

OUT18/8355

Ms Tatsiana Bandaruk
Resource and Energy Assessments
NSW Department of Planning and Environment

By email: tatsiana.bandaruk@planning.nsw.gov.au

Dear Ms Bandaruk

**Orange Grove Solar Farm (SSD 8882)
Comment on the Environmental Impact Statement**

I refer to the email of 29 May 2018 to the Department of Industry in respect to the above matter. Comment has been sought from relevant branches of Lands & Water and Department of Primary Industries. Any further referrals to Department of Industry can be sent by email to landuse.enquiries@dpi.nsw.gov.au.

The department provides the following recommendations for consideration in assessment of the proposal. Detailed comments are provided at **Attachment A**.

Recommendations prior to project approval

- It is recommended additional flood assessment be completed to determine whether the existing 1st order watercourse located within the development footprint is a breakout channel of the Namoi River for the large design flood in the draft Floodplain Management Plan for the Upper Namoi Valley Floodplain (FMP). If this is the case an assessment against the requirements of the FMP will be required.
- It is recommended that the proponent assess the impacts of removing the existing farm dam on the aquatic habitat and existing drainage lines. A commitment is requested to reconstruct and stabilise the drainage lines where the impacts of dam removal are considered acceptable.
- It is recommended that the proponent confirm that sufficient water entitlement has been secured for the construction and operation phases of the project. Where water is to be sourced from a new extraction point in the water source an impact assessment will be required.
- It is recommended that the proponent specify the depths of excavation for the proposed development and assess the potential for groundwater impacts.

Recommended conditions of approval

- That the proponent prepares a Soil and Water Management Plan and Erosion and Sediment Control Plan as part of the Construction Environmental Management Plan in consultation with the Natural Resources Access Regulator, prior to commencement of activities.
- That all infrastructure (above and below ground) be removed from land identified as Biophysical Strategic Agricultural Land (BSAL) once the site is decommissioned.

Yours sincerely



Alison Collaros
A/Manager Assessment Advice
28 June 2018

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Water resources

- The EIS indicates that using the highest historical flood level monitoring, the modelled level of the nearby Namoi River (272.3 m) would not reach the lowest surveyed level of the development (272.5 m). However the assessment also indicates that a mapped 1st order watercourse may be a breakout channel for the Namoi River that has flowed in the relevant large design flood. Additional flood assessment is recommended to confirm this and hence to determine its relevance under the Draft Floodplain Management Plan for the Upper Namoi Valley Floodplain.
- Whether the mapped 1st order watercourse is a breakout channel from the Namoi River or is limited to conveying local runoff, the ability to ensure this function continues is important. Managing the potential for erosion and sedimentation during construction and operation would also be required.
- The proponent has indicated that there is a small farm dam that will be removed as part of site establishment activities. There has been no assessment of the impact of removing the dam, including dewatering and removal of aquatic habitat. Rehabilitation will be needed to ensure adequate reconstruction and stabilisation of the existing drainage channel.
- A number of bores have been identified on the property. If removal or modification to these bores is required, consultation will be required to confirm any requirements under the *Water Management Act 2000*.
- The proponent has identified that estimated water requirements during construction will be 15 ML for a 9 - 15 month period, for dust suppression and potable water. Annual water requirements during operation will be 3 ML, for cleaning panels and potable water. A range of water sources have been identified including via water tankers, an existing on-site bore with a 10 ML entitlement, or a neighbouring landholder. The department recommends the proponent confirm a secure source of water prior to the approval of the project.
- The EIS indicates no Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems (GDEs) exist within the site and no impacts on groundwater are expected. No depth of excavation however has been specified hence it is uncertain of the potential to intercept groundwater. The department recommends the excavation depths be confirmed and assess the potential to impact groundwater.
- The department supports the safeguards and mitigation measures proposed to be prepared prior to construction through an Erosion and Sediment Control Plan (ESCP) in accordance with Landcom (2004).

Agricultural resources

The EIS does not address the potential impacts to the operation from existing routine farming activities which may result in lost energy production, for example from dust deposition on panels as a result of neighbouring farming activity. The proponent should address the Right to Farm policy which supports rural landholders to be able to undertake lawful agricultural practices without conflict or interference arising from complaints from neighbours and other land users, including the proponent. Such conflict or interference may have the potential to sterilise a larger footprint of highly productive Biophysical Strategic Agricultural Land (BSAL) over and above the project area.

END ATTACHMENT A