

Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI)
C/- Major Projects Portal

Attention: rita.hatem@planning.nsw.gov.au

Garoo Solar Farm, BES and TWA, EIS (SSD-79747209)

Dear Rita,

I refer to your request of 3 March 2026 for advice on the EIS for the Garoo Solar Farm (BESS and TWA) Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Agriculture plays a vital role in supporting state, regional and local economies, and strengthening the character of rural communities. The NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, Agriculture and Biosecurity (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 has reviewed the EIS including Appendix M ('Land and Agricultural Impact Assessment Report', ERM, November 2025), which included a soil survey and land use conflict risk assessment (LUCRA). Our comments are provided below.

Agricultural land

- The land is zoned RU1 Primary Production, located in a productive rural locality with a long history of cropping and livestock grazing. Appendix M estimates lost agricultural production from the project site of \$42,940.26-\$88,914 per annum for livestock and between \$10-49K for cropping. Agricultural production losses are deemed to be insignificant, compared to the wider Tamworth Regional LGA.

Agrisolar

- The EIS indicates agrisolar may be pursued as an 'offset' to the 'temporary' 30-year agricultural production losses above and defers any agrisolar planning to a 'project planning' phase.

Land use conflict

- A Land Use Conflict Risk Assessment (LUCRA) identified a range of issues due to the project being potential impacts to visual amenity, biodiversity and biosecurity incursion.
- Soils impacts will be managed through Construction and Operational Environmental Management Plans (CEMP/OEMP).

Decommissioning

- The EIS does not commit to removing below ground infrastructure during decommissioning.

Based on the remit to protect agricultural values at and in the vicinity of the project footprint, the Department provides the following advice:

Agrisolar and groundcover management

- The preparation of a **Groundcover Management Plan** for the project site is recommended as part of the Construction and Operational Environmental Management Plans. Groundcover should be maintained at a minimum of 70% to prevent soil erosion, whether or not the site is used for agrisolar activities. The Groundcover Management Plan should detail the management practices to establish vegetation/pastures and grazing on the land pre- and post-construction and during operation.
- In terms of monitoring groundcover management, it is recommended that the agricultural productivity of the site along with land and soil capability assessment and prevailing climatic conditions are established as a baseline and reported annually in line with a 70% groundcover target to determine the efficacy of land management and rehabilitation objectives.

Biosecurity

- Agricultural biosecurity (weeds, pests, emergency animal diseases) management during, post construction and operation are to be assessed, and protocols developed in relation to potential agricultural impacts, including the Temporary Workers Accommodation. The Department recommends the Biosecurity Risk Management in Land Use Planning and Development Guide be referred to the proponent for further information.

Decommissioning and rehabilitation

- A proportionate and reasonable mitigation measure is for site decommissioning to remove all underground infrastructure to a depth that permits the re-establishment of livestock grazing on improved pastures and cropping at the end of the project life. This would involve removing all solar-related structures and ancillary infrastructure from the site to a minimum depth of 500mm and returning the site to pre-existing land and soil capability class as committed in the EIS.

Should you require clarification of any of the information contained in this response, please do not hesitate to contact me on 0487023845 or by email at landuse.ag@dpird.nsw.gov.au

Sincerely,



Nita Scott

Agriculture & Biosecurity
New England North West Region

26 March 2026