

APPENDIX C CONSULTATION

C.1 COMMUNITY CONSULTATION PLAN

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AGL

Community Consultation Plan

NYNGAN SOLAR PLANT

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ABN: 31 124 444 622

suite 1, 216 carp st (po box 470) bega nsw 2550 australia t 61 2 6492 8333

www.nghenvironmental.com.au e ngH@nghenvironmental.com.au

unit 17, 27 yallourn st (po box 1037)
fyshwick act 2609 australia
t 61 2 6280 5053 f 61 2 6280 9387

unit 18, level 3, 21 mary st
surry hills nsw 2010 australia
t 61 2 8202 8333

suite 1, 39 fitzmaurice st (po box 5464)
wagga wagga nsw 2650 australia
t 61 2 6971 9696 f 61 2 6971 9693

suite 7, 5/18 griffin dr (po box 1037)
dunsborough wa 6281 australia
t 61 8 9759 1985

CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	2
1.1	BACKGROUND	2
1.2	CONSULTATION OBJECTIVES.....	2
2	KEY STAKEHOLDERS	3
3	RISKS, OPPORTUNITIES AND STRATEGIES	5
4	COMMUNICATION FRAMEWORK AND STAGING	7
5	CONCLUSION	9
6	REFERENCES.....	10

TABLES

Table 2-1 Stakeholder groups	3
Table 3-1 Risks, opportunities and strategies to address them.....	5
Table 4-1 Communication activities by stage of project.....	7

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

AGL Energy Limited (AGL) has been selected by the Commonwealth Government as the successful proponent in the solar photovoltaic (PV) category of the Solar Flagships Program independent reassessment process. As part of this program, AGL, together with First Solar (Australia) Pty Ltd (First Solar), propose to construct a solar plant at Nyngan, with a generating capacity of up to 106MW.

The project site is located in Central West NSW, approximately 7.6 km west of the Nyngan township. The project is entirely within the Bogan Shire local government area (LGA) and comprises rural land. The project site is located on one land parcel, north of the Barrier Highway, Nyngan (Lot 34, DP751328).

Approximately 300 hectares of land is required for the solar plant. The project site has an elevation of approximately 175 to 178 metres Australian Height Datum (AHD) across the site and is on a cleared, relatively flat area. The surroundings of the site comprise predominantly rural activities on large holdings. There are few rural residential properties scattered throughout the Bogan LGA.

Along with the PV plant, the proposed development would include the installation and operation of a 132kV transmission line, approximately 3 km in length. Four land parcels would be traversed by the 132kV line including two private rural land holdings (Lot 24, DP751328 and Lot 8, DP724628), one Crown Land parcel (Lot 7300, DP1156652) and the Barrier Highway Road Reserve.

1.2 CONSULTATION OBJECTIVES

This Community Consultation Plan (the Plan) provides a framework for the establishment of a positive working relationship with the local community, commencing early in the assessment stage of the proposal. It aims to provide an effective, meaningful and inclusive approach for community consultation activities.

The Plan aims to identify and address potential risks regarding community acceptance and involvement with the project. Specifically, the objectives of the Plan are to:

- Identify the key community stakeholders relevant to the proposal (refer to Section 2).
- Identify risks and opportunities with regard to community consultation (refer to Section 3).
- Establish a frame-work for a two-way flow of information between the stakeholders and AGL, throughout the assessment and submission process, to specifically:
 - o Provide factual and up to date information in relation to the proposal (including identified positive and negative impacts).
 - o Receive feedback on the proposal and the existing values of the area, to assist identify and mitigate impacts.
 - o Keep the community abreast of changes to the proposal, relative to the stage of the project (refer to Section 4).

2 KEY STAKEHOLDERS

The key community stakeholders associated with this project will include a broad spectrum of local community groups and individual members of the community, including nearby residents. Table 2.1 identifies who are considered to be the key stakeholders at this point in time.

Note:

- Additional stakeholders may be identified during the development of the proposal.
- This Plan considers only community stakeholders (government agencies are not included).

Table 2-1 Stakeholder groups

Stakeholder group	Specific stakeholders
Involved landholders Landholders upon whose property solar plant infrastructure may be located.	There are two involved landowner's properties.
Nearby residents Residents located adjacent to the subject site which may experience a moderate to high level of direct impact during construction or operation of the solar plant (e.g. visual impact, noise and traffic).	There are no residences located within 1km of the subject site. The closest residence is located 1.3km from the subject site.
Surrounding landowners, residents and community groups Residents in the locality (i.e. within 5-10km) which may experience a lower level of direct impact during construction or operation of the solar plant (i.e. visual impact, noise and traffic) or indirect impacts on recreational activities. Local residents within the Shire which may not be affected by the project but may have an interest in it.	There are approximately 14 rural homesteads within 10km of the subject site. Most of the Nyngan townsite is located within 10km of the subject site including a caravan park, hospital, high school, nursing home, primary school and TAFE.
Business operators and groups Business operators and employees in the locality (i.e. within 5-10km) which may experience indirect impacts on business operations (e.g. increased trade during construction). Local residents within the Shire which may not be affected by the project but may have an interest in it.	Bogan Community Tourism and Business Group The majority of the Nyngan township is located within 10km of the subject site, including several accommodation and restaurant facilities.
Indigenous groups Members of the Aboriginal community who may have an interest in the project and its potential impacts on Aboriginal heritage.	Ngiyambaa Aboriginal people Nyngan Local Aboriginal Land Council Bogan Aboriginal Corporation

Stakeholder group	Specific stakeholders
Special interest groups Groups such as sporting groups, wildlife groups, etc. that may have an interest in the area and the project.	Sports clubs Birdwatchers groups
Broader community Residents or visitors to the region (i.e. within 20km) which may have an interest in the project.	

3 RISKS, OPPORTUNITIES AND STRATEGIES

Solar plants can have a range of impacts on the community. It is important that dialogue is established early in the project to address real and perceived impacts and take advantage of opportunities to increase the amount of involvement the community can have in the development of the proposal. Mitigation strategies have been developed within Table 3.1, specific to identified issues.

Table 3-1 Risks, opportunities and strategies to address them

Issue	Risks and opportunities	General strategies	Proposed activities (target stakeholders)
Incorrect assumptions made about types and levels of impact.	Solar plants are a relatively new type of development, particularly in regional areas. Misinformation can spread quickly. This can create undue alarm and draw attention away from project specific issues.	Relay information about solar plants generally, early in the project. Relay information about project specific issues/developments, as early as possible in the project. Keep direct communication channels open throughout the assessment and development stages of the project. Ensure Council and local elected members are aware of the project, timeline and proposed consultation activities.	Advertisement in local media to introduce the project and provide a contact (broader community). Open house to introduce the project and establish communication channels (broader community). Briefing local council members (broader community). Face to face meetings to discuss specific issues (nearby residents). Establish website for project updates (all stakeholders).
Local knowledge and values overlooked.	While environmental assessments are carried out resourcing the most up to date information available and include assessments of the site and surrounding area, some local knowledge may only be available through the community itself. Important community values could be overlooked. Community input into identifying and mitigating impacts is an opportunity at all stages of the project.	Establish two-way communication channels and keep them open throughout the assessment and development stages of the project. Prompt the community to identify their issues / concerns and suggest mitigation strategies, as part of the assessment process.	Open house to include a feedback form prompting community input (broader community). Face to face meetings to discuss specific issues (nearby residents, special interest groups). Establish website for project updates (all stakeholders). Specific consultation and notification process (Aboriginal community).

Issue	Risks and opportunities	General strategies	Proposed activities (target stakeholders)
Confusion about assessment timeline and level of input that can be provided by the community.	Unless stakeholders are clear about their ability to contribute to the project (including how much input they can have and when), stakeholders can become apathetic or cynical about the project.	Provide clear timelines about the assessment process, showing where community input will be sought. Be clear about the level of community input that will be sought and how it will be considered.	Fact Sheets / Newsletters (all stakeholders) can be used to explain these issues.
Confusion about assessment process.	The assessment process can be complex. Stakeholders can become apathetic or cynical about the project if they are not engaged.	Provide information about specific stages of the project including timelines, approvals and negotiable components of the project.	Fact Sheets / Newsletters (all stakeholders) can be used to explain these issues. Advertise upcoming events or milestones.
Complexity in general.	The complexity of environmental assessment documentation and process can be a barrier to many stakeholders.	Keep all documentation prepared for the community as plain spoken as possible. Keep all assessments as plain spoken as possible, referring to the detail in technical appendices when necessary. Ensure information is consistently communicated.	Fact Sheets / Newsletters (all stakeholders) can be used to explain detail about key issues or updates to the project. Environmental assessment documentation should be edited thoroughly to ensure readability. A simple executive summary should be provided.
Large development proposed by an external party	The size of the project is large for the local area. There can sometimes be mistrust of the developers, if they are an unknown entity.	Provide the community with information about AGL Energy and the project.	Advertisement in local media to introduce AGL (broader community). Open house to introduce AGL (broader community). Briefing local council members (broader community).

4 COMMUNICATION FRAMEWORK AND STAGING

A range of activities are identified above in Section 3. This section orders the proposed activities by stage of the project and elaborates on the aim of each activity. It is intended to be adapted, as the project progresses, to improve the ability of the project to address the aims identified.

Table 4-1 Communication activities by stage of project

Project Stage	Aim	Activity	Comments
ASSESSMENT STAGE			
Early site investigations	Introduce the project and AGL.	Face to face meetings to discuss specific issues (nearby residents).	Stakeholders with potential for the greatest impact should be contacted early and directly.
	Provide information on solar plants.	Advertisement in local media to introduce the project and provide a contact (broader community).	
	Provide information on assessment process and opportunities for community input.	Establish website for project updates (all stakeholders).	Broader information should be provided soon thereafter, to circumvent misinformation.
	Start Aboriginal heritage notification process.	Briefing local council members (broader community).	
		Archaeologist to commence notification process prior to any field assessment (Aboriginal community).	
	Relay results of early investigations and general project description.	Open house to present results of early investigations and seek community input (broader community).	
	Seek community input in identifying and mitigating impacts.	A feedback form prompting community input (broader community) in specific areas should be included. A key impact area in this regard is visual amenity: the community should be asked to identify visual values of the area and state how they would perceive the visual impact of the solar plant.	The open house is an opportunity to discuss issues in small groups or one on one with specialists. A drop in format over several hours with presentation aids is preferable to a formal presentation. This requires higher staffing levels but avoids the potential for the event to be hijacked by the most vocal attendees.
	Ensure that the assessment process and timelines are understood.	Face to face meetings to discuss specific issues (nearby residents, any special interest groups that will be affected).	
Detailed assessment and refinement of project description	Relay results of final investigations and revised project description.	A second open house may be warranted if significant issues are identified or significant project revisions are anticipated.	
	Ensure that the assessment process and timelines are understood.	A second open house provides the opportunity to demonstrate how community input has been incorporated and how key impacts have been addressed. This can increase community acceptance of the project (broader community).	
		Disseminate newsletter updates / fact sheets regarding key issues (broader	

Project Stage	Aim	Activity	Comments
		community). Maintain website (broader community).	
SUBMIT FOR PUBLIC EXHIBITION			
Environmental assessment on public exhibition	Ensure that the assessment process and timelines are understood.	Advertisement in local media (broader community). Disseminate newsletter updates (broader community). Maintain website (broader community).	The location of the environmental assessment and time frames to comment on it should be made clear. Additional points of contact, such as directly to the Dept. Planning, can be provided.
SUBMIT FINAL PROJECT FOR APPROVAL, ADDRESSING ALL AGENCY AND PUBLIC SUBMISSIONS			
Submissions Report on public exhibition	Ensure that the assessment process and timelines are understood.	Advertisement in local media (broader community). Disseminate newsletter updates (broader community). Maintain website (broader community).	The location of the Submissions Report should be made clear.
CONSTRUCTION, IF APPROVED			
Pre construction	Ensure that the construction timeline is understood.	Advertisement in local media (broader community). Maintain website (broader community).	This may include a call for tenders, to maximise local employment opportunities.
Construction	Ensure that complaints response is developed.	Signage onsite, maintain website, in accordance with broader complaints response protocols (broader community).	Dependent on the results of the environmental assessment, some additional strategies may be required for specific receivers (i.e. noise level compliance).
OPERATION, IF APPROVED			
Operation	Ensure that complaints response is continued.	Signage onsite, maintain website, in accordance with broader complaints response protocols (broader community).	

5 CONCLUSION

This Plan has been prepared to identify community risks and opportunities with regard to the development of the Nyngan Solar Plant. It identifies the different community stakeholder groups. Community engagement activities have been developed specifically and associated with the relevant stage of the project: from early investigations through to the operation of the facility, pending project approval.

Demonstrating where community input has influenced the assessment and design of the project is a key opportunity to maximise community acceptance of the project. This can occur through many of the activities outlined in Section 4.

6 REFERENCES

Bogan Shire Council 2012. Bogan Shire Council, NSW, viewed May 2012 <http://www.bogan.nsw.gov.au/>

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