



Prof Mary O'Kane
Chair
Independent Planning Commission
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Received by IPC
Thursday 28 January 2021

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Dear Professor O'Kane

Culcairn Solar Farm (SSD 10288)

The Department has completed its assessment of the merits of the application for the Culcairn Solar Farm (SSD 10288).

The application is referred to the Independent Planning Commission for determination, as Council objected to the proposal, and there were more than 50 unique submissions objecting to the proposal.

Neoen Australia Pty Ltd (Neoen) proposes to develop a new State significant solar farm located approximately 4 kilometres (km) southwest of Culcairn in the Greater Hume Shire local government area. It would have a generating capacity of approximately 350 megawatts (MW) and would connect to TransGrid's existing 330 kilovolt transmission line on the site.

During the exhibition of the environmental impact statement (EIS), the Department received a total of 230 submissions from the community and special interest groups, in addition to advice from 12 government agencies. Of the public submissions, 146 objected to the project, of which 138 were unique submissions. Greater Hume Shire Council also objected to the project.

After reviewing the submissions, Neoen made a number of changes to the project to address issues raised in submissions, including:

- removing all project infrastructure north of Cummings Road (313 ha);
- total reduction of the development footprint by 234 ha (from 1,126 ha to 892 ha);
- an additional 60 m setback from residence R24 (resulting in a separation distance of 498 m) and an additional 5 m of vegetation screening (resulting in 20 m deep screening);
- additional riparian screening in the vicinity of residences R17 and R19 to increase habitat connectivity across the site and reduce visual impacts;
- reducing clearing of paddock trees by 35 (from 99 to 64);
- reducing native vegetation clearing from 0.61 ha to 0.33 ha; and
- upgrading a section (1.4 km) of Weeamera Road from 6 m to 7 m width.

Neoen also offered to enter into a voluntary planning agreement with Greater Hume Council to contribute towards community enhancement projects in the local area.

The Department has considered this information in detail during its assessment and supports the proposed amendments as they would significantly reduce the impacts of the project and address some of the key issues raised by the community in submissions.

In assessing the merits of the project, the Department has considered the environmental, social and economic impacts of the project, submissions on the EIS, relevant environmental planning instruments, the suitability of the site, and the public interest, in accordance with the requirements of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.

During the assessment process the Department visited the site, and consulted with local residents, Council and relevant government agencies.

Based on this assessment, the Department considers that the project is approvable, subject to the recommended conditions of consent.

I have attached a copy of the Department's assessment report and other relevant documents for the Commission's consideration.

For further information or to arrange a briefing, please contact Mike Young, Executive Director Energy, Industry and Compliance on 02 8217 2091 or mike.young@planning.nsw.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



27/1/2021

David Gainsford
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