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Gillenbah BESS (SSD-104186459) – SEARs

Dear Rachael

Thank you for the opportunity to provide advice on the Gillenbah BESS (SSD-104186459) – SEARs.

Agriculture plays a vital role in supporting state, regional and local economies and strengthening rural communities' social bonds and character. The NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (the Department) collaborates and partners with our stakeholders to protect and enhance the productive and sustainable use and resilience of agricultural resources and the environment.

The Department's advice is guided by section 4.15(1) of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act), where a consent authority is required to evaluate a project's potential environmental, social, and economic impacts and the public interest. Sections 1.3(a) and (b) of the EP&A Act emphasise facilitating ecologically sustainable development (ESD) in land use decision-making, promoting responsible resource management that benefits present and future generations.

The Department understands the project involves the development of a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) near Narrandera. The proposal is not within any current REZ. The scoping report for the proposed BESS has been reviewed and the Department notes that the site has been identified as LSC Classes 3 and 4. Under the Large-Scale Solar Energy Guideline, renewables to be located on rural zoned land verified as LSC classes 1 to 3 should undertake a Level 3 – detailed agricultural impact assessment. Similarly decommissioning the site should involve removing all above and below ground infrastructure and rehabilitating the site to pre-existing land capability.

The draft Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) have been reviewed. The Department supports the requirements for a Land Use Conflict Risk Assessment (LUCRA) and an assessment of impact on agricultural resources and agricultural production on the site and in the region, as per the draft SEARs.

The following additional requirements are requested:

- Provision of details on how ground cover will be maintained at a minimum of 70% to prevent soil erosion. Detail the measures and management practices to re-establish vegetation on the land during the project's construction and operation.

- Provision of details of any proposed earthworks, including an assessment of the overall footprint where the natural contours of the land will be modified, the total amount of material involved, how any stockpiled material will be managed and an outline of how this material will or will not be used for rehabilitation purposes.
- Provision of a suitable LUCRA for any accommodation site outside current urban areas (Temporary workers' accommodation) so that the impact of ongoing agricultural and other rural activities on workers within the facility is considered.
- Provision of details on potential impacts on agricultural land and productivity from biosecurity issues and on measures to mitigate potential impacts on the site and surrounding agricultural land. Agricultural Biosecurity Management Plans should be prepared for all stages – construction, operation and decommissioning.
- Provision of a Rehabilitation and Decommissioning/Closure Management strategy including, but not be limited to, describing the potential design criteria of the final land use and landform, and the removal of all above and below ground infrastructure, along with the expected timeline for the rehabilitation program.

The Department requires that no additional dwelling eligibilities are created if there is any subdivision of land below the Minimum Lot Size (MLS).

Should you require clarification on any of the information contained in this response, please do not hesitate to contact me by email at landuse.ag@dpird.nsw.gov.au

Sincerely

L Parker

Lilian Parker
A/Manager Agricultural Land Use Planning
Esigned 28-1-2026