

Finley Solar Farm

Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement

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1. Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement

1 Regional Overview

The Berrigan Shire is situated in the Southern Riverina Region of New South Wales, north of the Murray River. The Shire has four major towns: Barooga, Berrigan, Finley and Tocumwal (Berrigan Council, 2017). In 2015 the Shire had a population of 8,416 and with a median age of 49.3 years (ABS 2017a). The main employing is agriculture, consisting of predominantly irrigated rural land (ABS 2017a). Due to the Shire's proximity to the Murray River tourism is another major employing industry centred in river front towns of Barooga and Tocumwal (Berrigan Shire Council, 2017). The Traditional Owners in the region are the Cummeragunja Nation Aboriginal Corporation.

Finley is the largest town in the Berrigan Shire. The population in 2016 was 2,519 in 2016 with the median age 47 (ABS 2017b). Finley township is intersected by the Newell and Riverina Highways. The proposed Finley Solar Farm is located approximately 6km of Finley off the Riverina Highway.

2 Consultation and Stakeholder Engagement Overview

ESCO Pacific has prepared this Stakeholder and Community Consultation plan to guide communication activities relating to the proposed project and assist in the preparation of the EIS for the Project. This document provides an overview of stakeholder engagement, a description of the stakeholder engagement activities undertaken and a summary of the findings that have been incorporated into this EIS.

3 Formal Consultation Requirements

The SEARs for the Project state that:

"During the preparation of the EIS, you should consult with relevant local, State or Commonwealth Government authorities, infrastructure and service providers, community groups, affected landowners, exploration licence holders, quarry operators and mineral title holders. In particular you must consult with:

- Affected landowners surrounding the development
- Berrigan Shire Council

The EIS must describe the consultation that was carried out, identify the issues raised during this consultation, and explain how these issues have been addressed in the EIS".

Furthermore, the SEARs require that the EIS must:

"include adequate consultation with the local Aboriginal community".

4 Government Consultation

Consultation with government agencies was initiated by the Department of Planning and Environment (DP&E) during the preparation of the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs). Government Agencies that provided a response to DP&E for inclusion in the SEARs included:

- Berrigan Shire Council
- NSW Department of Planning and Environment, Resources & Energy - Division of Resources & Geoscience
- NSW Environment Protection Authority
- NSW Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH)
- NSW Roads and Maritime Services
- NSW Department of Primary Industries

Consultation was undertaken by ESCO Pacific with numerous government agencies during the preparation of this EIS to clarify agency requirements, discuss methodologies, and to seek feedback. A summary of the consultation undertaken with Government Agencies is provided in Appendix A (Consultation Register).

5 Aboriginal Community Consultation

ESCO Pacific has been actively engaging with the local Aboriginal community in the region and the Local Aboriginal Lands Council. Aboriginal consultation for the project is required to be undertaken in accordance with the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Consultation Requirement's (ACHCRs). Aboriginal Consultation and is regulated under Clause 80C of the National Parks and Wildlife Regulation 2009. The process includes a four stage Aboriginal consultation process that stipulates specific timeframes for components of each stage. Stage 1 is currently being completed before the EIS approval and further stages will be undertaken, if necessary, during the assessment phase of the EIS.

Stage 1 Identifying Aboriginal Stakeholders to be listed as Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs)

This stage requires that Aboriginal people who hold cultural information are identified, notified and invited to register an expression of interest in the assessment. This identification process should draw on reasonable sources of information including: the Registrar (Aboriginal Land Rights Act, 1983), the relevant OEH Environment Protection Regulation Group (EPRG) Regional Office, the Local Aboriginal Land Council(s), the National Native Title Tribunal, the Native Title Services Corporation Limited, the relevant Catchment Management Authority and the relevant local council(s). The identification process should also include an advertisement placed in a local newspaper circulating in the general location of the Project Area. Aboriginal organisations and/or individuals identified should be notified of the project and invited to register an expression of interest (Eoi) for Aboriginal consultation. Once a list of Aboriginal community stakeholders has been compiled from the expression of interest process, they need to be consulted in accordance with stages 2, 3 and 4 of the ACHCRs.

In accordance with Stage 1 of the ACHCRs, letters were sent (2/08/2017) to the Albury OEH office, the Registrar of Aboriginal Owners NSW, the Native Title Tribunal, Native Title Services Corporation Limited, the Berrigan Shire Council and the Murray Local Land Services requesting the identification of interested Aboriginal groups. A letter was also sent to Cummeragunja LALC who have already registered their interest and this letter was sent to confirm this. An advertisement was placed in the Southern Riverina News (9/8/2017) inviting expressions of interest from Aboriginal stakeholders. Letters inviting expressions of interest were sent to four Aboriginal organisations (15/8/2017) as a result of feedback from the notification process.

The following organisations have been identified as Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) (Table 1).

Table 1 Registered Aboriginal stakeholders (RAPs)

RAP	Contact	Date of Expression of Interest
Cummeragunja LALC	Rebecca Atkinson	20/7/2017

Stage 2 – Providing project information

This requires that project information is provided to Aboriginal community stakeholders by the proponent. Relevant project information may include an outline of the project activities, proposed impact areas and environmental assessment process. The presentation of the project information should be documented and include any agreed outcomes with the Aboriginal community stakeholders. In some instances, depending on the nature, scale and complexity of the project, the proponent may create the opportunity for Aboriginal community stakeholders to visit the project site and/or may conduct additional project information sessions.

Stage 3 – Gathering cultural significance

This stage is to gather information regarding cultural significance. The aim is to facilitate a process by which Aboriginal community stakeholders can have input into the heritage assessment methodology and management options, and provide information on the cultural significance of Aboriginal objects or places. The proponent must provide a proposed methodology for the cultural heritage assessment and allow a minimum of 28 days to respond. If needed, protocols for the appropriate handling of culturally sensitive information may need to be developed with the Aboriginal community stakeholders. The proponent must also seek the views of the Aboriginal community stakeholders on potential management options for Aboriginal objects or places.

Stage 4 – Draft Report

This stage requires that the proponent prepare a draft cultural heritage assessment report and provide a copy to the registered Aboriginal stakeholders for comment. A minimum of 28 days must be provided for the registered Aboriginal stakeholders to comment on the draft report. To finalise the report the proponent must consider the submissions made by the registered Aboriginal stakeholders and include the proponent's response to each submission. The finalised report must be provided to the registered Aboriginal stakeholders and the relevant Local Aboriginal Land Council.

6 Community Consultation

The purpose of the stakeholder and community consultation plan was to identify the key community stakeholders, present the stakeholders with details of the proposed Project and give the stakeholders an opportunity to provide feedback and identify any issues or concerns they may have. The plan focused on the following groups:

- Those landowners adjacent to the proposed solar farm;
- Individuals within the wider community that have an interest in the proposed solar farm.

A range of consultation activities were undertaken during the preparation of the EIS. An overview of these activities is outlined below.

6.1 Project Factsheet

A project factsheet was prepared to introduce the project to key community stakeholders to provide an overview of the project. The project factsheet provided information on ESCO Pacific, a project summary and a website address for further information on the Project.

The project factsheet was distributed to community stakeholders via mailout, the community information session (Appendix B).

6.2 Mail-out

Introductory letters and project factsheets were mailed out via trackable postage to all landowners within 2km to the proposed Project. The letters introduced the proposed project, ESCO Pacific and encouraged landowners to contact ESCO Pacific to discuss the project further. Letters also included an invite to the Community Consultation Meeting.

A copy of the introductory letter is provided in Appendix C.

6.3 Individual meetings

ESCO representatives contacted landowners closest to the Project offering to meet with them to discuss the project in person prior to the Community Consultation Meeting. ESCO Pacific met with two of the closest landowners and contacted by phone four other landowners located close by to introduce the Project and discuss any concerns or feedback.

A copy of the consultation register is provided in Appendix A.

6.4 Community Consultation Meeting

A Community information session was held at the Finley Returned Soldiers Club (RSC), 63-67 Tocumwal Street, Finley between 6pm to 7pm on Thursday 20 July 2017.

The event was advertised to government agencies, the local aboriginal group and project neighbours and the broader community as detailed below:

- the mail-out, including all houses within 2km of the project,
- the Southern Riverina Weekly Newspaper (12th and 19th July 2017 editions),
- notices placed in local businesses, including the Finley Elders Store, the Finley Bakery and the Finley Library,
- notices on social media site, the 'Finley for the Future' Facebook Page,
- the Finely Solar Farm website,
- emails sent to key government stakeholders, including the DP&E, OEH, Murray Irrigation and Council.

The community information session was attended by ESCO Pacific representatives and their planning consultant RPS. The session provided an opportunity for community stakeholders to view the proposed plans and to speak to members of the project team to find out more. Stakeholders were encouraged to read and take a copy of the project factsheet, visit the website and or download a copy of the application and complete a feedback form.

6.5 Project Website

Project information has been provided on the Finley Solar Farm website www.finleysolarfarm.com.au. The website includes an up-to-date overview of the Project and offers stakeholders the opportunity to provide feedback on the project.

6.6 Consultation Database

A consultation database has been created and maintained to record stakeholder contact details and any issues, concerns or feedback received. A copy of the Consultation Register is provided in Appendix A.

6.7 Issues Raised

Community consultation is ongoing. Issues raised to date have been addressed within the EIS. An up to date consolidated summary of the responses received from the community consultation activities, correspondence can be provided upon request. The consultation Register is presented in Appendix A.

7 Continuing Consultation Activities

ESCO Pacific will continue to undertake consultation with stakeholders as necessary, at various times through the project including:

- EIS Public exhibition
- Any other time as interest levels dictates
- As otherwise recommended by DP&E.

Lines of communication between the proponent and stakeholders will remain open through various communication mediums as detailed in Section 6.

7.1 EIS Public Exhibition and Post Exhibition

This EIS will be placed on public exhibition for a minimum period of 30 days.

The Project Team will continue to commit resources to satisfy consultation requirements during the public exhibition phase and throughout the life of the Project.

ESCO Pacific will actively engage with key stakeholders to ensure they are aware the EIS is on exhibition.

Information about the EIS will be made available on the Project website www.finleysolarfarm.com.au, on the Department of Planning & Environment – Major Project Assessment - <http://majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au/> and contact details for ESCO Pacific will continue to be made available on the Project website and on any distributed material.

ESCO Pacific will continue to undertake consultation with stakeholders as necessary post determination of the EIS for the Project.

8 References

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2017a, Berrigan (A) (LGA), access 10 July 2017, <<http://stat.abs.gov.au>>

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2017b, 2016 Census QuickStats, accessed 10 July 2017, <<http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au>>

Berrigan Shire Council 2017, Annual Report 2015-2016, accessed 10 July 2017, <<http://www.berriganshire.nsw.gov.au>>

Date	Stakeholder	Method of Engagement	Outcome / Comment
23/05/2017	Berrigan Shire Council	In Person	Met with Berrigan Shire Council planners to introduce project and ESCO Pacific
9/06/2017	Berrigan Shire Council	Email	Berrigan Shire Council confirmation of local road status
23/06/2017	Berrigan Shire Council	In Person	Archaeological site visit
11/07/2017	Berrigan Shire Council	Email	Email invitation to Community Consultation Session, also forwarded to Councillors
2/06/2017	Dept. Planning & Environment	In Person	Meet with DPE in Sydney to discuss project, introduce ESCO Pacific and discuss SEARs
28/06/2017	Office of Environment & Heritage	In Person	Met with OEH and Consultants on site
11/07/2017	Office of Environment & Heritage	Email	Email invitation to Community Consultation Session
23/05/2017	Murray Irrigation Ltd.	In Person	Met with Murray Irrigation on site
11/07/2017	Murray Irrigation Ltd.	Phone	Invite to Community Consultation Session
12/07/2017	Murray Irrigation Ltd.	Phone	Discussed potential impacts on irrigation and drainage
6/07/2017	Yarkuwa Aboriginal group	Phone	Called YAG and discussed preliminary advice from heritage due diligence report
11/07/2017	Yarkuwa Aboriginal Group	Email	Email invitation to Community Consultation Session
12/07/2017	Yarkuwa Aboriginal group	In Person	Discussed aboriginal consultation and outcome of assessments
18/07/2017	Southern Riverina News	Advertisement	Newspaper advertisement for Community Consultation Meeting
18/07/2017	Southern Riverina News	Phone	Discussion on Finley Project with journalist
6/07/2017	Neighbouring Landowner	Letter	Mailout to neighbouring landowner's information of proposed project and invite to Community Consultation Meeting

Date	Stakeholder	Method of Engagement	Outcome / Comment
10/07/2017	Neighbouring Landowner	Email	Emails to neighbouring landowners
12/07/2017	Neighbouring Landowner	Person	Phone calls to neighbouring landowners
12/07/2017	Community	Advertisement	Notices for Community Consultation Meeting put up in Finley
20/07/2017	Community Members	Community Meeting	Community members attendance at Community Consultation Meeting (~50 people in attendance) Meeting introduced ESCO Pacific and project. Answered typical questions, job creation, access, the approval process and ongoing neighbour engagement. Questions about: - visual impact and landscape planting - number of jobs created - removal of agricultural land - potential ecological impacts - construction impacts
20/07/2017	Media	Community Meeting	Media attendance at Community Consultation Meeting
20/07/2017	Neighbouring Landowners	Community Meeting	Neighbouring Landowners attendance at Community Consultation Meeting
20/07/2017	Contractors	Community Meeting	Contractors attendance at the Community Consultation Meeting
20/07/2017	Berrigan Shire Council - Councillors	Community Meeting	Attended Community Consultation Meeting
24/07/2017	Community Members	Email	Community consultation follow up emails
27/07/2017	Contractor	Phone	Several contractors called to express interest the tendering process for the Finley Solar Finley
29/07/2017	Contractor	Email	Several contractors email expressing interest in contracting/employment opportunities
24/07/2017	Neighbour/Contractor	Email	Two contractors/neighbours called to express interest the tendering process for the Finley Solar Finley

Finley Solar Farm

ESCO Pacific is a leading Australian developer of utility scale solar farms with a proven track record of developing projects from early stage feasibility through to financial close and ultimately project commissioning.

Project Facts

Website	www.finleysolarfarm.com.au
Capacity	up to 170MW
Technology	Horizontal Tracking
Modules	~480,000 solar panels
Project Cost	\$222 million dollars
Location	Approx. 6km west of Finley
Connection Point	Finley 132kV Substation (Transgrid)
DPE Contact	www.majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au



The Finley Solar Farm is a utility scale renewable energy project with an output measuring up to 170 megawatts (MW) that will generate clean and renewable electricity from the power of the sun. The project will generate enough electricity to power the equivalent of approximately 80,000 homes.

The \$220 million dollar project is located west of the township of Finley in the Berrigan Shire Council. The project site was chosen due to its proximity to Transgrid's substation, access from the state highway and relatively flat land.

The solar farm will comprise of approximately 480,000 solar photovoltaic modules, known more commonly as 'solar panels'. The solar panels are identical in type but larger in size to those used in residential solar installations installed on homes throughout Australia.

The solar panels will be installed on ground-mounted frames that will slowly track the daily horizontal movement of the sun. The solar panels will generate direct current ('DC') electricity that will be inverted to alternating current ('AC') via power conversion units. The power conversion units located within the site will feed AC electricity into an onsite power reticulation system before the power is centrally collected and dispatched to the local electricity distribution network via the Transgrid transmission network.

phone +61 3 8595 2406
email info@escopacific.com.au

website www.escopacific.com.au

address Level 4, 13 Cremorne St
Richmond Victoria Australia 3121



6 July 2017



Dear [REDACTED],

Re: Proposed Finley Solar Farm Development

By way of introduction ESCO Pacific is a leading Australian developer of utility scale solar farms. Our leading project, the 148MW Ross River Solar Farm is currently under construction. Once operational the \$225 million dollar project will generate electricity to feed into the distribution network, equivalent to the average consumption of 65,000 homes.

ESCO Pacific wish to inform you of our proposed solar farm development on land located at 198 Canalla Road, Finley. A preliminary Development Application has been lodged with the Department of Planning and Environment and as part of this application process we are seeking your feedback on the project.

As neighbours to the proposed project, we would like to invite you to a community discussion about the project and answer any questions you may have. We will be holding a **Community Consultation Meeting from 6 to 7pm on Thursday 20th July 2017**, at the **Finley Returned Soldiers Club, 63-67 Tocumwal Street, Finley**. We will stay on after this time to answer any additional questions as individuals prefer.

Should you have further questions or wish to discuss the proposal in more detail or register your interest to attend the community meeting, please contact ESCO Pacific using the contact details below.

Kind regards,

Allison Hawke
Head of Development

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