

29 August 2024

Shannon Blackmore
Principal Planning Officer
Department of Planning Housing & Infrastructure

T (02) 9274 6220 E Shannon.blackmore@dpie.nsw.gov.au

Dear Shannon,

Re: Draft Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) - Request for Advice for West Nyangay Solar Farm (SDD-74990235) | Cobb Highway, Boorooban within Edward River

Thank you for allowing Edward River Council (ERC) the opportunity to provide advice in relation to the draft SEARs for the West Nyangay Solar Farm development (SSD-74990235) as a precursor to the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process. It is understood that the development is proposed to be located along the Cobb Highway, north of the Boorooban-Tchelery Road, and east of the Cobb Highway, approximately 40km south of Hay. The development is proposed to have a solar capacity of approximately 800 megawatts and an estimate storage capacity of 500MWac/2000MWh and will connect into the national electricity grid. Council provides the following preliminary advice in relation to the Draft SEARs:

Watercourse/s and drainage lines

The project area contains several water sources and natural drainage lines that traverse throughout the site, including the Nyangay Creek. Consideration of development within environmentally sensitive areas should be extensively assessed. Council has not undertaken a Flood Study for this area, however, based on recent history, the Project Site is likely within an area impacted during flood events from the nearby creek systems and natural drainage system. A Flood Study should be carried out to ensure the proposed solar farm and associated infrastructure will not be subject to flooding during events.

Impact on Road Infrastructure

Specific detail on the source location of the construction materials should be provided, noting that this would impact on the haulage routes through all affected Local Government Areas (LGAs). The Cobb Highway is a State Classified Road network, therefore, a comprehensive traffic impact assessment (TIA) should accompany the EIS and any road upgrade plans. This should also consider the increase traffic movements, internal site manoeuvrability, new internal roads, on-site parking and delivery areas, and any key transport linkages.

Bushfire

Bushfire risks associated with the construction and operation of the development need to be carefully considered in the EIS. Of specific concern is the Bushfire Prone Land areas consisting of large expanses of grassland and the remoteness of these areas. Adequate resources would be required to protect these areas in the event of fire outbreak as there are extended response times and access to adequate resources for fire defence are limited, which will need to be supported by a Bushfire Assessment Report.

Biodiversity and cultural heritage

A detailed assessment of the likely biodiversity impacts and cultural heritage items of the project.

Provide information regarding the commissioning and decommissioning of the site. Additional information is required to understand the scale of the site/s, servicing arrangements and the proposed actions for returning the sites back to pre-development conditions, at the completion of works particularly relating to proposed earthworks, construction and roadworks.

Accommodation and resources

Extensive consideration will be required regarding the proposed workforce during construction, operation and during decommissioning. The Scoping Report identifies approximately 300 staff will be required during each stage of construction, therefore, the location of any on-site accommodation will need to be detailed to ensure the accommodation is well-located, and in an area outside hazard areas (flood, bushfire, etc). Consideration for essential services, including stormwater and runoff, on-site septic systems, potable water supply, electricity connection and the like will need to be detailed to ensure the development has adequate services due to the remote locality of the Project.

Community and Amenity

It is requested the EIS holistically address the likely impacts (positive and negative) on the community and surrounding townships. It would be expected employee numbers for both the construction and operation stages are clearly identified, the duration of each phase, and the likely impact on workforce influx be addressed.

Amenity implications for surrounding land and nearby properties should be considered during the construction the throughout the duration of the operation of the Project. This includes any visual, acoustic and social impacts, as well as any likely generation of emissions (dust, smoke, odour, chemical or hazards), environmental consideration, as well as hazards (bushfire, flood) to be comprehensively addressed within the EIS. A community engagement plan should also be provided.

Waste Management and Decommissioning

The Scoping Report (July 2024) notes that the project is expected to operate for at least 30 years. Council requests that a comprehensive Decommissioning and Site Rehabilitation Management Plan be prepared to ensure all associated infrastructure and ancillary facilities are removed, and the entirety of the Project Site is rehabilitated to its original status. Suitable correspondence should be provided to Council prior to any rectification works being carried out, and to Council's satisfaction.

Council looks forward to reviewing the investigations of the EIS process which address the issues outlined in this response. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned Officer or the Development Services team on 03 5898 3000.

Yours sincerely

Maddison Gunter

Maddison Gunter
Town Planner