

Our ref: SSD-46543209

Stephen Barry
Planning Director
Independent Planning Commission NSW

Via email: [REDACTED]

24/1/2025

Subject: Muswellbrook Solar Farm (SSD-46543209) – Request for Additional Information

Dear Mr Barry

I refer to your letter dated 20 January 2025 concerning the Independent Planning Commission's (the Commission's) consideration of Muswellbrook Solar Farm (SSD-46543209).

The Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure's (the Department) response to the question in the Commission's letter are provided below, which is in addition to the content of the Department's Assessment Report. The Commission's question is included in bold italics for reference.

Land use compatibility

The Department's Assessment Report states that the project is consistent with the objectives of the C3 Environmental Management zone pursuant to Muswellbrook Local Environmental Plan 2009. Can the Department please provide further detail on how the project is consistent with the C3 zone objectives?

The Department considers the proposed solar farm is consistent with the objectives of the C3 Environmental Management Zone as follows:

- *to protect, manage and restore areas with special ecological, scientific, cultural or aesthetic values;*
DPHI Comment: The proposed development has been designed to retain the areas of highest ecological value on the site, and will also serve to improve areas of box gum woodland by undertaking additional measures the applicant has committed to.

- *to provide for a limited range of development that does not have an adverse effect on those values;*
DPHI Comment: The Department is satisfied that the project minimises adverse impacts on ecological values of the site, and that the recommended conditions of consent effectively mitigate the impacts of the project

- *to maintain, or improve in the long term, the ecological values of existing remnant vegetation of significance including wooded hilltops, river valley systems, major scenic corridors and other local features of scenic attraction;*

DPHI Comment: The Department is satisfied that the proposed development will improve areas of box gum woodland across the site through the Additional and Appropriate Measures ESCO has committed to. Furthermore, the placement of the development footprint has centred around the area of lowest biodiversity value that has had the highest historic grazing pressures, and aimed to minimise impacts to CEEC and species habitat by avoiding higher quality, more intact remaining vegetation surrounding the development footprint.

Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure



- *to limit development that is visually intrusive and ensure compatibility with the existing landscape character;*

DPHI Comment: The Department is satisfied that the proposed development would not have significant visual impacts, per section 5.5 of the Department's Assessment Report

- *to allow agricultural activities that will not have an adverse impact on the environmental and scenic quality of the existing landscape;*

DPHI Comment: The proposed development is capable of being returned to its pre-existing agricultural capacity at decommissioning which is a requirement of the recommended condition set.

- *to promote ecologically sustainable development; and*

DPHI Comment: The Department considers that the project, if undertaken in accordance with the recommended conditions of consent, would be consistent with the principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development.

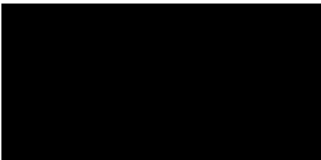
- *to ensure that development in this zone on land that adjoins land in the land zoned C1 National Parks and Nature Reserves is compatible with the objectives for that zone.*

DPHI Comment: The development site does not adjoin any C1 zoned land, nor is there any C1 land located in the broader surroundings of the development site.

The Department is satisfied that the project is consistent with the C3 Environmental Management Zone in that it has been designed to protect and retain areas of ecological value.

If you have any questions, please contact me on 02 9274 6296 or via email at [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely,



Iwan Davies
Director
Energy Assessments