

APPENDIX C CONSULTATION

C.1 DEPARTMENTAL CONSULTATION



Mr Christophe Leonard
International Development Manager
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60 Park Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Contact: Anna Timbrell
Phone: (02) 9228 6345
Email: Anna.Timbrell@planning.nsw.gov.au

Our ref: SSD 6604

Dear Mr Leonard

Subject: Griffith Solar Farm (SSD 6604) – Revised Project Scope

I refer to your correspondence dated 28 September 2015 enclosing a revised scoping report for the Griffith Solar Farm.

I note the changes to your proposal that include an increase in the proposed capacity of the solar farm from 30 MVA to 110 MVA and an increase in site coverage from approximately 55 hectares to 120 hectares. I also note that the revised proposal remains within the existing site previously identified in the original scoping study dated May 2014.

The Department has reviewed your revised scoping study and concludes that the existing Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs), issued by the Secretary on 26 August 2014 remain relevant.

If you have any queries regarding these matters, please do not hesitate to contact the planner, Ms Anna Timbrell, on the above contact details.

Yours sincerely

Mike Young
A/Executive Director
Resource Assessments and Business Systems

29.9.15.

Jenny Walsh

From: Anna Timbrell <Anna.Timbrell@planning.nsw.gov.au>
Sent: Friday, 30 October 2015 3:52 PM
To: Jenny Walsh
Cc: Neville Osborne
Subject: RE: SEARs for Griffith Solar Farm (SSD 14-6604) and Parkes Solar Farm (SSD 14-6784)

Hi Jenny

In response to your email yesterday regarding visual and heritage assessment, and your email below regarding flood risk, I advise the following:

Visual Assessment

Your request not to prepare photomontages: Based on the information you provided in your letter, it is difficult for me to determine the necessity of photomontages. Before you dismiss the need to provide photomontages, you should provide some context. Much would depend on the distance of the nearest sensitive receivers, their orientation and impact. It would depend upon how well you present your supporting information demonstrating the impact. In other words once all analysis is proposed you must demonstrate that it would add no additional value.

Heritage

Subsurface excavations: It is my understanding that there is no automatic requirement for test excavations. Rather it is required that appropriate archaeological methodology must be employed for excavations where relevant for PADs.

Flooding

It sounds at face value that Parkes does not present a flood risk based on initial hydrology advice. It is a matter for you to demonstrate this in your report. Regarding your approach at Griffith, I have no problem with your approach, provided again, that your report justifies the approach taken.

Kind regards
Anna

Anna Timbrell

Planning Officer – Resource Assessments
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From: Jenny Walsh [mailto:jenny.w@nghenvironmental.com.au]
Sent: Friday, 30 October 2015 8:24 AM
To: Anna Timbrell
Subject: SEARs for Griffith Solar Farm (SSD 14-6604) and Parkes Solar Farm (SSD 14-6784)

Hi Anna,

I'm sorry to bother you again,

The Griffith and Parkes SEARs both request:

- *an appropriate assessment of potential flooding impacts, undertaken generally in accordance with the principles, processes and guidelines as outlined in the NSW Government Floodplain Development Manual 2005. The study shall consider a full range of potential flood events up to and including the Probable Maximum Flood (PMF) and any local floodplain risk management planning processes.*

For the Parkes site, we have had some initial hydrology advice that flooding would not be an issue as the site is not traversed by a watercourse or in a flood affected area. We have been advised that there would be no benefit in undertaking a flood assessment for the Parkes site, though we would cover off this issue in the EIS.

Is this approach satisfactory for the Parkes Solar Farm EIS?

For Griffith the Council has undertaken a flood study which covers the site (draft report at this stage):

http://www.griffith.nsw.gov.au/cp_content/resources/Floodplain_Minutes_-_Attach_-_Griffith_Main_Drain_J_and_Mirrool_Creek_Catchment_Flood_Study.pdf

An initial look at the study indicates the Griffith site is in the flood fringe. Therefore we propose to assess flooding impacts of the Griffith Solar Farm based on the *Griffith Main Drain J and Mirrool Creek Flood Study 2014* and existing development control definitions, the *NSW Floodplain Development Manual 2005* and the definitions in the WBM report to determine the proposal's impact on flood levels.

This approach would not involve modelling, as we have been advised that the outcome would be similar to our proposed approach. Are you able to advise whether our approach is satisfactory for the Griffith Solar Farm EIS? I could provide a more detailed methodology for the assessment if that helps.

Many thanks,
Jenny

Jenny Walsh | Manager, Central West & Orana

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Jenny Walsh

From: Tim Baker <tim.baker@dpi.nsw.gov.au>
Sent: Friday, 11 December 2015 1:08 PM
To: Jenny Walsh
Subject: Re: Griffith Solar Farm [SSD 14_6604] SEARs

Hi Jenny,

Sorry for the delay in responding to this matter. I can provide the following advice.

- Flood work approvals assessed under the Water Management Act 2000 are generally not required for areas covered by a Council Floodplain Management/Risk Plan. In those areas Council is the relevant regulator. Therefore for this project as it is covered by Councils Flood study I would assume this would be the guiding document initially and Council would need to be consulted for further requirements. As this is an SSD project the requirements of OEH or DP&E would also need to be addressed.
- Where Floodplain Mgt Plans are developed under the WMA Act 2000 OEH is responsible for developing the content of the plans, hence they would be worthwhile contacting to clarify their position.

Please give me a call if you need to discuss further.

Regards

Tim

Tim Baker | Senior Water Regulation Officer
NSW Department of Primary Industries | Water
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On 3 December 2015 at 07:51, Jenny Walsh <jenny.w@nghenvironmental.com.au> wrote:

Hi Wayne and Tim,

NGH Environmental is completing the EIA for the Griffith Solar Farm on behalf of Neoen Australia. DPI provided comments to Dept Planning (attached) and a copy of the SEARs is also attached, which notes the following for WQ, waterways and flooding:

Water Quality, Waterways and Flooding – The EIS must identify likely impacts to the waterways and measures to minimise impacts including:

- an assessment of impacts on surface and ground water sources (both quality and quantity), related infrastructure, adjacent licensed water users, basic landholder rights, watercourses, riparian land, and groundwater dependent ecosystems, and measures proposed to reduce and mitigate these impacts should also be provided;
- details of the design of waterway crossings where such crossings are to be located in third order or higher streams;
- address soil erosion issues and the potential for clearing to create salinity risks;
- an assessment of potential flooding impacts, undertaken generally in accordance the NSW Government *Floodplain Development Manual 2005*, considering a full range of potential flood events up to and including the Probable Maximum Flood (PMF) and any local floodplain risk management planning processes; and
- details of proposed storm water collection, storage and disposal systems including demonstration that surface and ground waters will be protected through adequate design, construction and management.

We have been advised that the Griffith site is outside the 1/100 flood zone in (see attached). And Griffith the Council has undertaken a flood study which covers the site (draft report at this stage):

http://www.griffith.nsw.gov.au/cp_content/resources/Floodplain_Minutes_-_Griffith_Main_Drain_J_and_Mirrool_Creek_Catchment_Flood_Study.pdf. An initial look at the study indicates the Griffith site is in the flood fringe.

As the site is located outside the 1 in 100 year flood zone, is there any requirement to determine the proposal's impact on flood levels? Can you advise how detailed the assessment of potential impacts to flooding needs to be to address the requirement to consider events up to the Probable Maximum Flood?

Many thanks,

Jenny

Jenny Walsh

From: Mathew Vitucci <Mathew.Vitucci@griffith.nsw.gov.au>
Sent: Tuesday, 22 December 2015 10:37 AM
To: Jenny Walsh
Cc: chris.leonard@neoen.com; Joe Rizzo; Kelly McNicol; Erin Cotter; Maurice.MORGAN@rms.nsw.gov.au; Neil Southorn
Subject: Griffith Solar Farm - Council Engineer comments

Jenny,

Council's engineering staff have reviewed the initial proposal for the Griffith Solar Farm. As we discussed last week, the main issue will be achieving 19-metre Semi-Trailer access to the site from the Irrigation Way due to the location of the railway line on the northern side of the road. As semi-trailer access will only be consistently required during the construction phase of the project it can be addressed and managed through the development and implementation of a Construction Management Plan.

I have listed below the major engineering issues Council has identified that should be addressed in regards to the proposed development.

- **Proposed route to the subject site** - Vehicles will be restricted to accessing the site via Irrigation Way and either Hamilton Road, Ross Road or Mirrool Branch Canal Road. Council have inspected the surrounding road network and determined that the alternate routes to the site are unsuitable for the construction traffic.
- **Access across the Railway** - The railway line is located approximately 17-20 metres from Irrigation Way. Austroads and RMS Guidelines require a minimum stacking distance of the length of the largest size vehicle to access the road plus 3.5 metres, therefore a stacking distance of 22.5 metres is required. As this cannot be achieved without major reconstruction of the existing infrastructure, access across the railway will require traffic control based upon an appropriate risk assessment and is subject to the approval of the rail authority (John Holland) and the RMS. Below I have provided some brief comments on how access over the railway line may be achieved.
 - **Restrict Access off Irrigation Way to a Left Turn Only** - Access off Irrigation Way should be restricted to a left turn (vehicles will approach the site from Yoogali). Combined with the construction of a temporary left turn lane, vehicles will be able to stop at the railway line without impacting on the travel lanes of Irrigation Way. The most appropriate location out of Hamilton Road, Ross Road or Mirrool Branch Canal Road should be investigated due to the depth of the table drain in the area and the location of irrigation channels in close proximity to the intersections. The existing condition of the roads should also be considered as both Ross Road and Mirrool Branch Canal Road would not be suitable for the proposed construction traffic without remediation works.
 - **Access onto Irrigation Way** - The proximity of the railway line to Irrigation Way does not allow for the stacking of a semi-trailer. Council staff have investigated several alternate options however access onto Irrigation Way is the preferred route for vehicles leaving the site. The access across the railway will have to be achieved via traffic control based upon a risk assessment factoring the traffic counts along Irrigation Way, the traffic generated during construction and the train timetable for the railway line. Council staff suggest that contact be made with the rail authority (John Holland) to determine their requirements if access is possible.
- **Flooding** - The subject site is flood prone for the Probable Maximum Flooding (PMF) event. Council advise that all electrical outlets and perishable items be kept a minimum 410mm above surrounding finished surface level to minimise the likelihood of damage from flooding.

The above is not an exhaustive list but details the significant issues Council has identified in regards to the development.

I was unable to contact Maurice Morgan from the RMS regarding the proposed development, therefore concurrence from both RMS and John Holland for the above is still required. I recommend that contact be made with John Holland

regarding the proposal, the impact on the railway line and providing access over the railway line without the necessary stacking distance. Similarly the RMS should be contacted in regards to Irrigation Way.

If you require any further information please dont hesitate to contact me.

Regards

Mathew Vitucci
Development Engineer
Griffith City Council

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Jenny Walsh

From: Thomas White <thomas.white@lls.nsw.gov.au>
Sent: Thursday, 14 January 2016 1:16 PM
To: Jenny Walsh
Cc: Peter Beal
Subject: Re: FW: Griffith Solar Farm proposal

Hi Jenny,

Thanks for providing Riverina LLS with the opportunity to comment on the proposed Griffith Solar Farm.

After discussion with key staff, and observations of the site, Riverina LLS has no objections to the proposal, although we anticipate that the following aspects of the development will receive due consideration;

(1) the adjacent woodland remnants, Boree, are an Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (*EPBC Act*) listed endangered ecological community (EEC), therefore any immediate or potential impact requires appropriate action to be taken.

(2) the status of the site in relation to potential disturbance to cultural heritage is carefully considered.

(3) the long term implications of ground disturbance and subsequent exotic or noxious weed growth and spread is carefully considered. This has implications with the introduction of machinery from other locations, with the potential to introduce weeds or other material having severe implications for surrounding areas.

(4) the impacts of water flow across or from the site as a result of construction, infrastructure or other works is carefully considered. Sediment flow into drains, channels or creeks as a result of diversion of water could also result in a significantly perverse outcome.

If there are any other aspects of the development you wish Riverina LLS to provide comment on then please don't hesitate to call.

For more information please call Peter Beal, Team Leader Land Services Lower, on 0269 512508, mob. 0428968249 or email peter.beal@lls.nsw.gov.au

Kind regards,

Tom (A/Manager Land Services)

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On 11 January 2016 at 11:59, Jenny Walsh <jenny.w@ngHENvironmental.com.au> wrote:

Hi Tom,

Thanks for the call. Attached are the environmental assessment requirements from the Department of Planning, which gives you an idea of what will already be covered in the environmental impact assessment for the Griffith Solar Farm.

Many thanks,

Jenny

From: Jenny Walsh
Sent: Thursday, 7 January 2016 5:09 PM
To: 'julie.heath@lls.nsw.gov.au' <julie.heath@lls.nsw.gov.au>
Subject: Griffith Solar Farm proposal

Hi Julie,

Please find attached a letter requesting environmental assessment input from Local Land Services for the proposed Griffith Solar Farm.

Many thanks,

Jenny

Jenny Walsh

From: Martha Dotter <Martha.Dotter@rfs.nsw.gov.au>
Sent: Thursday, 18 February 2016 12:14 PM
To: Jane Blomfield
Subject: Solar Farm Parkes and Griffith

Dear Jane

Further to your letters dated 18 January 2016 regarding RFS comment on the environmental assessment of proposed solar farms at Griffith and Parkes the RFS advises the following:

- Both sites do not appear to be mapped as bush fire prone land.
- The RFS usually responds to requests for comment via the Department of Planning and Environment.
- Should a request for comment be received from the Department of Planning and Environment, it is likely that as the proposal is not located on bush fire prone land that our comments would be limited to:

If the proposal is considered to be at risk of bushfire, the proposal should address the aims and objectives of Planning for Bushfire Protection 2006. This should include a fire management plan to ensure appropriate mitigative measures are developed to reduce the risk of wildfire impacts on the facility, and to address the risk of activities occurring on the site becoming a potential ignition point for fire escaping from the site.

If you have any further inquiries please contact me.

Regards
Martha



Martha Dotter | Development Assessment and Planning Officer | Customer Service & Support Centre
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C.2 COMMUNITY CONSULTATION PLAN

Community Consultation Plan

GRIFFITH SOLAR FARM

MARCH 2016



Document Verification



Project Title:

CCP - Griffith Solar Farm

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Revision	Date	Prepared by (name)	Reviewed by (name)	Approved by (name)
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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 COMMUNITY CONSULTATION PRINCIPLES

Best practice community consultation involves the community in all decision making stages of a project. There is a role for the community from project conception, through the assessment process and on to project development. Effective community consultation has three important functions:

1. It facilitates deeper understanding of issues and decisions required for the project;
2. It improves the quality of decisions made for the project;
3. It allows people to be involved in decisions that affect their lives.

Important community engagement principles for a project include:

- Openness – combats assumptions and misinformation.
- Inclusiveness - consultation should be diverse and representative, not responding only to the most vocal stakeholders.
- Effective communication – requiring trust between parties and tools appropriate to the task.
- A communication strategy – clarity about what is being undertaken:
 - Inform - one way communication to deliver information about the project.
 - Consult - two-way communication to seek input into the project.
 - Collaborate and involve – seek participation in elements of the project design and implementation.
- Early rather than late – to maximise engagement opportunities.
- Accountability – the process should be monitored and evaluated to ensure its aims are being achieved.

1.2 AIM OF THIS PLAN

This Community Consultation Plan (CCP) has been developed for the Griffith Solar Farm.

The aim of the plan is to:

**Identify methods to inform the community about the Griffith Solar Farm
and facilitate engagement with the community.**

The plan identifies:

- Community stakeholders for the project;
- Issues / risks related to the engagement of each stakeholder group;
- A consultation strategy for each stakeholder group;
- A set of activities against the project development time line to facilitate consultation.

Effective engagement will require an understanding of community stakeholders and prioritisation of potential impacts. It also relies on the community understanding the project and specific issues of interest to them, in order to contribute effectively. The focus of the consultation plan will be on providing this understanding and engagement.

The plan has been developed for the early planning and assessment stages of the project.

If the project is approved, consultation will also be required to continue into the construction and operational phases of the project. These phases will require a new or updated plan, to reflect the changed consultation objectives.

1.3 STRUCTURE

The structure of this plan is:

1. Proposal overview
2. Identification of community stakeholders for the project
3. Issue management – what specific issues need consideration
4. Project based activities – what vehicles will be utilised in the consultation process

1.4 RELEVANT GUIDELINES

This CCP has been prepared with reference to the following guidelines / references:

- *Establishing the social licence to operate large scale solar facilities in Australia: Insights from social research for industry*, Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA).
- *Beyond Public Meetings: Connecting community engagement with decision making*, Twyford Consulting 2007.

2 PROPOSAL OVERVIEW

2.1 BACKGROUND

The proposed photovoltaic (PV) Griffith Solar Farm would produce up to 53 megavolt-ampere (MVA) or 60 Megawatts (MW) of electricity. The proposal site is located approximately 7 kilometres south east of Griffith (Figure 2-1), within the Griffith Local Government Area (LGA) and Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area (MIA).

2.2 JUSTIFICATION

The objectives of the Griffith Solar Farm proposal are to:

- Select and develop a site which is suitable for commercial scale solar electricity generation.
- Assist the NSW and Commonwealth Governments to meet Australia's renewable energy targets and other energy and carbon mitigation goals.
- Develop a project which is acceptable to the local community.
- Provide local and regional employment opportunities and other social benefits during construction and operation.
- Provide a clean and renewable energy source to assist in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- Construct a project with minimal adverse environmental impacts.
- Provide electricity generation close to a consumption centre.

The Griffith Solar Farm would meet the proposal objectives and is justified in terms of reducing Australia's greenhouse gas emissions, meeting future energy demands, contributing to Australia's renewable energy targets, supporting a global reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, and contributing to economic development in the Griffith region.

Further detail about the need for the proposal, benefits and justification are provided in Section 2 of the *Griffith Solar Farm Environmental Impact Statement*, prepared by NGH Environmental in 2016.

2.3 PROPOSAL DESCRIPTION

The site is accessed via Irrigation Way, Hamilton Road and Poletta Road (refer Figure 2-2). The solar proposal would connect to the existing Griffith/Yoogali Transgrid substation, located on Hamilton Road to the west of the site.

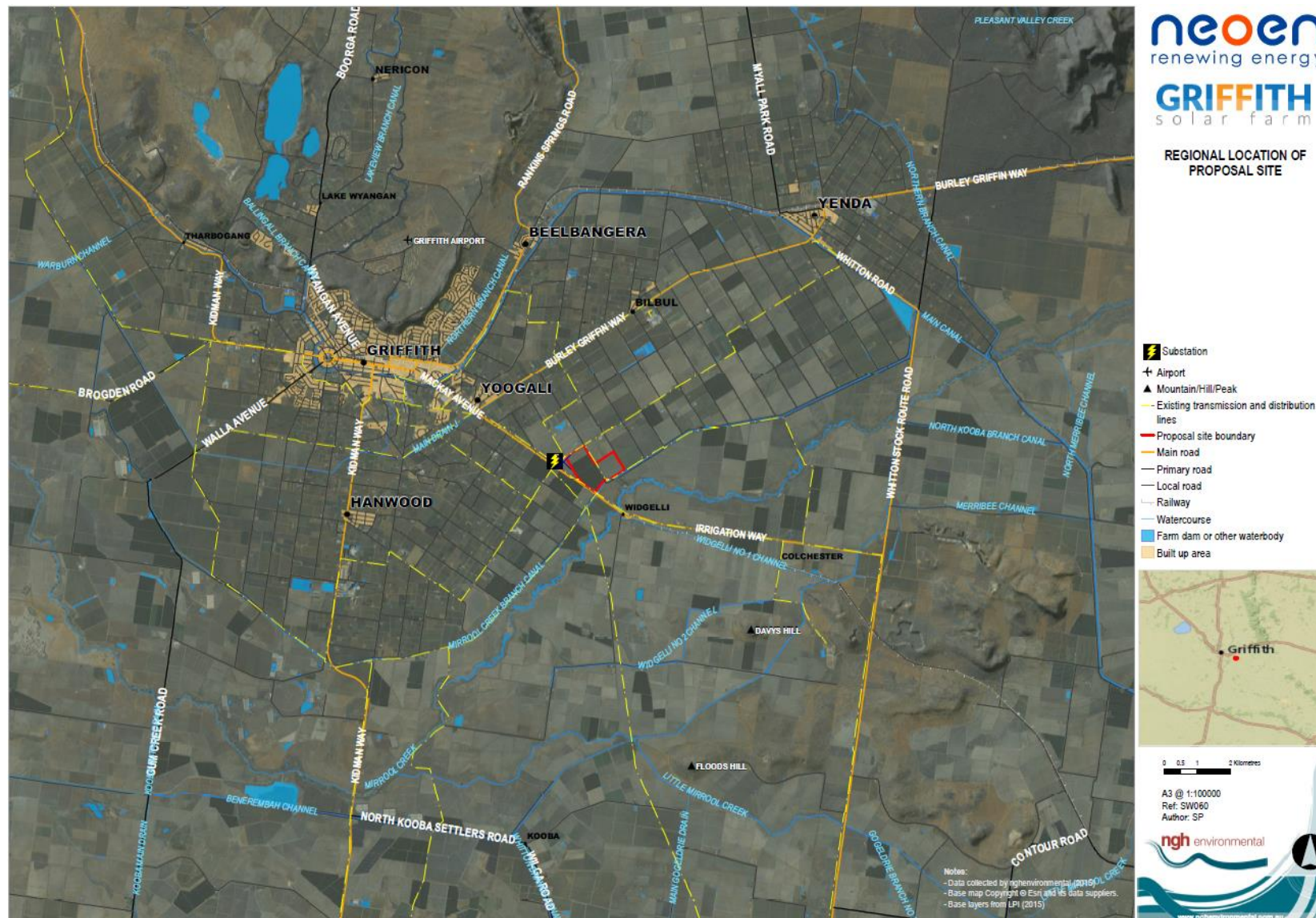


Figure 2-1 Locality map



Figure 2-2 Site layout

The Griffith Solar Farm proposal site covers approximately 125 hectares of land. Key infrastructure components would include:

- Solar arrays: approximately 200,000 solar panels supported by approximately 25,000 piles, driven or screwed into the ground in order to support the solar array's mounting system. The panels to be installed would be either:
 - single-axis tracking panels (which would have approximately 2,650 tracker units)
 - north-oriented fixed-tilt panels
 - east-west facing fixed-tilt panels
 - or a combination of these alternatives.
- Approximately 26 PV boxes or PV skids (either containerised or installed on a 'skid' platform) each of them containing an inverter and a 33kV transformer.
- Onsite cabling and electrical connections between solar arrays and panel inverters.
- One delivery station in a container or on a 'skid' platform (no further voltage step-up being required, the delivery station will not contain any transformer).
- Cables and trenches.
- Internal access tracks to allow for site maintenance vehicles, and gravel access road and parking for staff and visitors.
- Staff amenities and offices.
- Perimeter security fencing, approximately 2.3m high.
- Vegetation buffer.
- A 33kV underground or overhead power line to connect into the existing Griffith/Yoogali Transgrid substation, approximately 300 metres west of the site, on Hamilton Road.

2.3.1 Construction

The construction and commissioning phase is expected to last approximately 9 months. The main construction activities would include:

- Site establishment and preparation for construction (fencing, preliminary civil works and drainage (including removal of two of the three irrigation channels), access road construction, construction services and offices).
- Installation of steel post foundation system for the solar panels.
- Installation of underground cabling (trenching), installation of PV boxes containers and delivery station, connection of communications equipment.
- Construction of the 33kV transmission line (underground or above ground), switch gear and equipment, and interconnection of the generator to the existing Transgrid Griffith/Yoogali electricity substation.
- Removal of temporary construction facilities and rehabilitation of disturbed areas.

Works during construction would be undertaken during standard working hours:

- Monday – Friday 7am to 6pm
- Saturday 8am to 1pm

No night works or work on Sundays or public holidays are proposed. Any construction outside of these standard construction hours would only be undertaken at the request of relevant roads authorities.

During construction, up to 20 trucks a day will deliver equipment on site. A special convoy and a 50T mobile crane may be required for the offloading of larger components.

2.3.2 Operation

Once operational, activities would include:

- Routine visual inspections, general maintenance and cleaning operations of the solar arrays, use of 'drone' technology to enhance maintenance operations.
- Vegetation management. Ground cover vegetation would be maintained beneath panels to resist erosion and weed infestation. A monitoring program would address any bare areas that develop, by seeding or armouring (i.e. jute mesh) to avoid erosion.
- Site security if a security event occurs.
- Replacement of equipment and infrastructure, as required.
- In total, approximately 3000 man-hours of work per year for preventive maintenance.

It is anticipated that standard vehicles would occasionally be parked at the site during normal operation. During major outages, 20-30 vehicles may be present at any one time. Standard work hours would be maintained for standard operational activities.

Daily operations and maintenance by site staff would be undertaken during standard working hours:

- Monday – Friday 7am to 6pm
- Saturday 8am to 1pm

Outside of emergencies, night works or work on Sundays or public holidays are not proposed.

During summer months, the solar farm may continue to produce electricity after 6pm and prior to 7am while the days are longer. In the case that the panels installed are single-axis trackers, the tracker units would potentially operate outside standard working hours during summer months.

2.3.3 Decommissioning

During decommissioning, all above ground infrastructure would be removed. Key elements of project decommissioning would include:

- The solar farm's generator would be disconnected from the Transgrid metering point.
- Removal of all above ground infrastructure.
- All site amenities and equipment would be removed and materials recycled or reused, wherever possible.
- Posts and cabling would be removed and recycled.
- Fencing would be removed (some fencing may be retained, if it is requested by the landowner).

Traffic required for decommissioning would be similar in type but of shorter duration than that required for the construction phase.

2.3.4 Indicative timelines

The indicative timing for the project is outlined in Table 2-1.

Table 2-1 Indicative timing for the Griffith Solar Farm.

Phase	Approximate commencement
Environmental investigations	October 2015
Development Application and submission	March 2016
Public exhibition	March – April 2016
Preconstruction documentation and design	Late 2016
Construction	January 2017
Commissioning	September 2017

3 COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS FOR THE GRIFFITH SOLAR PROJECT

3.1 COMMUNITY PROFILE

3.1.1 Socio-economic profile

The Griffith LGA has a population of 24,364 people (ABS, 2011). This represents a population increase of around 2 per cent since the 2006 Census (23,801 people). The percentage of people of Indigenous origin (4.1 per cent in 2011) is high compared to the Australian average (2.5 per cent in 2011). The overseas immigrant population is slightly smaller than the Australian average of 69.8 per cent; 76 per cent of Griffith's population was born in Australia (ABS, 2011).

The local economy is based on beverage manufacturing, involving 7.3 per cent of the population, and fruit and tree nut growing, involving 5.2 per cent of the population. Other important sectors include retail, health care, education and public administration (ABS, 2011; GCC, 2014). The unemployment rate for Griffith LGA is 4.9 per cent, which is less than the national rate of 5.6 per cent (ABS, 2011).

Griffith is a service centre for the area, it provides:

- A regional airport with two airlines that provide flights to Sydney and Melbourne (Griffith City Council, 2015).
- Accommodation options in the township of Griffith; 10 motels, 12 self-contained cottages/suites, three caravan parks, four hotels, five hostels and one bed and breakfast (Griffith Shire Council, 2015).
- Educational facilities within the Griffith LGA; three high school, 12 primary schools, nine pre-schools. Additionally a TAFE campus, Community College and Skills Training Centre (Griffith City Council, 2015).
- Griffith Base Hospital, which provides facilities for accident/emergency and specialist services including intensive care, surgical and renal dialysis. A new private hospital is currently under construction, which has been assisted by the local community's fundraising. A new aged care facility has recently received development approval (Griffith City Council, 2015).
- Recreational and sporting facilities in Griffith; an indoor swimming pool, 18 hole golf course, racecourse, as well as facilities for touch football, rugby league, rugby union, little athletics, AFL, hockey, cricket, tennis, squash, badminton, basketball, netball, bowls, soccer, archery, sailing, cycling, pony club, and shooting ranges (Griffith City Council, 2015).
- Tourist attractions within the Griffith LGA; La Festa, Festival of Gardens, UnWined, Pioneer Park Museum, Hermits Cave, and Lookout, Cocoparra National Park, Lake Wyangan, Winery Cellar Doors and Altina Wildlife Park (Griffith City Council, 2015).

3.1.2 Community make up and priorities

Community wellbeing is related to the quality of the natural and urban surroundings, socio-economic position, the availability of services and perceptions of safety (Australian State of the Environment, 2006). One measure of 'community' is the willingness of individuals to be involved in volunteer organisations such as the Bush Fire Brigade, Meals on Wheels, the Country Women's Association and farmers' associations. Local sports and recreation clubs are also well represented in the region. These organisations are based on shared goals and maintained by volunteer efforts. The additional element of people who have long associations with the area can strengthen the fabric of the local community. These features are present in the local community.

Griffith Community Action Plan was developed in 2007 and reviewed and updated in consultation with the community in 2010. The plan incorporates issues that have an impact on community wellbeing, provides an overview of the community and identifies key issues and strategies to address these issues. Key strengths of the community included:

- A diverse cultural mix.
- Community spirit such as volunteering and helping other community members.
- The lifestyle provided including entertainment options, employment opportunities and activities for children.

Challenges for the Griffith community included:

- Securing the sustainability of the local community with drought, climate change, infrastructure and transport.
- Retaining and engaging local young people, predominately due to the lack of tertiary education and activities for young people in the local community.
- Racism and bullying within the community.

These characteristics are important in considering the impact on a community of a new development.

4 STAKEHOLDER GROUPS AND CONSULTATION STRATEGIES

It is important to identify all key stakeholder groups and relevant characteristics and tailor engagement strategies to suit each group. Different levels of engagement suit varying degrees of potential impacts in the community. Where impacts are less significant, for example, the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) consultation spectrum suggests approaches such as 'Inform' and 'Consult'. Greater impacts on communities require approaches such as 'Involve', 'Collaborate' and 'Empower'. Appropriate strategies are set out below for each stakeholder group.

Stakeholder group	Defining characteristics	Consultation strategies
1. Near Neighbours	Neighbours to the project and those who may be directly affected, for example: those with a view of infrastructure, noise or vibration from haulage route or construction activities. Six residences are located in close proximity to of the site (note that one to the west of the site is an unoccupied and likely derelict house) and may experience direct impacts.	Inform and Consult Understanding the values and potential impacts to this group is highly important. Direct feedback is required. Mitigation strategies may require changes to the project or the development of specific plans of management i.e. screening visual impact.
2. Local community	Residents and businesses within 5km of the project site. While direct impacts may be very few, the project would be a large new development for the locality.	Inform and Consult Understanding the values of this group will assist the assessment process and development of appropriate mitigation strategies. Direct feedback is required.
3. Special interest groups	Single interest groups, for example, recreational groups, sporting groups. None were identified specific to this proposal.	Inform and Consult Specific information or assessment may be required to understand and mitigate impacts for these groups. An avenue to provide feedback or ask questions should be provided.

Stakeholder group	Defining characteristics	Consultation strategies
4. Agencies or representative bodies	Representatives of groups such as: Council Chamber of Commerce Tourism	Inform and Consult Specific information may be required for this group. An avenue to provide feedback or ask questions should be provided.
5. Media	Outlets to ensure a clear message is delivered: Local radio, television, newspapers.	Inform A contact should be provided to this group, for further information if required.
6. Broader community	While direct impacts are unlikely, the project would be a large new development for the broader community.	Inform Newsletters, advertisements, website information used to relay information about the project. A contact should be provided to this group, for further information if required.

5 ISSUE MANAGEMENT

A set of project-specific issues and risks to maximising community engagement in the project have been identified below. These issues pose potential risks to the effective identification and mitigation of impacts important to the community. Mitigation strategies have been developed below, specific to the identified issues. These have been incorporated into the Project-based Activities, in Section 6.

Issue	Risks	Mitigation strategies
Lack of support for project	Lack of interest, leading to low levels of public support. Unaddressed concerns may generate opponents of this project.	Early dissemination of information about the project and its justification and benefits. Clear communication of key environmental impacts and mitigation strategies. Make participation easy – to ensure all concerns are addressed.
The approvals process can be complex.	Perception that the process is too difficult to become involved in. Suspicion that input will not be valued.	Clearly illustrate approvals process. Clearly define opportunities for community input including what is required and when it is required. Communicate back, identifying where input has been used.
Distrust in environmental assessment process.	Distrust of impact identification and mitigation strategies.	Establish credentials of assessment team. Make participation easy – create opportunities to discuss issues with the team.
Fear of unknown / complex information	Exaggerated fears / misunderstanding of information.	Layman explanations of issues.
Representative	Risk of biased consultation, serving only the 'squeaky wheel'. Sections of the community may be "overpowered" and may be marginalised.	Ensure community is engaged in a forum that minimises risk of debate being side tracked. Use established social (and media) channels in dissemination of materials, i.e. sport clubs.

Issue	Risks	Mitigation strategies
Unified message	Differing messages may create confusion and mistrust.	Limit points of contact. Have message clearly set out for use, rather than reinventing it for each consultation activity.
Unequal distribution of benefits	Residents close to the development are likely to feel more strongly.	Identification of stakeholder groups should reflect differences in impacts.

6 PROJECT BASED ACTIVITIES

The following table outlines the different project stages and associated community consultation objectives and activities, in chronological order. Relevant to all activities:

- One person would co-ordinate the activities to limit points of contact, ensuring a clear message, no contradictions in terminology or project information.
- Feedback would be sought using a standard form, allowing this information to inform the assessment (example provided in Appendix A). This form would be made available during meetings and on the project website.

Project stages	Stakeholder group	Issue	Consultation objective	Community engagement activities
Confirm site boundaries and preliminary project details	Near neighbours	Lack of support Unequal distribution of benefits Other concerns	Inform and engage	Individually contact near neighbours Early dissemination of information about the project and its justification and benefits. Seek direct feedback regarding concerns, incorporate into assessment process and mitigation strategies. Offer to meet Face to Face.
	Agencies or representative bodies	Unaddressed concerns	Inform and consult	Face to face meeting: Early dissemination of information about the project and its justification and benefits. Seek direct feedback regarding concerns, incorporate into assessment process and mitigation strategies.
Commence environmental investigations	All	Distrust in environmental assessment process. The approvals process can be complex.	Inform	Media release: Preliminary project announcement, including stage of assessment, likely time lines, ways in which the community can be involved.
	All	Differing messages may create confusion and mistrust. The approvals process can be complex.	Inform	Web site: Keep project information up to date Provide link to relevant information including feedback form Provide a contact for further information

Project stages	Stakeholder group	Issue	Consultation objective	Community engagement activities
Key results from environmental investigations known	All	Lack of support Fear of unknown / complex information Distrust in environmental assessment process.	Inform and Consult	Community open day: Discuss detailed project proposal Establish credentials of assessment team. Present key findings of assessments and likely mitigation strategies Seek direct feedback to include in assessment process (example feedback from provided in Appendix A) Provide contact for further information Follow up with stakeholders as required to ensure their concerns are addressed
Key community feedback known	All	Unequal distribution of benefits Risk of biased consultation, serving only the 'squeaky wheel'.	Consult and inform	Feed information into the final assessment to ensure: All community issues have been identified and addressed by the project, differentiating between stakeholder groups
Assessment completed and submitted	All			Media release / newspaper article or advert: Thanking community for input Demonstrate to the community how the information has been used to improve the assessment and the project – this could be done in the EIS but also via media release, website or newspaper article. Outlining opportunities for input during the public exhibition period Provide contact for further information

7 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

To ensure this plan is effective during the implementation of activities, and adapts as required to new information, the following review actions will be undertaken alongside implementation activities:

- Appoint and maintain a consultation manager for the project to implement activities and review this plan regularly.
- Keep an accurate record of all feedback from consultation activities and all correspondence with the community.
- Monitor regularly and respond promptly to email and phone queries.
- Are the activities reaching a diverse and representative section of the community; do new activities need to be implemented?
- Has relevant information been passed back to:
 - Project developers
 - Assessment staff.

8 REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

ARENA (n.d). Establishing the social licence to operate large scale solar facilities in Australia: Insights from social research for industry, Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA).

Twyford Consulting (2007) *Beyond Public Meetings: Connecting community engagement with decision making*

APPENDIX A COMMUNITY FEEDBACK FORM



60MWp Griffith Solar Farm
Community Feedback Form

In developing the detailed project and undertaking the environmental assessment of the proposed solar farm, your feedback is important. It will ensure:

- local concerns are understood by the developers and the assessment team;
- all relevant impacts are identified, investigated and mitigation measures developed where required.

The results of the feedback will be compiled and used in the assessment of the project. All contact details will be kept anonymous. Only the geographic information and nominated organisations information will be used in collating the information.

Please send your feedback:

- 1) By e-mail to contact@griffithsolarfarm.com.au
- 2) By post to:

Griffith Solar Farm
c/o Neoen Australia
Suite 3 - Level 14, 227 Elizabeth Street
Sydney NSW 2000

For further information about the project, please see the project website at www.griffithsolarfarm.com.au.

Your name:

Organisation
(if relevant):

Telephone n°:

Address:

Tick which box best describes where you live:

- ☐ Less than 2 kilometres from the proposed solar plant
- ☐ 2-5 kilometres from the proposed solar plant
- ☐ More than 5 kilometres from the proposed solar plant
- ☐ Not a member of the local community

Tell us what you think about the local area and the proposed solar farm below.

What do you value most about the local area? Tick one or more.

- ☐ Views
- ☐ Community / family ties
- ☐ Historic values
- ☐ Work opportunities
- ☐ Recreation opportunities, including sporting, nature based etc.
- ☐ Other

Discuss:

What do you like most about solar farms, generally? Tick one or more.

- ☐ Renewable energy generation
- ☐ Local economic opportunities – jobs, tourism, economic stimulus
- ☐ Diversification of land use
- ☐ Other

Discuss:

What concerns do you have about solar farms, generally? Tick one or more.

- ☐ Community impacts
- ☐ Visual impact
- ☐ Noise, during construction or operation
- ☐ Traffic, during construction or operation
- ☐ Effects on land use or land values
- ☐ Effects on recreation opportunities
- ☐ Effects on natural areas and habitats
- ☐ Other

What specific concerns do you have about the solar farm proposed at Griffith?

What additional information would you like us to know in assessing the impacts of the solar farm proposed at Griffith?

What views or landscape characteristics in the region and local area are important to you?

Area or feature:

What do you enjoy / value about this area?

Area or feature:

What do you enjoy / value about this area?

Area or feature:

What do you enjoy / value about this area?

C.3 COMMUNITY CONSULTATION RESOURCES

GRIFFITH

solar farm

Dear Sir / Madam,

Neoen is currently in the process of developing the Griffith Solar Farm, a large-scale solar photovoltaic project planned in the Yoogali area, on the land owned by John and Gloria Badocco (lots 59, 60, 61, 62, 81 and 82 in Deposited Plan 751728).

Two months ahead of the lodgement of a development application to the NSW department of Planning, Neoen's team has the pleasure to organise an information session in relation to the project at the following date, time and address:

Date/time:

Monday 14th December 2015, 4PM to 7PM (project presentations at 4:30PM and 6PM)

Venue:

Ex-Servicemen's Club on Jondaryan Avenue in Griffith (Mirrool Room 3)

It is particularly important for us and we think for the community, that all close neighbours to the development have a chance to discuss the project at the occasion of this informative session. We would warmly welcome your participation and invite you to fill the attached questionnaire in the meantime. Would you prefer to fill the questionnaire online, you can access it in the community section of the project website at www.griffithsolarfarm.com.au, and send it at contact@griffithsolarfarm.com.au.

I remain available on the phone, would you have any question, and hope to see you very soon.
Best regards,

Chris Leonard



Project Manager - Griffith Solar Farm
0406 280 568

MEDIA RELEASE
Sydney, 3 December 2015

Neoen accelerates the development of its large-scale solar projects in New South Wales, taking advantage of a new momentum in the Australian renewable energy market

Leading French renewable energy firm Neoen is accelerating the development of three of its large-scale solar photovoltaic projects in New South Wales.

The affirmation of the Renewable Energy Target in June, combined with the \$100m large-scale solar competitive round launched by the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) in September and the \$250m large-scale solar program created by the CEFC in parallel, now provide highly favourable conditions for solar projects in Australia. In this context, Neoen has decided to commit significant resources to the development of its Parkes Solar Farm, Griffith Solar Farm, and Dubbo Solar Hub, totalling up to 165MW of generating capacity.

Neoen has initiated more detailed connection studies and environmental impact studies for the three projects, as well as a community consultation program in order to ensure that any concerns that members of the community may have are addressed early in the planning and design of the proposals. The new project websites (www.griffithsolarfarm.com.au, www.parkessolarfarm.com.au, and www.dubbosolarhub.com.au) are integral to this consultation program, and will allow all project stakeholders to submit a feedback form online.

Some of solar energy's most attractive qualities are the very low noise emission levels and limited height of its infrastructures, which do not generally raise concerns for neighbouring communities. However, Neoen believes in proactive, positive community partnership. Consequently, information sessions for all three projects will be organised in mid-December, allowing the community to discuss any questions they may have with both Neoen's team and its environmental consultants.

Romain Desrousseaux, International CEO of Neoen, states: *"Having commissioned Europe's largest solar farm in France this year, Neoen strongly believes in the future of solar. Until now, wind has been stronger in Australia, because no specific regulatory instruments were in place to bridge the temporary economic gap between large-scale solar and wind, but the market is now evolving with the ARENA and CEFC programs, and we see an opportunity for multiple large-scale solar projects to come to life in the years to come."*

Franck Woitiez, Managing Director of Neoen Australia, commented: *"Neoen has proudly invested in more than 110MW of wind and off-grid solar projects in Australia in 2015. The year to come looks even more promising, as numerous grid-connected large-scale solar projects will be given a chance to come to fruition. The Parkes Solar Farm, Griffith Solar Farm, and Dubbo Solar Hub, developed by Neoen close to consumption centres in New South Wales, are at the heart of Neoen's long-term development strategy in Australia. All three projects benefit from ideal siting, resulting in minimal construction and connection costs. After a period of regulatory uncertainty, we are thrilled to accelerate their development, and lucky to be able to rely on the support of the NSW government through the New South Wales Renewable Energy Action Plan."*

Dates and venues for Neoen's information sessions:

Griffith Solar Farm:

Monday 14 December 2015, 4pm to 7pm at the Griffith Ex-Servicemen's Club (Mirrool Room 3), Jondaryan Avenue, Griffith

Parkes Solar Farm:

Tuesday 15 December 2015, 4pm to 7pm at the Parkes Leagues Club (Pioneer Room), 192 Clarinda Street, Parkes

Dubbo Solar Hub:

Narromine site: Wednesday 16 December 2015, 4PM to 7PM at the Narromine USMC Club, 58 Dandaloo Street, Narromine

Dubbo site: Thursday 17 December, 4pm to 7pm at the MacQuarie Inn (River Room), Cnr Wheelers Lane & Birch Avenue, Dubbo

About Neoen

Neoen, an independent energy company, was founded in 2008 on the initiative of French business leader Mr Jacques Veyrat.

The company is a subsidiary of Impala SAS (www.impala-sas.com), a diversified investment Group with over 6000 employees and a global presence. Capenergie II fund (managed by Omnes Capital, www.omnescapital.com), and Bpifrance (www.bpifrance.fr) the French public investment bank, are the minority shareholders of Neoen.

Neoen develops, finances, builds and operates power plants based on renewable energies (solar, wind and biomass). Neoen is active in France, Portugal, Australia, Mexico, Egypt and El Salvador, and seeks to achieve installed power of over 1000 MW by 2017. Acting in Australia since 2012, Neoen's approach is based on a long-term commitment to its stakeholders and the Community.

Media contacts

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