

Notice of decision

Section 2.22 and clause 20 of Schedule 1 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*

Application type	State significant development
Application number and project name	SSD-9097 Quorn Park Solar Farm
Applicant	Quorn Park Solar Farm Pty Ltd
Consent Authority	Minister for Planning and Public Spaces

Decision

On 16 July 2020, the Executive Director granted consent to the development application for the Quorn Park Solar Farm subject to conditions, under delegation from the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces and section 4.38 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (the Act).

A copy of the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment's Assessment Report and development consent is available [here](#).

Date of decision

16 July 2020

Reasons for decision

The following matters were taken into consideration in making this decision:

- the relevant matters listed in section 4.15 of the Act and the additional matters listed in the statutory context section of the Department's Assessment Report;
- the prescribed matters under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000*;
- the objects of the Act;
- the considerations under s 7.14(2) and 7.16(3) of the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* (NSW);
- applicable NSW Government policies and guidelines
- all information submitted to the Department during the assessment of the development application and information considered in the Department's Assessment Report;
- the findings and recommendations in the Department's Assessment Report;
- advice from relevant NSW Government agencies and Parkes Shire Council; and
- the views of the community about the project (see Appendix 1).

The findings and recommendations set out in the Department's Assessment Report were accepted and adopted as the reasons for making this decision.

The key reasons for granting consent to the development application are as follows:

- the project would provide a range of benefits for the region and the State as a whole, including:
 - contributing to a more diverse local economy;
 - a capital investment of approximately \$89 million;
 - creating up to 130 construction jobs;
 - generating enough electricity to power around 30,000 homes, saving over 160,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions per year;
 - storage of energy for dispatch to the National Energy Market with the 20 MW / 20 MWh battery storage facility; and
 - assisting in transitioning the electricity sector from coal and gas fired power stations to renewable energy;
- the project is permissible with development consent under *State Environmental Planning Policy (Infrastructure) 2007*;
- the project is consistent with relevant NSW Government policies, including the *Climate Change Policy Framework*, *Net Zero Plan Stage 1: 2020 – 2030*, *Large-Scale Solar Energy Guideline* and *Central West and Orana Regional Plan 2036*;
- the impacts on the community and the environment can be appropriately minimised, managed or offset to an acceptable level, in accordance with applicable NSW Government policies and standards;
- none of the NSW Government agencies objected to the project and Council is supportive of the project;
- the issues raised by the community during consultation and in submissions have been considered and adequately addressed through changes to the project and the recommended conditions of consent; and
- weighing all relevant considerations, the project is in the public interest, subject to strict conditions of consent.

Appendix 1 – Consideration of Community Views

The Department exhibited the Environmental Impact Statement for the project from 5 November 2019 until 3 December 2019 (29 days) and received 41 submissions from the community (40 objections, and one comment) and one comment from a special interest group.

The key issues raised by the community (including in submissions) and considered in the Department's Assessment Report include amenity (visual impacts and traffic) and land use compatibility.

Issue	Consideration
<i>Visual Impacts</i>	<p><i>Assessment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing vegetation, the relatively low height of the infrastructure (panels up to 4 m high), the proposed vegetation screening and increased setbacks from project boundaries, would limit the visual impacts of the project from nearby residences, lots with dwelling entitlements and the surrounding landscape. The photovoltaic panels are designed to absorb rather than reflect sunlight, and the Department is satisfied that the project would not cause noticeable glint or glare compared to other building surfaces. The Department considers that subject to the implementation of proposed visual impact mitigation measures, including visual screening and exclusions zones, the visual impacts of the project on the landscape and local residents would be acceptable. <p><i>Conditions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimise the off-site visual impacts of the development, including the potential for any glare or reflection. The Applicant must establish and maintain a vegetation buffer along parts of the northern and western boundaries of the projects site and the substation within three years of commencing operations.
<i>Compatibility of the proposed land use</i>	<p><i>Assessment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project site is located on land zoned RU1 – Primary Production under the Parkes LEP, and the project is permitted with consent within this zone. The Department considers that the loss of 343 ha of agricultural land represents a very small fraction of the agricultural output of the region and would result in a negligible impact on its overall productivity. The project is consistent with the <i>Parkes Shire 2030 Community Strategic Plan</i> and the NSW Government's <i>Central West and Orana Regional Plan 2036</i>. Council and DPI – Agriculture support the project, subject to the recommended conditions of consent. <p><i>Conditions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain the agricultural land capability of the site, including establishing the ground cover of the site within 3 months following completion of any construction or upgrading, properly maintaining the ground cover with appropriate perennial species and weed management, and maintaining grazing within the development footprint. Restore land capability to pre-existing use (at least Class 3 Land Capability for areas of mapped BSAL). All solar farm infrastructure to be decommissioned and removed prior to site rehabilitation
<i>Traffic Impacts</i>	<p><i>Assessment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposed road upgrades have been developed in consultation with Transport for NSW (TfNSW) and Council. Council and TfNSW are satisfied that the proposed road upgrades and maintenance conditions would address road safety. <p><i>Conditions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare a TMP in consultation with TfNSW and Council, including measures to minimise traffic impacts (including cumulative traffic impacts with other projects in the area) during construction, upgrading or decommissioning works. All road upgrades must be carried out to the satisfaction of the relevant roads authority.
<i>Noise Impacts</i>	<p><i>Assessment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noise generated by the proposed construction, upgrading and decommissioning activities would be well below the Environment Protection Authority's 'noise affected' criterion at all non-associated residences. The Department is satisfied that, subject to the recommended conditions, there would be no significant noise impacts on non-associated receivers. <p><i>Conditions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimise the noise generated by any construction, upgrading or decommissioning activities on site in accordance with best practice requirements outlined in the <i>Interim Construction Noise Guidelines</i>. Restrict construction hours to Monday to Friday 7 am – 6 pm, and Saturday 8 am – 1 pm.

Issue	Consideration
<i>Water Availability and Site Runoff</i>	<p><i>Assessment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The site is not identified as Flood Prone Land under the Parkes Local Environmental Plan (LEP). The development has been designed to avoid watercourses mapped within the site. Council has provided in principle agreement for the supply of non-potable water for the proposed development. The Department considers that any erosion and sedimentation risks associated with the project can be effectively managed using best practice construction techniques. <p><i>Conditions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prohibit water pollution in accordance with Section 120 of the <i>Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997</i>. Undertake activities in accordance with <i>Managing Urban Stormwater: Soils and Construction</i> (Landcom, 2004) manual and <i>Guidelines for Controlled Activities on Waterfront Land</i> (DPI Water, 2018). The Applicant must ensure that it has sufficient water for all stages of the development.
<i>Hazards</i>	<p><i>Assessment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The site is not mapped as bushfire prone land under Parkes LEP. The project would comply with the <i>International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection</i> (ICNIRP) guidelines for electric, magnetic and electromagnetic fields The Department is satisfied that the bushfire risks can be suitably controlled through the implementation of standard fire management procedures and recommendations made by the Rural Fire Service (RFS) and Fire and Rescue NSW (FRNSW). <p><i>Conditions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The development must comply with the relevant requirements in the RFS's <i>Planning for Bushfire Protection 2019</i> (or equivalent) and <i>Standards for Asset Protection Zones</i>. Defendable space and solar arrays are to be managed as an Asset Protection Zone and the development is suitable equipped to respond to fires including water supply tank and appropriate connectors. Prepare and implement an Emergency Plan in consultation with RFS and FRNSW.
<i>Land Values</i>	<p><i>Assessment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project is permissible with development consent under the Infrastructure SEPP. A detailed assessment of the merits of the project has found that the project is unlikely to generate any significant economic, environmental or social impacts. The Department considers the visual impacts of the project on the surrounding residences and road users would be minimal, subject to the recommended conditions. The Department considers the project would not result in any significant or widespread reduction in land values in the areas surrounding the solar farm. <p><i>Conditions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No specific conditions required.
<i>Workforce Accommodation</i>	<p><i>Assessment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project would generate direct and indirect benefits to the local community, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> up to 130 jobs during the 12-month construction period expenditure on accommodation and businesses in the local economy by workers who would reside in Parkes Local Government Area (LGA); the procurement of goods and services by the applicant and any associated contractors; and upgrading of roads used by project related traffic. The project would utilise accommodation within the Parkes LGA and source workers from the local area. The Department is satisfied that the project would provide economic benefits to the local community and that there is sufficient accommodation, services and infrastructure within the Parkes LGA and surrounding areas to accommodate project related workers. <p><i>Conditions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No specific conditions required.