



EIS Summary Report

Peninsula Solar Farm

30 August 2022

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PROJECT OVERVIEW

Edify Energy Pty Ltd (Edify) is proposing to construct and operate a utilityscale solar farm and integrated battery storage project located at Paytens Bridge, southeast of Forbes, in central west New South Wales (NSW) (Figure S1). The proposed Peninsula Solar Farm (Peninsula SF) (the project) will have a generation capacity up to 80 megawatt (MW) alternating current (AC) and a storage capacity of up to 80 MW/160 megawatt hours (MWh).

The Peninsula SF will comprise up to 260,000 photovoltaic (PV) modules (assuming each module is 500 watts), known more commonly as solar panels. The solar panels use the same type of technology as is commonly used in residential solar installations throughout Australia but are larger in size. The panels will be mounted in rows on horizontal tracking or fixed tilt systems.

The solar panels will generate direct current (DC) electricity that will be inverted to AC electricity (which is the standard form of electricity used throughout Australia). The solar panels interconnect to form a solar array of up to either 4 MW (AC) or 8 MW (AC) capacity. Associated with each array will be a prefabricated, containerised inverter and integrated transformer to convert and step up the voltage level.

The project will also feature a battery energy storage system (BESS) comprising sealed lithium-ion batteries housed in multiple secure, climate-controlled enclosures (BESS units). Subject to economic and technical considerations, the BESS is anticipated to be an approximate 80 MW/160 MWh rated capacity battery storage system. The BESS units

will be distributed throughout the site or consolidated in a centralised location next to the substation.

The solar arrays and inverter enclosures will be installed on frames supported by steel piles and will sit above ground level. The arrays will have a maximum height of 4.2 m at full solar panel tilt and the inverter enclosures a height of up to 3 m.

Electrical connections will also be installed between the solar arrays, as well as associated monitoring and protection equipment and central inverters, via underground or frame-secured cabling.

Each inverter will be connected to a central 33 kilovolt (kV) switchboard by underground medium voltage cable reticulation.

The switchboard will be connected to a high voltage substation occupying a footprint of approximately 120 m by 120 m. The substation will connect the solar farm to the 132 kV above-ground transmission line, owned and operated by Transgrid.

The proposed site layout is shown in Figure S2. The land to be directly disturbed by the project is estimated to be 235 ha.

The project is expected to have a workforce of up to 250 during construction and five full time equivalent positions during operation. Construction is expected to take approximately 16 months and the project is anticipated to have an operational life of 30 years or more.



Lot boundary Landfill site

Main watercourse

Quarry

Watercourse - tributary

State Forest and Nature Reserve

AE1173.1 Peninsula SF Figure S1. Local context Created: 6/05/2022 CRS: GDA 1994 MGA Zone 55 Page size: A4 Base map: Google Satellite [Mar 2022] Additional data: NSW RoadSegment, NSW Hydroline, NSW_Rail, NSW ElectricityTransmissionLine, NSW_Six_Forbes_Lot_Cadastral_data.



HHH Railway

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The total capital investment value of the Peninsula SF is approximately A\$194.9 million, thereby meeting criteria for classification as a State Significant Development (SSD) to be assessed by the NSW Department of Planning and Environment (DPE). As an SSD, the project requires the preparation of an EIS under Part 4 of the *Environmental Planning and* Assessment Act 1979 (EP&A Act).

The purpose of the EIS is to identify and assess potential environmental, social and economic impacts associated with the construction, operation and decommissioning of the Peninsula SF and develop effective mitigation measures. The EIS has been prepared in accordance with the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) and agency comments, issued by DPE on 18 March 2021, and outcomes of community and stakeholder consultation.

PROJECT APPLICANT

The project applicant, Edify, is an Australian-owned renewable energy company with significant experience in developing and financing renewable projects across Australia. Edify has financed six large-scale solar and energy storage projects in Australia, currently owns and operates the largest operational solar farm in NSW and has also finalised agreements to develop the State's largest energy storage project in 2022.

Headquartered in Manly, NSW, Edify's current portfolio provides more than 796 MW installed capacity of renewable energy, producing enough electricity to power over 280,000 Australian homes – nearly 3% of all homes in the country. Edify has broad energy expertise, covering project development, project design and engineering, financing, construction management and asset management.

PROJECT SITE

The project site is located in the Forbes region of central-western NSW which is predominantly agricultural land, with the region's main sources of income being agriculture, forestry and fishing.

The site is neither regionally nor locally unique and is surrounded by comparable land in terms of topography, hydrology, soils, vegetation and land use. At the end of the project life, it is expected that rehabilitation will be able to return the land to its current agricultural use. The project therefore involves the temporary loss of 290 ha of agricultural land within a broad and consistent landscape. This temporary loss may be partially offset if sheep grazing occurs on site as part of ongoing land management.

The 290 ha of rural land within the project site (including the project footprint of about 235 ha) is highly modified due to its history of agriculture and grazing and is currently comprises both cropping and grazing land. The site is generally flat, with undulating rises towards the southern section of the site, south of Paytens Bridge Road, and a single rise in the northern section of the site. The site is zoned RU1 primary production under the provisions of the Forbes Local Environmental Plan (LEP) 2013.

Native vegetation is largely absent.

The site comprises three blocks of land, two north of Paytens Bridge Road and one to the south (see Figure E). The main parcel of land north of Paytens Bridge Road is the Peninsula Block (Lot 441). The other northern parcel is part of unnamed Lot 9. The land to the south of Paytens Bridge Road is part of unnamed Lot 442.



Photo S1 The site as viewed from the west looking east

Lot 441 is currently used for cropping and irregular grazing. Three dams are present on the lot and, with the exception of the dam near the midpoint of the allotment (non-development zone 3 on Figure S2), these may be infilled during construction.

Patches of remnant vegetation in the northeastern corner of the block (in non-development zone 1), and the southern part of the block (non-development zones 4 and 7 on Figure S2) have been excluded from the development footprint. A small number of paddock trees which will be removed.

No built structures or formed tracks are present on this allotment. The existing transmission line easement bisects Lot 441.

Lot 9 is currently used for cropping. One dam is present within the project site and this has been excluded from the development footprint (nondevelopment zone 6 on Figure S2). Lot 9 has a patch of remnant vegetation in its southeastern corner that has also been excluded from the development footprint (non-development zone 5 on Figure S2). Two paddock trees that are present near the eastern fenceline, bordering Lot 441, may be removed.

No built structures or formed tracks are present on this allotment within the project site. The existing transmission line easement also bisects Lot 9.

Lot 442 is currently used for grazing. One dam is present and this has been excluded from the development footprint (non-development zone 9 on Figure S2). Lot 442 has patches of remnant vegetation in its northeastern corner and in the central and southern parts of the block, which have been excluded from the development footprint (nondevelopment zones 10, 11 and 12 on Figure S2). A small number of paddock trees are also present and will be removed.

No built structures are present on this allotment within the project site. An old quarry (Thomas Pit) is present just south of the southern boundary of this allotment. A dirt track leads south across the allotment towards the quarry from an entrance gate on Paytens Bridge Road. The proposed access point to the southern section of the project is located at the existing entrance gate (see Figure S2).

Five scattered residences (R1 to R5) are at a distance of 0.32 m to 1.74 km from the development footprint, as shown in Figure S3. An additional nine residences (R6 to R14) are located between 2 km and 5 km of the site.



Ν

- Project site Lot boundary Substation Exclusion zone Residence - ass
 - Residence associated
- Residence non-associated
- Project site access point
 - State Forest

- 1 km radius from project site 2 km radius from project site
- 5 km radius from project site
- Main watercourse
- Watercourse tributary
 - Existing transmission line
- Contour AHD (10 m interval)
 - Contour AHD (2 m interval)

AE1173.1 Peninsula SF Figure S3. Sensitive receivers and topography Created: 18/03/2022 CRS: GDA 1994 MGA Zone 55 Page size: A4 Additional data: NSW RoadSegment, NSW Hydroline, NSW_Six_Forbes_Cadastral_data



ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Due to the long history of grazing and cropping activities native vegetation is largely absent from the project site. Remnant vegetation patches within the project site are generally associated with the presence of undulating rises and have been excluded from the disturbance footprint (see Figure 2.1).

The wider landscape also consists largely of land historically cleared for agriculture, with vegetation (other than grassland) predominantly found on undulating hills, surrounding dwellings, and along road reserves, drainage lines and fencelines.

Pre-clearing vegetation communities within the project site were identified during the biodiversity survey (OzArk 2022) and are listed in Table 2.2, along with their current condition.

Edify has undertaken a process of constraints and opportunities analysis to identify potential development sites in NSW and other states. This process has included consideration of factors such as regulatory settings for energy projects, solar irradiation levels, access to and capacity of existing energy grids, potential for land acquisition, land suitability and the need to minimise environmental and social impacts. Therefore, avoidance and minimisation of impacts, such as clearance of native vegetation, was initially achieved through appropriate site selection. The region in which the project is located, the Central West region of NSW, has been selected primarily due to its proximity to one of NSW's renewable energy zones (REZs) – the Central-West Orana REZ. Within this region the location of the project site has been constrained by the need to be as close as possible to an existing transmission line with capacity to accept electricity from the Peninsula SF.

Operating within these constraints, Edify searched for a site that not only meets construction and operational requirements (such as suitable topography and accessibility by major transport routes) but has low environmental values and limited potential for adverse community impact. The project site meets these selection criteria. In addition, land use conflicts with existing surrounding land uses are minimal and agricultural land use is expected to be able to be restored at the end of project life.

As Edify is considering the option of a decentralised BESS configuration where smaller BESS groupings would be distributed around the site, there is a degree of flexibility in siting these groupings within the project footprint. Accordingly, during the EIS study period, potential BESS unit locations were evaluated to establish minimum allowable distances from nearest sensitive receivers, primarily to minimise noise impacts from inverters. These locational constraints will be key inputs to the detailed design phase, should the decentralised BESS configuration be chosen. Furthermore, Edify has some additional flexibility when choosing the location for the substation (and the centralised BESS option should this be chosen). During the EIS study period, western and eastern locations proximal to the existing 132 kV transmission line were evaluated in relation to noise, potential flood risk, visual impacts and other factors which resulted in the eastern location option being adopted.

Edify also recognised that the location of some of the solar infrastructure in the northernmost part of the site could visually impact the nearest residence, R1, and also adversely impact on a vegetation community and threatened species. Accordingly, after assessing the visual impact, Edify decided not to develop a section of Lot 441 to minimise visual impacts on that sensitive receiver. Following the biodiversity surveys, Edify also decided to minimise impacts on native vegetation by excluding development along part of the eastern fenceline at the northern end of Lot 441 (non-development zone 1).

Additional areas within the project site were excluded from development, primarily to avoid impacts on areas of biodiversity value. A total of twelve non-development zones have been designated within the project site, as shown in Figure S2.



Photo S2 Looking southeast from the site with Forbes-Cowra Transmission line The selection of BESS technology during the detailed design phase will provide a further opportunity to reduce environmental risk. The controls and safeguards that the BESS units are equipped with, or that are added by Edify, will be an important design consideration. Such measures are likely to include ventilation systems and fire prevention or control features.

The site is of a scale that allows for flexibility in design, thereby allowing Edify to avoid ecological and other constraints that may be identified during the EIS process.

The long-term lease arrangements for Lot 441 and Lot 442 ensure the landowners maintain their participation in the community. A final alternative that was considered was for the project not to proceed (the 'do nothing' approach). If this were to occur, then the benefits outlined in Section 8 would be forgone.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Edify has prepared a high-level Community and Stakeholder Engagement Plan to guide consultation during the EIS process and the approvals phase of the project. The plan includes various methods of information dissemination (such as letter box drops and face-to-face meetings with local landholders) and opportunities for stakeholder engagement at key project milestones. The consultation program has included a four-stage Aboriginal consultation process which is being undertaken in accordance with the *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Consultation Requirements* (ACHCRs).

The Forbes Shire Council, State agencies and the community are generally supportive of the project to date.

Edify will continue undertaking community engagement throughout the development, operation and eventual decommissioning of the project, including during the EIS exhibition and review period.

Project information has been provided on the Peninsula SF website <u>https://edifyenergy.com/project/peninsula-solar-power-station</u>.

The website includes an up-to-date overview of the project and offers stakeholders the opportunity to provide feedback on the project or raise concerns via a contact form.

ASSESSMENT AND MITIGATION OF IMPACTS

Project issues and risks

The Peninsula SF project may result in a number of potential environmental and social impacts, both positive and negative. The nature and extent of these potential impacts has been assessed during the EIS process and avoidance, management and mitigation measures have been incorporated into project design, construction, operation and eventual decommissioning.

Nine higher priority issues that required assessment during the preparation of the EIS were identified, as follows:

- potential impacts on biodiversity such as plant communities and threatened and endangered species
- potential disturbance of Aboriginal cultural heritage
- potential impacts on land use and capability
- · potential impacts on watercourses and hydrology
- potential traffic and transport impacts, particularly on local roads
- potential noise impacts on nearest sensitive receivers
- potential impacts on visual amenity for the nearest sensitive receivers
- hazards associated with the operation of BESS units
- social and economic impacts (positive and negative), particularly on the local community.

The project also considered a number of other issues including:

- · potential impacts of waste on the environment
- the cumulative impacts of the project and other developments in the region.

Biodiversity

A biodiversity assessment was undertaken and a biodiversity development assessment report (BDAR) was prepared for the project. The project site has been subjected to extensive historical clearing, and non-development zones have been designated by Edify within the project site to exclude most of the remaining native vegetation from projectrelated disturbance. Consequently, biodiversity impacts have been substantially reduced due to site selection and design. Vegetation to be disturbed consists primarily of isolated paddock trees, derived grassland and non-native vegetation. This includes the removal of up to 56.55 ha of native vegetation from two plant community types (PCTs) (PCT 267 and 282), as shown on Figure S4. The PCTs meet the condition criteria to be considered critically endangered ecological communities under the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016. Additionally, one vegetation zone was found to meet the threshold criteria for listing under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cwlth). No threatened flora species were recorded during surveys of relevant habitat and no impacts to threatened flora are therefore anticipated.

In addition to the ecosystem species generated by the biodiversity assessment method (BAM), two species credit species (Superb Parrot and Masked Owl) have been assumed to be present on the site, although only the Superb Parrot was observed during field surveys



Figure S4

Plant community types and vegetation zones identified during the vegetation survey

Offsetting is required for 278 ecosystem credits and 214 species credits.

Due to the largely cleared nature of the project site and the approach being implemented by Edify to avoid, minimise and mitigate disturbance (including proposed offsetting), impacts on biodiversity as a result of the project are expected to be minor compared with many comparably sized projects.

Cultural heritage

ABORIGINAL CULTURAL HERITAGE

The project will have an impact to Aboriginal cultural heritage values as one Aboriginal site was recorded. This artefact was identified as having high social or cultural value but low archaeological/scientific and aesthetic value and nil historical value. The artefact will be retrieved following project approval and moved to a location where it will not be impacted by the project.

With regards to intangible heritage, no specific locations were identified by the Aboriginal community within the study area as having intangible cultural significance.

HISTORIC HERITAGE

The project is not expected to result in any significant impacts on historic heritage. One item of historic heritage identified during the assessment was assessed as having no historic heritage significance under the current Heritage NSW guidelines and the Burra Charter.

Land

More than half of the project site is mapped as land and soil capability (LSC) Class 5 (moderate to low) and Class 4 (moderate), although 46.0% of the site is Class 3 (high). The nearest biophysical strategic agricultural land (BSAL) is located approximately 70 km southeast of the site.

Direct and indirect project impacts on soils, land use and agriculture are expected to be largely confined to the disturbance areas of the project site, limited in magnitude and largely reversible, provided that the proposed land management measures are implemented effectively. In particular, effective management of erosion risk during construction, drainage management during construction and operation, weed and pest species control during construction and operation, and a strong emphasis on site rehabilitation at the end of project life are required to avoid long term impacts.

The project is considered to represent a temporary change in rural land use that is compatible with the existing use of the project site for power transmission. No major land use conflicts were identified.

Water

The assessment of water and water resource impacts has identified only minor project impacts. Changes to site hydrology will be minor and reversible, although runoff controls will be required to minimise erosion risk. No impacts on groundwater are anticipated and risks to water quality are expected to be readily manageable. Modelling indicates that the project site will have no impact on flooding, as the footprint is located on the floodplain where water velocity is low. Water use during construction and operation will be minor, with water supplied from off site.

Traffic and transport

Paytens Bridge Road in the vicinity of the project site may experience an increase in traffic volumes of up to 20% during the peak construction period. This additional traffic can be comfortably accommodated without any material impact on the operation or safety of this road, although some road maintenance may be required. No turn treatments are considered to be required at the site access points to accommodate construction traffic and no line-of-site issues were identified. A basic right turn (BAR) treatment is proposed at the intersection of Lachlan Valley Way/Paytens Bridge Road.

Traffic impacts during operation will be negligible. Impacts during decommissioning are expected to be generally comparable to construction, although likely extending over a shorter period.

Noise and vibration

Noise levels during construction are predicted to comply with noise criteria. Increases in traffic noise will be minor and will not require mitigation.

Noise during operation is predicted to comply with noise criteria given that the eastern substation option has been adopted and inverters are located greater than specified minimum distances from receivers.

Vibration impacts during construction and operation are expected to be negligible.

Visual amenity

The project facilities are expected to be visible from the surrounds of three nearby sensitive receivers (residences R1, R2 and R4). However, visual impacts from within the residential compounds are expected to be negligible, provided that development is excluded, as proposed, from the northernmost area of the site. Visual impacts from local roads will be moderate to low and no mitigation is proposed. Figures S5 and S6 show views of the site from Paytens Bridge Road. Figure S5 presents the current view and Figure S6 presents the simulated view of solar infrastructure.

Hazards

A Preliminary Hazard Analysis (PHA) has been undertaken in accordance with applicable guidelines and has considered risks such as radiant heat exposure from a BESS fire, overpressure impacts from a BESS explosion, stored chemicals, and electromagnetic fields (EMFs).

The PHA has shown that risks to the public associated with the operation of the solar farm (including the BESS units) can be effectively managed by establishing appropriate separation distances between the units and the site boundary.

Bushfire risk can be effectively managed by implementing appropriate fire prevention and control measures in consultation with Fire and Rescue NSW and the NSW Rural Fire Service.



Figure S5 Current view of proposed Peninsula SF project site looking southwest from Paytens Bridge Road



Figure S6 Simulated view of proposed Peninsula SF project site looking southwest from Paytens Bridge Road

Socio-economic

The social and economic impacts of the project are expected to be positive at a state level in relation to the transition to renewable energy, and the level of investment. At a local and regional level, positive impacts will include employment and commercial opportunities (particularly during construction), and the multiplier effect i.e. the additional economic benefit accrued to the area from money being spent in the local economy. Potential adverse social impacts include reduced availability of local accommodation and services during construction due to a proportion of the workforce moving into the Forbes region from other locations.

Waste management

The project will generate a range of wastes during construction, operation and decommissioning which will be managed as far as practicable in accordance with the waste hierarchy and applicable legislation and guidelines. Many of the wastes generated are expected to be suitable for reuse or recycling. Edify is committed to recycling the solar panels and the lithium-ion batteries used in the project, where recycling opportunities exist, when they have reached the end of their life. Accordingly, no significant environmental impacts are anticipated in relation to waste management and disposal.

Cumulative impacts

There are currently eight approved or proposed energy-related SSDs in the region listed on the DPE Major Projects website in addition to the Peninsula SF. If these or other projects are developed at the same time as the Peninsula SF, then there is the potential for cumulative impacts on aspects such as land use, noise, traffic and the availability of local accommodation and services.

Cumulative impacts on aspects such as land use, noise and traffic are difficult to predict and quantify due to the uncertain timeframes of other potential developments in the region. However, such impacts will be restricted to the project's construction period, which is estimated to be approximately 16-months, given that the potential for cumulative impacts during operations will be negligible.

STRATEGIC JUSTIFICATION

By supporting the development of renewable energy, the project demonstrates consistency with strategic Commonwealth and State government objectives in relation to the transition from fossil fuel-based energy generation to renewable energy, including:

- the Australian Government's recent commitment to achieve net zero GHG emissions by 2050
- The NSW Government's commitment to deliver a 35% cut in emissions by 2030 under its Net Zero Plan Stage 1: 2020-2030
- The NSW Government's commitment to deliver 12 GW of network capacity within the five declared Renewable Energy Zones (REZs) under the *Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020 (NSW)*. The Peninsula SF project is located within the Central-West Orana REZ.

At a regional level, the proposed project is consistent with the aims of the Forbes LEP 2013 including in relation to meeting encouraging and managing ecologically sustainable development (ESD) in Forbes.

The NSW Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000 requires the EIS to include justifications for the development, with regard to biophysical, economic and social considerations, including the principles of ESD. The project is consistent with these principles as described in the regulation.

Although the land within the project site is zoned RU1 Primary Production, State Environmental Planning Policy (Infrastructure) 2007 allows for the development, with consent, of electricity generating works in a prescribed rural zone.

PROJECT BENEFITS

The Peninsula SF project is expected to provide the following benefits:

- providing renewable generating capacity to the electricity grid
- · providing reliability and security to the electricity grid
- providing firming capacity in the transition to renewable energy from fossil fuel generation
- employment opportunities, mainly during construction, including engagement of local contractors and materials and service providers
- increasing the capacity and experience of local workforce, contractors and service providers
- local business stimulus.

A 'do nothing' approach would forgo the benefits of the project outlined above. The project is assessed as having significant socio-economic benefits and low to negligible environmental impacts when appropriate management and mitigation measures are implemented. Not proceeding with the proposal would result in:

- the loss of a source of renewable energy that would assist the Australian and NSW Governments to reach their targets
- the loss of cleaner energy and reduced greenhouse gas emissions
- the loss of a source of additional electricity generation and supply into the grid
- the loss of social and economic benefit through the provision of direct and indirect employment and economic stimulus.

The 'do nothing' approach would avoid adverse impacts. However, the benefits of the proposed Peninsula SF outweigh such impacts.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the EIS and the outcomes of community engagement, the project is expected to be a relatively low impact development due to the relatively simple project rehabilitation at the endof-life (e.g. in comparison to a mine or quarry which normally require extensive end-of-life rehabilitation), and the project's location on land that has been substantially disturbed by agricultural and grazing activities, is adjacent to existing electrical infrastructure, and is remote from areas of high environmental sensitivity.

The project site does not have high environmental values. The land is neither regionally nor locally unique and is surrounded by comparable land in terms of topography, hydrology, soils, vegetation and land use. At the end of the project life, it is expected that rehabilitation will return the land to its current agricultural use. In addition, Edify is considering the potential for the site to accommodate 'agrisolar' use – the grazing of sheep among and beneath the solar panels. The project therefore involves the temporary loss of a relatively small area of land (estimated to be 290 ha) within a broad and consistent landscape.

The operation of the Peninsula SF will require very little handling of hazardous materials and will generate very little hazardous pollution or waste, other than the eventual removal of the solar panels, lithium-ion batteries and other infrastructure (which are expected to be mostly recovered/recycled) at the end of their operational life. The project is expected to result in significant benefits to the local community and NSW by generating economic activity and contributing to the transition to cleaner electricity generation and increased energy security. This page has been deliberately left blank

