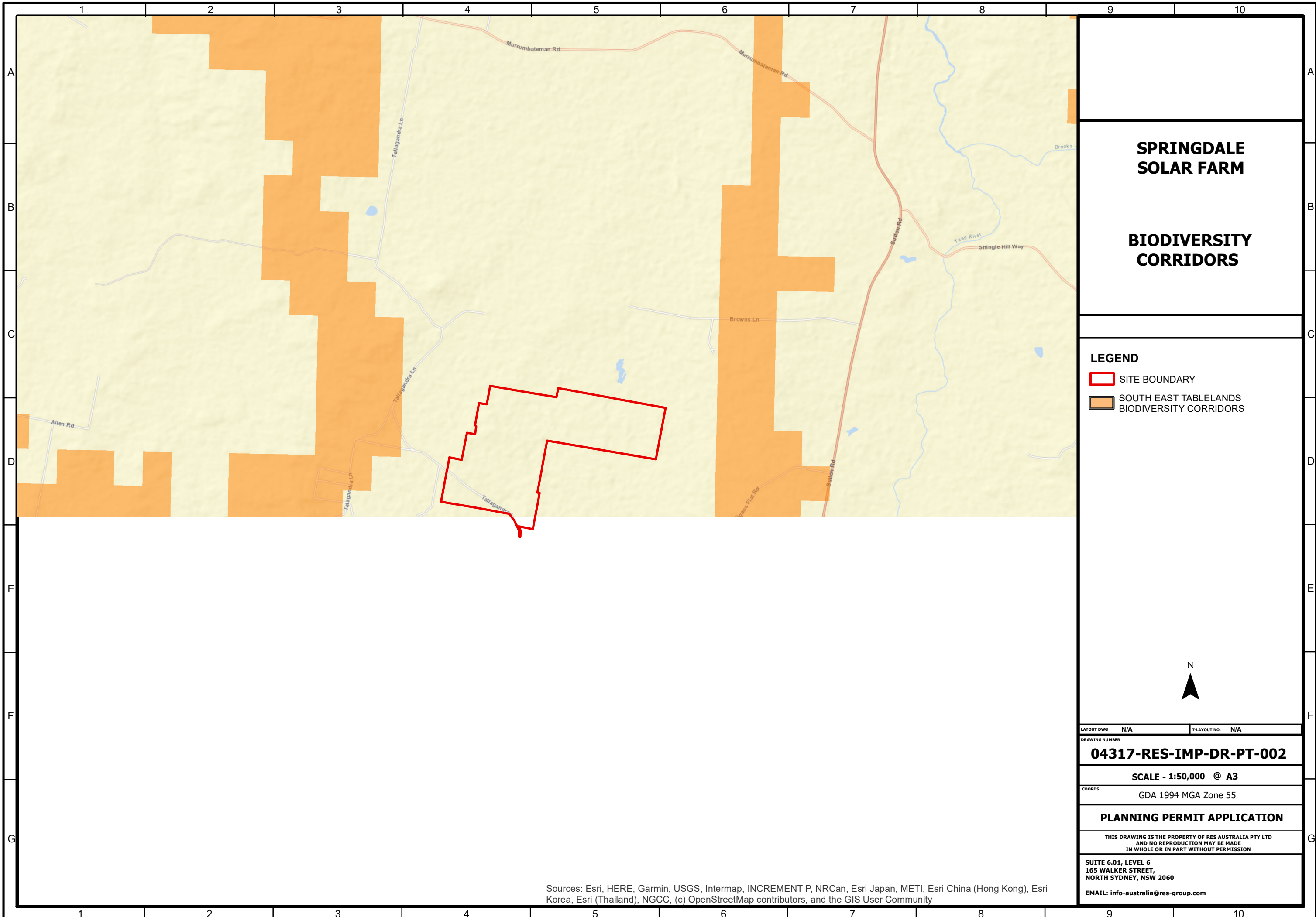
	<p>These additional movements would fit within the traffic numbers already presented in the EIS, being 75 heavy vehicles per day during construction.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <u>Vehicle crossings</u>: please provide information about the proposed vehicle crossings of:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Creeks</li> <li>o Tintinhull Road (or should this part of the road be referred to as a driveway?)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>The project will cross two creeks which are recorded as 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> order streams. The specific design of these crossings will take place in the detailed design phase, following the receipt of development consent. Noting that these streams are normally dry and only active during periods of higher rainfall, the agreed principle of the design will be to ensure the maintenance of flows during higher rainfall periods, which may be achieved by the installation of culvert(s) or designing the 4<sup>th</sup> order stream crossing to be a low level causeway. This design would need to ensure access is still viable during a flood.</p> <p>It should be noted that Tintinhull Road is a Crown Road open to the public and is not subject to any exclusive access arrangements for any adjacent landholders.</p> <p>The vehicle crossings proposed for Tintinhull Road will be designed to comply with any requirements of the NSW Department of Industry (DOI). DOI have been approached and an application process has commenced for cable crossings of this land.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <u>Tintinhull Road</u>: please clarify ownership arrangements (is the road Crown land? What easements or right-of-way applies?)</li> <li>-</li> </ul>	<p>As noted above, Tintinhull Road is a Crown Road open to the public and is not subject to any exclusive access arrangements for any adjacent landholders. A licence is required for a cable crossing of Tintinhull Road and a second 'paper road' within the main solar farm development area.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <u>Substation</u>: please provide a photomontage of the substation in the proposed location.</li> </ul>	<p>[A viewshed from the paddock to the north of R5's house and garden has been produced to confirm the anticipated visibility zone in the direction of the newly relocated substation. The tree heights have been modelled using [ ] data, with an accuracy of 4m. We have applied the most conservative tree height data to present this viewshed]</p> <p>See Annexure 3.2 [We are still working on this plan]</p>



## 3 Annexures

### 3.1 Biodiversity Corridor Plan

DRAFT



**SPRINGDALE  
SOLAR FARM**

**BIODIVERSITY  
CORRIDORS**

**LEGEND**

- SITE BOUNDARY
- SOUTH EAST TABLELANDS  
BIODIVERSITY CORRIDORS



LAYOUT DWG	N/A	T-LAYOUT NO.	N/A
<b>DRAWING NUMBER</b>			
<b>04317-RES-IMP-DR-PT-002</b>			
<b>SCALE - 1:50,000 @ A3</b>			
COORDS			
GDA 1994 MGA Zone 55			
<b>PLANNING PERMIT APPLICATION</b>			
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Sources: Esri, HERE, Garmin, USGS, Intermap, INCREMENT P, NRCan, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), Esri Korea, Esri (Thailand), NGCC, (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

## 3.2 Springdale Solar Farm Substation - R5 Viewshed