

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-9358 Silverleaf Solar Farm
Applicant	INTERNATIONAL POWER (AUSTRALIA) PTY LTD
Consent Authority	Minister for Planning

Decision

On 21 April 2022, the Director, Energy Assessments granted consent to the development application for the Silverleaf Solar Farm subject to conditions, under delegation from the Minister for Planning and section 4.38 of the *Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979* (the Act).

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

Date of decision

21 April 2022

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);
- all information submitted to the Department during the assessment of the development application and additional information considered in the Department's Assessment Report;
- the findings and recommendations in the Department's Assessment Report; and
- the views of the community about the project (see Attachment 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 \$191 million;
 - creating up to 120 construction jobs;
 - generating enough electricity to power around 44,000 homes, saving over 254,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions per year;
 - 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 NSW Government policies and guidelines, including the *Climate Change Policy Framework*, *Net Zero Plan Stage 1: 2020 – 2030*, *Large-Scale Solar Energy Guideline* and *NSW Electricity Strategy*;
- 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 or Council objected to 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.

Attachment 1 – Consideration of Community Views

The Department exhibited the Environmental Impact Statement for the project from 4 September 2019 to 1 October 2019 (28 days) and received five submissions, including two objections, two in support and one providing comments to the project.

The Department consulted with government agencies and Narrabri Shire Council throughout the assessment process.

The key issues raised by the community (including in submissions) and considered in the Department's assessment report include water management, visual impacts, land use compatibility and property devaluation.

<i>Issue</i>	<i>Consideration</i>
<p><i>Water management</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts on existing overland flow paths and drainage lines 	<p><i>Assessment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ENGIE has committed to ensuring that existing overland flows to neighbouring properties are maintained through appropriate infrastructure design and management measures, including locating site fencing to not obstruct overland flow and designing and constructing access tracks and associated drains to maintain existing drainage paths. <p><i>Conditions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Applicant must ensure any solar panels, ancillary infrastructure and any other land disturbance associated with the development (including security fencing) have appropriate drainage and are designed, constructed and maintained to reduce impacts on surface water, localised flooding and groundwater at the site. Prior to commencing construction, the Applicant must prepare a Soil and Water Management Plan for the development. This plan must be prepared in consultation with DPIE Water, Council and adjacent property owners.
<p><i>Visual impacts</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> View impacts and glare 	<p><i>Assessment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The relatively low height of the proposed infrastructure, the presence of existing infrastructure (Newell Highway, Kamilaroi Highway and North-West Railway Line) and the proposed vegetation buffer, would limit visual impacts of the project for residences and most sensitive viewpoints. Photovoltaic panels are designed to absorb rather than reflect sunlight, and reflectivity of any galvanised steel mounting framework would diminish over time. <p><i>Conditions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of a vegetation buffer to the satisfaction of the Planning Secretary prior to the commencement of construction. Minimise the off-site visual impacts of the development, including the potential for any glare or reflection.
<p><i>Land use compatibility</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts of solar farms on surrounding agricultural operations 	<p><i>Assessment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ENGIE has committed to coordinating construction and operational activities with surrounding farming activities, including aerial spraying, and note the solar farm could be controlled remotely if required during operations. Transmission infrastructure and vegetation screening would be located wholly within the project site and transmission corridor and would not encroach on agricultural activities on surrounding properties. <p><i>Conditions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development to be undertaken on the approved development site only and in accordance with commitments contained within the Environmental Impact Statement.
<p><i>Socio-economic</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Devaluation of surrounding properties 	<p><i>Assessment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Property values are influenced by a number of factors; the amenity impacts of the project on the surrounding residences and road users would not be significant; the Department considers that the project would not result in any significant or widespread reduction in land values in areas surrounding the project. <p><i>Conditions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No specific conditions