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Department of Planning and Environment
Major Projects Planning Portal

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Tallawang Solar Farm, BESS and temporary accommodation camp (SSD-23700028) (Mid-Western Regional and Warrumbungle Shire Councils) Submissions Report and Amendment Report

Dear Sir

Thank you for your correspondence of 4 June 2024 and the opportunity to provide comment on the Amendment and Response to Submissions Report and Appendices for the Tallawang Solar and BESS project.

The NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) Agriculture collaborates and partners with our stakeholders to protect and enhance the productive and sustainable use and resilience of agricultural resources and the environment.

NSW DPI has reviewed the Amendment Report, Submissions Report and Appendices, prepared by Umwelt Pty Ltd, dated May 2024. NSW DPI acknowledges proposed amendments to the project now include an increase in development footprint to 1016ha from 866ha and inclusion of a 400 room Temporary Workers Accommodation facility on the site.

The matters concerning agriculture raised in our previous advice of 28 November 2022 (OUT22/20999) in response to the EIS have been partially addressed. Our comments and recommendations for consent documents are provided below:

- Agricultural productivity was assessed in the Amendment Report using ABS data that results in \$/ha figures that are regarded as an underestimation. It should be noted that by comparison, DPI gross margins conservatively indicate livestock production across the entire site to be more lucrative than suggested in the Amendment Report.
- We note the continued reference to 'sheep grazing' to justify (in part) the solar project on 1,371ha of agricultural land is without evidence of such an undertaking, with the Amendment Report maintaining that a Sheep Grazing Management Plan is yet to be prepared.
- Our advice of 28 November 2022 suggested that groundcover on the project site be maintained at a minimum of 70% to prevent soil erosion, to be managed through a

groundcover management plan. If a Sheep Grazing Management Plan is to be prepared, other issues such as agricultural biosecurity, weed and pest control, and land use conflict with surrounding land will also need to be addressed.

- Where sheep grazing will form part of the groundcover management of the solar farm area, it is recommended that the agricultural productivity of the site (including carrying capacity, stock numbers from current farm records) along with land and soil capability assessment and prevailing climatic conditions are established as a baseline and then reported annually in line with the 70% target to determine the efficacy of land management and rehabilitation objectives.
- Conversely if the site will not be used for agricultural purposes, it should be reiterated that a minimum of 70% groundcover be maintained to prevent soil erosion through the development of a groundcover management plan.
- We note the management of construction and operation activities through implementation of Construction and Operational Environmental Management Plans. Issues of farm biosecurity, weed and pest control and land use conflict with adjoining land also need to be addressed in these documents.
- In relation to decommissioning and rehabilitation it is NSW DPI's recommendation that underground infrastructure is removed to a depth of at least 500mm to enable continuation of agricultural activities post development, where the risk of erosion and ground disturbance is low.

Should you require clarification on any of the information contained in this response, please do not hesitate to contact me on 0487 023 845 or by email at landuse.ag@dpi.nsw.gov.au.

Sincerely



Nita Scott
Agricultural Land Use Planner
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11 June 2024