

ASSESSMENT REPORT

White Rock Solar Farm

Site Layout Modification (SSD 7487 MOD 1)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

White Rock Solar Farm Pty Ltd is seeking to modify the layout of the White Rock Solar Farm to include a temporary car park and to amend the route of the approved underground transmission cable.

The Department's assessment has concluded that the modification would not result in any significant impacts beyond those that were previously assessed and approved.

1. BACKGROUND

White Rock Solar Farm Pty Ltd (White Rock Solar), a subsidiary of Goldwind Australia Proprietary Limited, has approval to construct and operate the White Rock Solar Farm. The solar farm is located within and adjacent to the project area for the White Rock Wind Farm, approximately 20 kilometres (km) west of Glen Innes (see **Figure 1**).

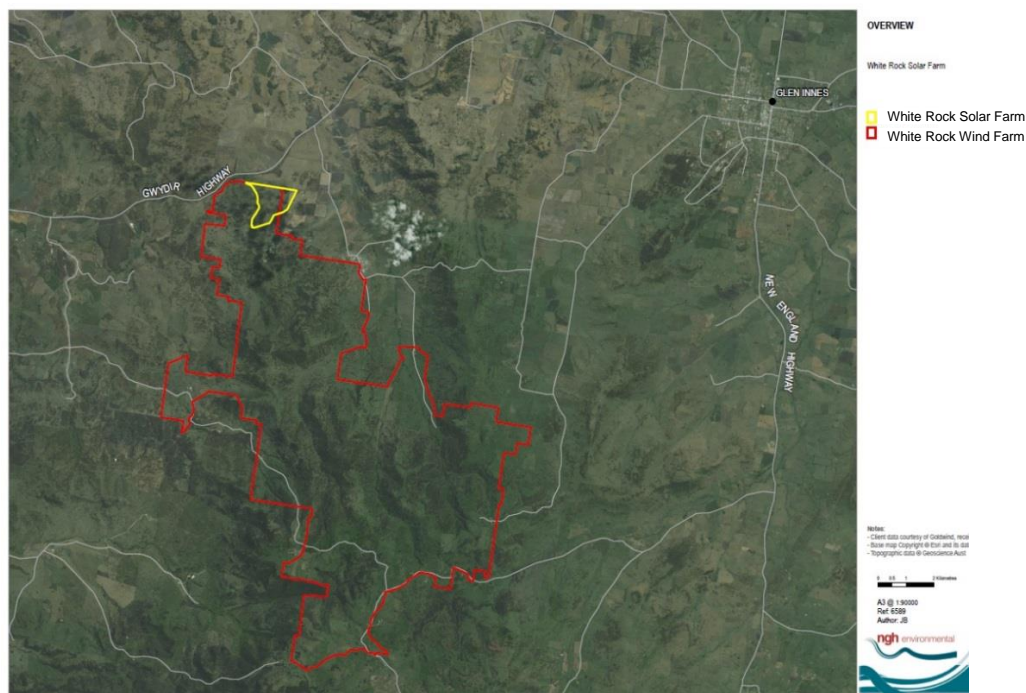


Figure 1: Project site location

On 14 June 2016, the Executive Director, Resource Assessments and Business Systems, as delegate of the Minister for Planning, granted approval for the White Rock Solar Farm (SSD 7487). The consent allows for the construction, upgrading and decommissioning of a photovoltaic (PV) solar farm with an initial capacity of 20 megawatts (MW), which includes:

- approximately 75,000 solar panels supported by a galvanised steel mounting framework fixed to piles;
- approximately 800 metres (m) of internal access tracks, a site building, power conversion blocks, internal wiring and electrical connections; and
- an underground 33 kilovolt (kV) cable linking the solar farm output to the White Rock Wind Farm collections circuits.

Construction commenced in July 2017, and the solar farm is expected to be operational by mid 2018.

2. PROPOSED MODIFICATION

White Rock Solar has identified that there is insufficient parking available for construction vehicles, which is causing logistical and safety issues for the movement and turning of heavy vehicles within the laydown area. Consequently, White Rock Solar is seeking to construct a new temporary car parking area to accommodate construction traffic.

White Rock Solar is also seeking a minor variation to the route of the 33 kV cable that connects the solar panel array to the substation. The proposed new route would overcome construction challenges associated with the steep terrain and the interface with other infrastructure, and would also make more land available to the landowner for cultivation.

A comparison of the approved and proposed layouts are shown in **Figure 2**.

The proposed modification is described in the Environmental Assessment submitted in support of the application (see **Appendix A**).

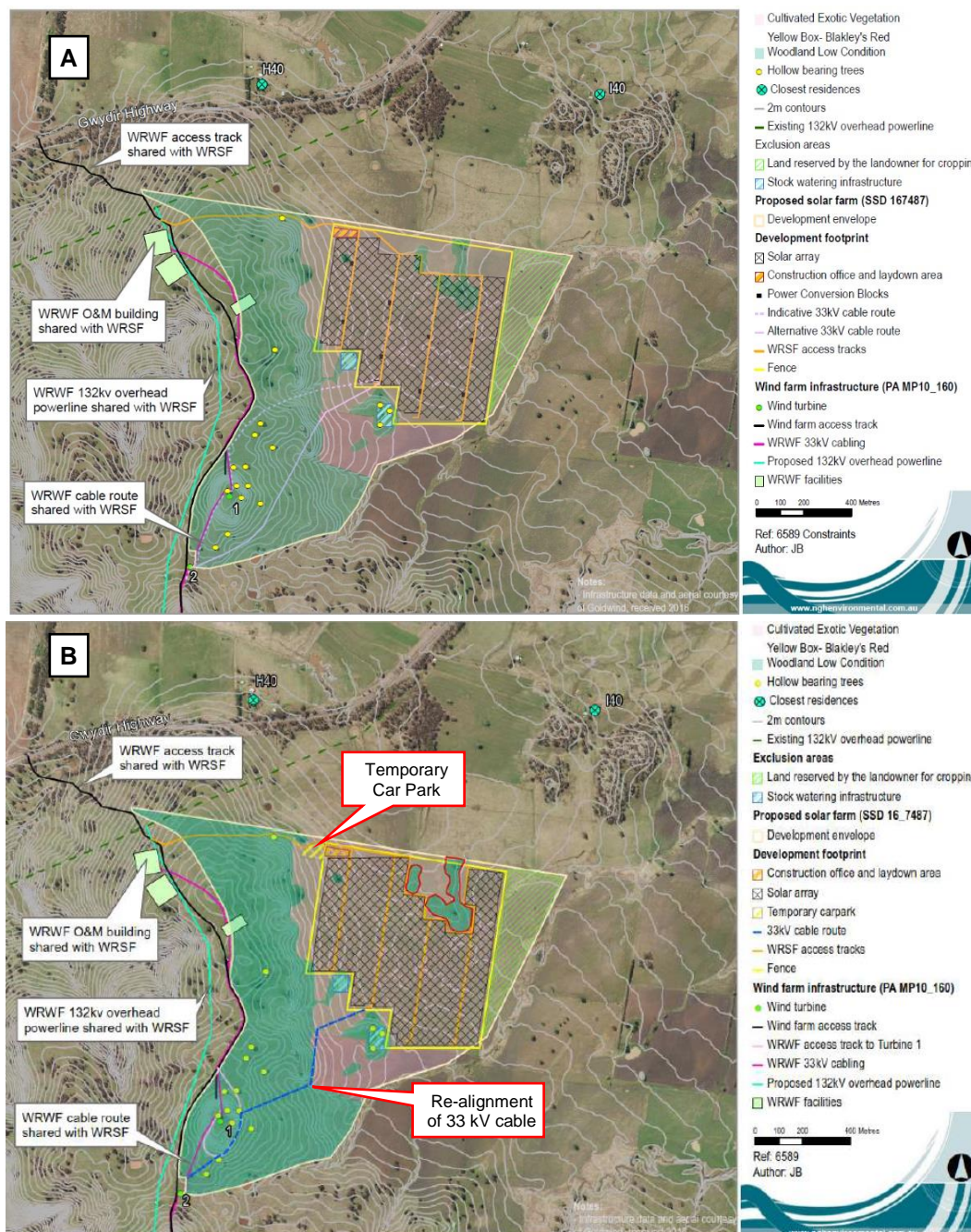


Figure 2: A - approved Site Layout; B - proposed project layout

3. STATUTORY CONTEXT

The development was originally approved under Section 89E of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act) and any modification to this consent must be made under Section 96 of the EP&A Act.

Based on its assessment, the Department is satisfied that the application can be characterised as a modification to the existing consent as the proposal would not significantly alter the approved layout or disturbance area of the development, nor would it significantly increase the environmental impacts of the development as approved.

The Minister for Planning is the approval authority for the application. However, under the Minister's delegation dated 11 October 2017, the Director, Resource Assessments may determine the proposed modification as Glenn Innes Severn Council does not object to the proposal, White Rock Solar Farm Pty Ltd has not made reportable political donations, and no public submissions were received on the proposal.

4. CONSULTATION

The Department made the application and EIS publicly available on its website on 18 December 2017. Given the minor nature of the application, the Department did not formally seek submissions on the application, but referred the application to Glenn Innes Severn Council, Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) and TransGrid for comment.

No concerns were raised by these agencies about the modification.

5. ASSESSMENT

In assessing the merits of the proposal, the Department has considered:

- the modification application;
- the EIS and conditions of consent for the original project;
- relevant environmental planning instruments, policies and guidelines, and
- the requirements of the EP&A Act.

The Department has considered the relevant issues in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Assessment of Issues

Issue	Consideration	Recommendation
Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A biodiversity assessment of the project area was undertaken to support the original development application. This included an assessment of the areas proposed for the temporary car park and revised 33 kV cable alignment. • The biodiversity assessment identified that the area proposed for the temporary car park comprises exotic pasture. A small area of Blakely's Red Gum-Yellow Box Grassy Woodland (an endangered ecological community) was mapped approximately 10 m to the north west of the car park. However, the car park would be separated from this vegetation by an approved access track. As an additional precaution, White Rock Solar is proposing to fence the car park to prevent access to that area. • White Rock Solar has approval to clear up to 0.21 hectares (ha) of the Blakely's Red Gum-Yellow Box Grassy Woodland for construction of the 33 kV cable. The proposed cable route would be slightly shorter overall than the approved route, and there would be no increase in the amount of clearing as a result of the modification. • Consequently, the Department is satisfied the modification would not increase the impacts on threatened species or endangered ecological communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comply with existing conditions.
Aboriginal Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Aboriginal heritage assessment of the project area was undertaken to support the original development application. • The Department is satisfied the modification would not increase the impacts on Aboriginal heritage as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – no Aboriginal heritage items were identified during archaeological surveys of the project area (which included the proposed modification areas); – OEH confirmed that the likelihood of undisturbed Aboriginal heritage items being present on the site is low during the assessment of the original development application; and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comply with existing conditions.

	– the existing conditions include measures to manage any unexpected Aboriginal heritage finds.	
Traffic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The modification would not increase the size or the number of vehicles entering or exiting the site, and there would be no material changes to the traffic or access arrangements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comply with existing conditions.
Visual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposed modification would not result in any material change to the existing visual amenity at sensitive receiver locations. The undulating landscape and existing vegetation would continue to provide a visual buffer between nearby residences and the development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comply with existing conditions.

6. RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS

The Department has drafted a recommended Notice of Modification (see **Appendix B**), as well as a consolidated version of the development consent as modified (see **Appendix C**). The only changes to the existing consent are an update to the definition of the EIS and a revised map of the general layout of the development in Appendix 1 of the development consent.

White Rock Solar has reviewed the proposed changes to the conditions and does not object to them.

7. CONCLUSION

The Department has assessed the modification application in accordance with the relevant statutory requirements, having regard to the EIS, comments from agencies, and documentation relating to the original project.

The Department's assessment has found that the proposed modification would not result in any impacts beyond those that were assessed and approved for the original project.

Consequently, the Department is satisfied that the proposed modification is in the interest of stakeholders and the public and should be approved.

8. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Director, Resource and Energy Assessments, as delegate of the Minister for Planning:

- **consider** the findings and recommendations of this report;
- **determine** that the modification application SSD 7487 MOD 1 falls within the scope of section 96(1A) of the EP&A Act;
- **modify** the development consent for the White Rock Solar Farm (SSD 7487); and
- **sign** the attached approval of the modification (**Appendix B**).

Recommended by:

 20/12/17

Rose-Anne Hawkeswood
Senior Planner
Resource and Energy Assessments

Recommended by:

 20/12/17

Matthew Riley
A/Team Leader
Resource and Energy Assessments

9. DECISION

The recommendation is Approved Not approved by:

 21/12/17

Clay Preshaw
Director
Resource and Energy Assessments
as delegate of the Minister for Planning

APPENDIX A:
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

See the Department's website at:

http://majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au/index.pl?action=view_job&job_id=8951

APPENDIX B:
NOTICE OF MODIFICATION

APPENDIX C:
CONSOLIDATED CONSENT
