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O/N H-1336699

INDEPENDENT PLANNING COMMISSION

COUNCIL MEETING

RE. JINDERA SOLAR FARM

PANEL: **ANDREW HUTTON (Chair)**
ZADA LIPMAN

IPC: **STEPHEN BARRY**
JANE ANDERSON

COUNCIL: **DOUG MEYER**
COLIN KANE

LOCATION: **VIDEOCONFERENCE**

DATE: **12:15 PM, MONDAY, 23 NOVEMBER 2020**

MR A. HUTTON: Great. Thank you. Well, what we'll do is we will kick off. So good afternoon and welcome and thanks for your time today. Before we begin, I would just like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the lands on which we meet and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging. Welcome to the meeting
5 today for the Jindera Solar Farm project. Jindera Solar Farm Proprietary Limited proposes to develop a 120-megawatt solar farm approximately four kilometres north of Jindera in the Greater Hume Shire local government area. My name is Andrew Hutton, I'm the chair of the commission's panel, and I'm joined by my fellow commissioner Professor Zada Lipman. Also on the call today we're joined by
10 Stephen Barry and Jane Anderson from the Office of the Independent Planning Commission.

In the interests of openness and transparency and to ensure the full capture of information, today's meeting is being recorded and a full transcript will be produced
15 and made available on the commission's website. This meeting is one part of the commission's consideration of this matter and will form one of several sources of information upon which the commission will base our determination. As usual, it is important for commissioners to ask questions of attendees and to clarify any issues wherever it is considered appropriate. And if you are asked a question and not in a
20 position to answer, then please feel free to take the question on notice and provide us with any additional information which we will also – in writing, which we will also put up on our website.

Just as a matter of formalities, when we commence the discussion, if I could just ask
25 that you introduce yourselves before speaking on the first occasion. That will assist with the transcript and to ensure that all members are acknowledged. And also just ask that we don't speak over the top of each other just to ensure accuracy of the transcript. So what we'll do is begin. What I wanted to do before we do open with discussion is just to acknowledge that myself and Zada have visited the site. We
30 took the opportunity to visit the site on our trip down to the region a few weeks ago, and I think, Colin, you were on that trip with us for the Jindera site. So we have the benefit of having been on the ground to understand some of the key issues, which will help with this conversation.

We've also read the department's assessment report, and we've sent through a bit of
35 an agenda today just to, I guess, frame up some of the conversation. So as was the case with the previous meeting with council on another matter, we're just keen to really give you the opportunity to talk with us as the panel and, I guess, run through any outstanding concerns or residual matters that you'd like to raise, and, particular,
40 Colin, with the benefit of being on site, whether there was anything that you would like to present to us. So I guess I'll hand over to you two gentlemen to just talk to us about any issues, and we will certainly work through that as we move forward.

MR D. MEYER: Doug Meyer, Deputy Mayor Greater Hume Shire. On behalf of
45 my ratepayers, mainly agriculturists, I'd like to exemplify what's happened in the last week in this shire that we've seen land – so this is prime agricultural land –

we've seen some land in the northern part of the shire sell for \$5500 per acre. This is not a hectare, per acre. It's unheard of, and they were multiple sales across an area from Henty to Culcairn almost to the south of Culcairn. We've seen some land in the eastern part of Greater Hume Shire sell for \$9000 an acre. Again, per acre, not
5 hectare, and that was a consistent price across two properties: one east of Culcairn, and one at Woomargama which is on the Hume Highway. This is unheard of. It emphasises what we've been saying for some time that the commercial market sees this area as being prime agricultural land. It's stable, it's solid, it has never not produced.

10 MR HUTTON: Mr Meyer, is the land that sold recently comparable in terms of topography and position in the landscape as what is proposed here on the Jindera site?

15 MR MEYER: I would see the land at Jindera and other area east of Jindera and Glenellen as being worth more than what these parcels of land were. Again, it's more productive land than that that I'm talking about or that that I'm emphasising.

MR HUTTON: Yes. Thank you for those comments. Colin.

20

MR C. KANE: Yes. Look, I think we we have – I won't labour the point today. We have raised the issue about

MR HUTTON: We seem to be having some slight connection issues. Is that - - -

25

MR KANE: - - - agricultural land. This particular - - -

MR HUTTON: Excuse me, Colin.

30 MR KANE: Yes.

MR HUTTON: Sorry, we're just having some connection issues. You're just dropping out a little bit there.

35 MR KANE: Sorry, I think we've got a little bit of an unstable line, Andrew.

MR HUTTON: Right. I wonder would it improve if we drop the video off and we just have the audio.

40 MR KANE: Could do. Let me see how we go. Let me stop.

MR HUTTON: Just don't want to miss key points.

MR KANE: Yes. Okay. How's that? Is that better?

45

MR HUTTON: We can hear you. So if you wouldn't mind just recommencing that, please, Colin.

MR KANE: Now I've lost him. You there, Andrew?

MR HUTTON: Yes, we can hear you.

5 MR KANE: Yes. Sorry.

MR HUTTON: Yes. No, you're right.

10 MR KANE: It is jumping around. It's a really rainy day down here today.

MR HUTTON: Okay.

MR KANE: I don't think that helps. And, yes, look, I don't want to labour the
15 point. I think that there is some category 3 land here, class 3 high agricultural land.
Quite a lot of this site is. So, you know, that's a loss. There's no doubt about that.
That's – and it's class 3 land. It's coupled with high natural rainfall levels. So it's
the properties of the soil plus the high rainfall does make it very good agricultural
land relative to other land in the Riverina Murray. So, other than that, I wouldn't like
20 to say too much more about the agricultural land except that it's – with the class 3,
that was listed as land that the Department of Planning within their own guidelines
said to avoid in their guidelines about the placement of large-scale solar farms. So
- - -

MR HUTTON: Colin, if I could just add, we've just finished a meeting this
25 morning with the department, and we understand from their presentation that the
applicant did a subsequent assessment – ag impact assessment on site following
comments from DPI Ag, and that with the benefit of that work they actually
reclassified a large part of the land there as class 4, and I think that was in relation to
some of the waterlogging potential of the site, if I understand that currently. I guess
30 that's just some feedback, that's all, more than anything else.

MR KANE: Yes, I think I did see that. I mean, I've been inundated with a lot of
material, Andrew and Zada.

35 MR HUTTON: Sure.

MR KANE: But I did see that came in in response to submissions. I haven't had an
actual look at the department's assessment report, I will just flag that now. I had
40 read their draft conditions, but I hadn't read their assessment report.

MR HUTTON: Sure.

MR KANE: I didn't get sent a copy of that, so I would've had to seek it out. I think
45 some of the other issues we had – I think the process has improved the development
from the initial cut from the EIS. I like the fact that there's been bigger setbacks
provided to boundaries. That does go some way to alleviate, I think, a lot of the
problems with the initial proposal that council had, particularly where we went along

Glenellen Road where there was all those small holdings on the other side of Glenellen Road. When the proposal was going to be hard up against the fence there, they would've had some big visual impacts. I still think they might have some visual impacts until all the landscaping and that's in place and how long they takes, and I
5 think we need to be very mindful of that and hopefully ensure that the landscaping is well looked after for those people so that they don't get quite big visual impacts. I'm a bit concerned – recently we've had the EIS come from the department from the adjacent solar farm, the Glenellen Solar Farm - - -

10 MS Z. LIPMAN: He's gone.

MR KANE: - - - that we talked about while we were at it's on the other side of Ortlipp Road. So I am concerned a bit about some of the cumulative impacts for some of those residents along there, potentially visual and traffic and the actual – if it
15 holds, and we won't know until its built, but the heat island effect. There is some landholdings that would have it on either side of them and quite close, I think, so that's a concern that I hold. Whether some of those concerns prove to be well founded, you wouldn't know until the development has occurred, I think. So - - -

20 MR HUTTON: Yes. So the Glenellen Solar Farm proposal is still in assessment, as I understand it, but you've seen the EIS as part of your consultation with Department of Planning?

MR KANE: Just recently. Just going through it right now.

25

MR HUTTON: Okay. Right.

MR KANE: And so there is a couple of small holdings on Ortlipp Road that would have the Glenellen Solar Farm at their back of their holding.

30

MR HUTTON: Yes.

MR KANE: And then on the other side of Ortlipp Road plus the setback, they will have the Jindera Solar Farm, so, you know, and then it's staff, we're quite concerned
35 a little bit about the cumulative impacts of traffic management if both occur at the same time.

MR HUTTON: Yes.

40 MR KANE: And I think that's particularly something that the councillors are concerned about are the transport routes coming from Jindera, which was agreed through Jindera for the Jindera Solar Farm, but the Glenellen Solar Farm was going to come in through the north which the staff are not particularly happy out. So there's still a few interactions between the two, and just this staging and the
45 cumulative nature I think all the impacts can be, and as to how bad they will be, I don't know, but they are very close together, the two developments.

MR HUTTON: Colin, on page 6 of the department's assessment report, they do actually present a table which talks about the Glenellen Solar Farm proposal. It's a 200-megawatt which is only at its nearest point, as you note, about 350 metres, 300 metres from the current proposal. And I can – looking at figure 4, I can certainly see
5 what you're describing in terms of the proximity to the current proposal, so thank you for raising that.

MR KANE: That's okay. So just continuing on with some – you can stop me whenever you like if – I'm just going through council's original letter.
10

MR HUTTON: Yes.

MR KANE: You know, look, some of those issues about the VPA, they've been resolved - - -
15

MR HUTTON: Yes.

MR KANE: - - - to council's satisfaction, so we're happy with that. I think, like I mentioned, the landscaping and the setbacks is definitely an improvement and
20 betterment. We would like to see – well, it is – look, it is potentially bit of an issue that it shuts down one area of growth for Jindera. Whether we would have got out that far in the 30-year period of time, I don't know. I doubt it, but it definitely - - -

MR HUTTON: Sorry to interrupt, is that in relation to what is the eastern side of the
25 proposal? That's what we spoke - - -

MR KANE: Well - - -

MR HUTTON: - - - in terms of future development opportunities for resi or rural
30 res?

MR KANE: Well, it's a little bit further out, and we have been currently developing primarily our rural residential to the south of Jindera going back towards Albury.

MR HUTTON: Yes.
35

MR KANE: But I was thinking longer term there is definitely some land out there that is less constrained than others around Jindera for rural residential and for residential growth. Jindera can be quite constrained little town for finding new
40 opportunities to place residential land because it's got native vegetation also that, you know, is very difficult to remove nowadays and is usually to best to be avoided for residential land growth. Particularly for the price of land around Jindera, you've virtually got to avoid your native vegetation because the costs of removing it often curtails the development.
45

So, look, that side of town definitely would have had some options that we would have explored. Whether we would have got as far out as the solar farm in the time

period that it's going to be commissioned, I don't know. There's so many variables as to how much the town will grow. But we are – we have definitely had one development that's been very successful for Jindera on Drumwood Road which is quite close to – closer to the Glenellen Solar Farm than the Jindera Solar Farm.

5

MR HUTTON: Yes.

MR KANE: And, yes, we have been looking for some options along Drumwood Road potentially to do more development.

10

MR HUTTON: I'm also interested in – you mentioned earlier the traffic both cumulative and traffic associated with this proposal. I understand there's three main access points for the construction and access to the site being off Urana Road which accesses the western side, and then there's the two-way access, if you like, on the Walla Walla Jindera Road.

15

MR KANE: Sorry, just dropped out for a second, Andrew. Hang on.

MR HUTTON: Sorry. I was just talking about the access points - - -

20

MR KANE: Yes.

MR HUTTON: - - - to the property.

25

MR KANE: Yes.

MR HUTTON: As I understand, there's three access points.

MR KANE: That's right.

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MR HUTTON: Yes, and – the western edge off Urana Road, and then obviously the dual entry off Walla Walla Jindera Road. Do council have any concerns or residual issues around that that you're aware of?

35

MR KANE: Well, we initially went through all our processes with council, and we've agreed to that traffic route for this development.

MR HUTTON: Yes.

40

MR KANE: I would have potentially some cumulative effects depending on the overlap of time with the Glenellen Solar Farm. There's a particular intersection that I don't particularly like which is on the Walla Walla Jindera Road which is the Lindner intersection. And I personally – I mean, I'm probably a little bit unqualified because I'm not a traffic engineer, but I find that that intersection just beneath the crest – and it was going to be on the transport route of the Glenellen Solar Farm.

45

And so if you're just loading up that road with a lot more traffic, I think, you know, there is a few concerns that I hold for that transport route if they're overlapping – if

the two developments particularly overlap. But if they don't overlap, I'm fairly comfortable with the transport route as it is for the - - -

5 MR HUTTON: So when you say "overlap", you mean the construction phase overlap?

MR KANE: - - - Jindera Solar Farm.

10 MR HUTTON: Sorry, Colin, when you say "overlap", you're referring to the construction phase?

15 MR KANE: Yes. If the two construction phases overlap, I think that would put a lot of - and we haven't reconciled our position about the Glenellen Solar Farm transport route. But if they both overlap, I think there's the potential for a lot of truck movements on that Walla Walla Jindera Road where there is a few tricky intersections that would need to be improved, particularly if their overlapping and you've just got a lot of construction transport.

20 MR HUTTON: Yes. But as I understand, you're providing feedback to the department now on those routes and things as part of your engagement with this project - with the Glenellen project.

MR KANE: Yes. The other route has been agreed to.

25 MR HUTTON: Yes.

MR KANE: But you've just got those two interactions with cumulative effects.

30 MR HUTTON: Yes. Okay. That's good. Thank you for those comments on traffic. Sorry, anything else there, Colin?

35 MR KANE: Look, I just think on the bushfire risk posed, I'd like to see if it's at all possible that a lot of these developments have some sort of initial firefighting capacity in themselves. I raised this before, and I don't think it needs to be much, it just needs to be a small trailer-towed tanker or something with hose reels, and just let any staff that they have there just have a go at fighting the fire initially. A little bit of water early is a lot - - -

40 MR HUTTON: Sorry, Colin, we've just lost you there again. Just having connection issues with council.

MR KANE: Get that Andrew? Sorry.

45 MR HUTTON: Sorry. You just mentioned that "a little bit of water early". We lost you there.

MR KANE: Yes. Look, I think, you know, a little bit of water early is worth a lot of water later on when the fire has grown. So, you know, if you've got a – the earlier you can instigate some bushfire actual firefighting, it's advantageous. You might be a snuff out a fire before it really gets going. Maybe, maybe not, but, you know, for a
5 small amount of money you can definitely have a go at it, that's for sure. It's not a lot to set up a tow-behind fire cart and have it just available with water, 5000 litres, firefighting pump and a couple of hoses. And if you've got staff on site, they can use that and have a go at putting out a grassfire.

10 MR HUTTON: Yes.

MR KANE: I think for these sort of developments where they have staff and that, it's a really good opportunity to do that.

15 MR HUTTON: Yes.

MR KANE: So, other than that, I think we're getting sort of to the end of the issues that I wanted to raise. I mean, there's definitely a lot of native veg that's coming out, but that's been – since our initial proposal, that has been modified and there's a lot
20 less, which I think is a betterment as well, so that's quite good. So I would say that the proposal is a lot more refined and I'm a lot more comfortable with it since the initial EIS.

MR HUTTON: Yes. Okay. Well, do appreciate those comments and certainly
25 acknowledge the comments that Doug made earlier in relation to land and land capability concerns. That's obviously something we're seeing across solar generally, not just in this LGA, for that matter, so we do acknowledge that point. All right. Well, I think – Zada, did you have any questions?

30 MS LIPMAN: Yes, I have a few. They're fairly minor. I think you've covered most aspects. The first one I wanted to talk about was the applicant has indicated, Colin, that they will be able to obtain water from council, and they're going to use quite a lot during construction. We're talking about 30 million litres. Are you comfortable with being able to supply them that quantity of water?

35 MR KANE: If it's within our water licence, we can definitely do it. We spoke with – I spoke with the regulator about it recently, and they said that council can do it. I think it's just depending on the staging. If it was right in the – there might be a couple of days where we might struggle to keep up massive amounts of supply, but I
40 think I'm reasonably confident that we can do it, but I could clarify that with our engineering staff and come back to you with an email with you like just to confirm. I'd rather do that, I think, Zada.

45 MS LIPMAN: Appreciate that. Thank you. And, Colin, just one other little question, it's about the Crown land. I understand that the landowners have negotiated repurchasing a section of that road next to the Crown land. What is the

progress on that, and how do you see the access to that area for, perhaps, walkers and horse riders and people like that?

5 MR KANE: Yes, look, I really couldn't comment too much on that, I'm sorry, Zada. I'm not across that issue, so I don't know. I haven't got anything to add, I'm sorry, about the Crown road.

MS LIPMAN: Okay. Thank you, Colin.

10 MR KANE: Sorry about that.

MR HUTTON: No, that's fine. All right. Well, I think other than those couple of questions I don't have anything extra to ask of you. I guess, just one last opportunity, Colin or Doug, just to finalise any issues before we wrap up the call.
15

MR KANE: Councillor Meyers had to leave.

MR HUTTON: Okay.

20 MR KANE: No, so, no, I'm comfortable with what we've discussed today, so, no, I've got nothing more to add. Thanks for the opportunity again.

MR HUTTON: just to note there is a planned public meeting online on Friday which you're probably aware of. But we've had a number of registered speakers and we'll be going through that process on Friday, so it's just for your information,
25 another part of the process that we go through.

MR KANE: Yes.

30 MR HUTTON: Okay. Well, other than that, I thank you again for your time.

MR KANE: No problem.

MR HUTTON: We certainly do value council's input and the consideration you've given to going through the material and presenting that to the panel. So thanks again for your time, and on that I think we'll close the meeting formally.
35

MR KANE: Okay. No worries. Thank you. Bye all. Thanks.

40 MR HUTTON: I think the panel will stay on, if that's okay.

MS LIPMAN: Okay.

MR HUTTON: Yes.
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[12.46 pm]