

STATE SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT ASSESSMENT *Metz Solar Farm (SSD 7931)*

1. BACKGROUND

Infinergy Pacific (the Applicant) proposes to develop a new 100 megawatt (MW) solar farm near Armidale in the Armidale local government area (LGA).

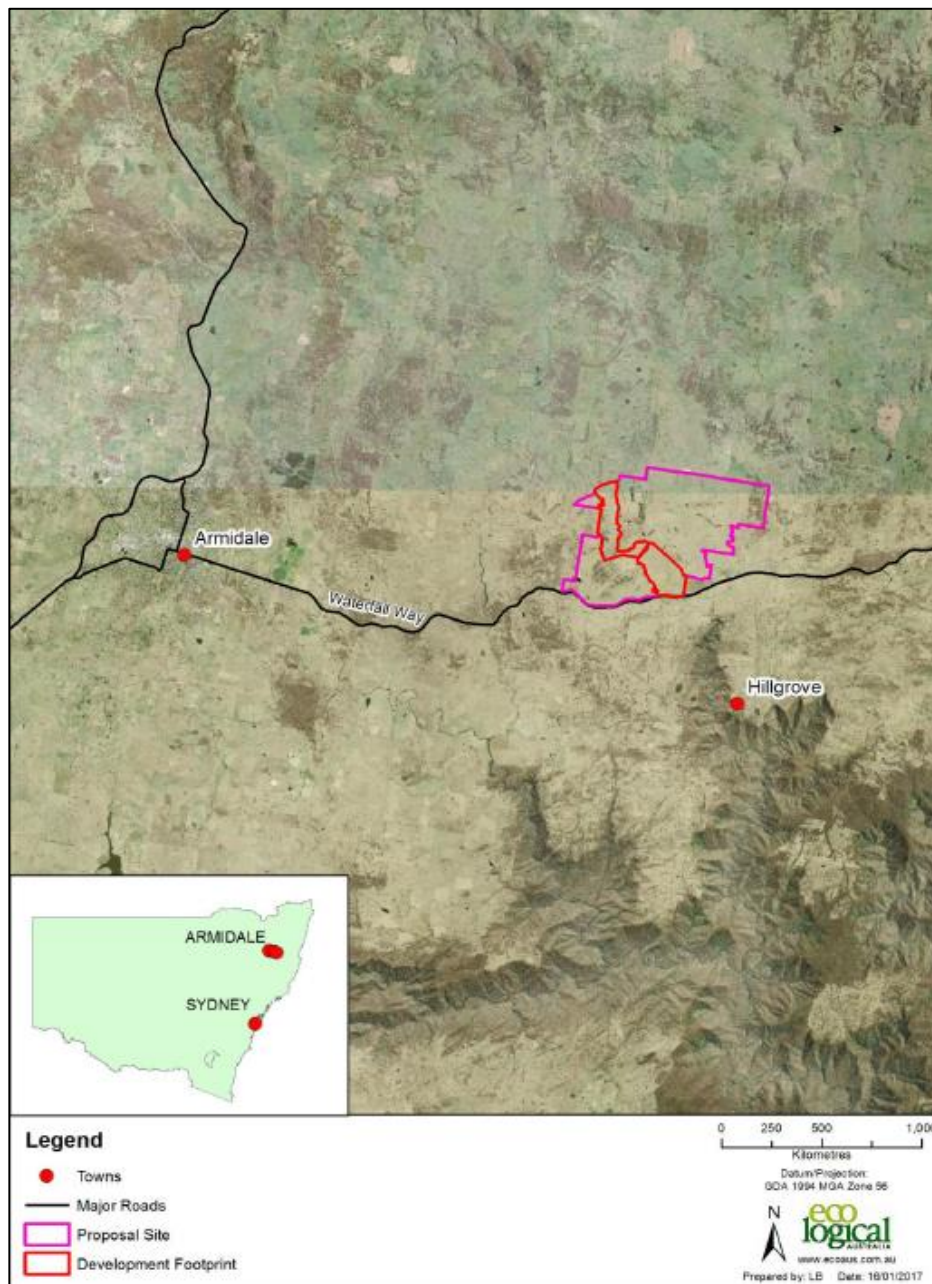


Figure 1: Regional Context

1.1 Project setting

The Metz Solar Farm (the project) site is located off Waterfall Way on a 2,946 hectare (ha) site, known as Bayley Park, approximately 18 kilometres (km) east of Armidale. (see **Figure 1**).

The development footprint within the site is 507 ha and has been designed to avoid native vegetation and Aboriginal cultural heritage items. The land is undulating and consists mostly of cleared agricultural land that has been used for cropping and grazing over several decades.

The nearest non-associated residences to the site are located approximately:

- 220 m south of the site (one residence); and
- 1,020 m south-west of the site (one residence).

1.2 Project description

The project involves the construction of a new solar farm with an initial capacity of 100 MW. It also involves any upgrading or decommissioning of infrastructure and equipment in the future. While the capacity of the proposed solar farm may increase over time as technology improves, the footprint of the development would not increase (without a further modification or development application).

The solar farm would connect to the national electricity grid via an existing 132 kilovolt (kV) transmission line located in the centre of the site.

Key components of the project are summarised in **Table 1**, depicted in **Figure 2** and described in detail in the environmental impact statement (EIS) for the project (see **Appendix B**).

Table 1: Major components of the project

Aspect	Description
<i>Project summary</i>	The project includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • approximately 400,000 solar panels supported by approximately 50,000 piles driven or screwed into the ground; • approximately 50 inverter stations (up to 2.9 m in height), each containing a 33 kV transformer; • an onsite substation, containing a 132 kV transformer and associated switchgear and directly connected into the existing 132 kV transmission line; • internal access tracks, staff amenities, offices, car parking and laydown area; • perimeter security fencing; and • vegetation screening along the southern and south-western boundaries of the site.
<i>Project area</i>	Approximately 2,946 ha, including a 507 ha development footprint
<i>Site entry</i>	The site would be accessed via three entry points on Bayley Park Road
<i>Road upgrades</i>	Key road works for the project would involve an upgrade of the access track along Bayley Park Road and the intersection of Bayley Park Road and Waterfall Way.
<i>Operational life</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The expected operational life of the initial infrastructure is 30 years. However, the project may involve infrastructure upgrades that could extend the operational life. • The project also includes decommissioning at the end of the project life, which would involve removing all above ground infrastructure and underground infrastructure.
<i>Construction and decommissioning traffic and timeframe</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The total construction period would last for 9 to 12 months, and would comprise: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a peak traffic period of approximately 6 months (up to 150 light vehicle, 34 heavy vehicle and 3 over dimensional vehicle movements a day); and - a non-peak period of approximately 5 months (up to 150 light vehicle and 22 heavy vehicle movements a day). • Construction hours would be limited to Monday to Friday 7 am - 6 pm, and Saturday 8 am - 1 pm.
<i>Hours of operation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The solar farm would operate during the day. • Daily operations and maintenance by site staff would be undertaken Monday to Friday 7 am - 6 pm, and Saturday 8 am - 1 pm.
<i>Employment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 150 full time equivalent jobs during the peak construction period (between 9 and 12 months) and approximately 8 full time equivalent operational jobs.
<i>Capital investment value</i>	\$130 million

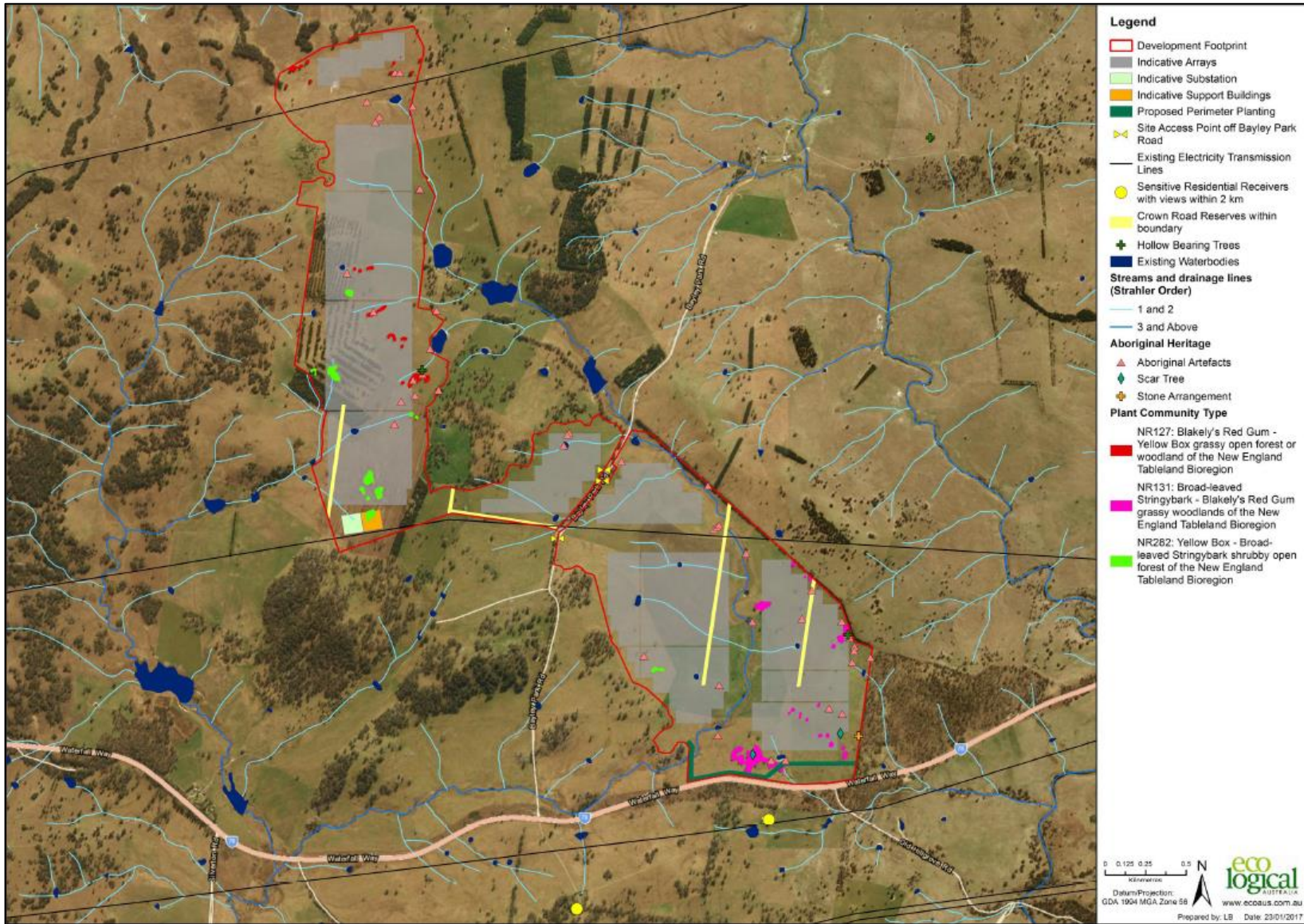


Figure 2: Project Layout

1.3 Strategic context

In 2016, the vast majority of energy in NSW was derived from fossil fuels, including 80.4% from coal and gas, and only 19.6% was derived from renewable energy sources. However, there are currently no plans for the development of new coal power stations in NSW, and the development of renewable energy sources, like wind and solar farms, is experiencing rapid growth.

This is highlighted in the recently released *Independent Review into the Future Security of the National Electricity Market* (the Finkel Review), which outlines a strategic approach to ensuring an orderly transition from traditional coal and gas fired power generation to renewable energy with lower emissions. It notes that Australia is heading towards zero emissions in the second half of the century.

The *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* (UNFCCC) has adopted the Paris Agreement, which aims to limit global warming to well below 2°C, with an aspirational goal of 1.5°C. Australia's contribution towards this target is a commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 26% to 28% below 2005 levels by 2030.

One of the key initiatives to deliver on this commitment is the Commonwealth Government's *Renewable Energy Target* (RET). Under this target, more than 20% of Australia's electricity would come from renewable energy by 2020. It is estimated that an additional 6,000 MW of new renewable energy capacity will need to be built by 2020 to achieve the *Renewable Energy Target*.

The *NSW Climate Change Policy Framework*, released in November 2016, sets an aspirational objective for NSW to achieve net zero emissions by 2050. The NSW Government also has a *Renewable Energy Action Plan*, which promotes the development of renewable energy in NSW.

NSW is currently leading Australia in large-scale solar, with four major operational projects, including the largest solar farm in Australia.

With an initial capacity of 100 MW, the project would generate enough power for around 40,000 homes, and is therefore consistent with both the Commonwealth's *Renewable Energy Target* and NSW's *Renewable Energy Action Plan*.

2. STATUTORY CONTEXT

2.1 State significant development

Under the *State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) (State and Regional Development) 2011*, the project is classified as State Significant Development (SSD) as it is an electricity generating activity with a capital investment value of more than \$30 million.

Consequently, the Minister for Planning is the consent authority for the development. However, under the Minister's delegation of 16 February 2015, the Executive Director, Resource Assessments and Business Systems, may determine the development application as there were less than 25 objections and no political donations have been reported.

2.2 Environmental planning instruments

The provisions of the *Armidale Dumaresq Local Environmental Plan (LEP) 2012* are discussed in **section 4.1** of this report.

Under the *SEPP (Infrastructure) 2007*, the project is permissible with development consent as it is an electricity generating works in a rural zone. In accordance with the Infrastructure SEPP, the Department has notified TransGrid of the proposed development. The Department has also confirmed that there is capacity to accommodate the Metz Solar Farm.

SEPP No. 44 – Koala Habitat Protection does not apply as there are no koalas, or koala habitat, within the project area or in the vicinity of the site.

The Department has considered the provisions of *SEPP No. 55 – Remediation of Land*. A preliminary assessment of the land found no contaminated land within the project site, and the Department is satisfied the site is suitable for the development.

2.3 Other approvals

Under the *Roads Act 1993*, the project requires approvals from the Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) and Armidale Regional Council (Council) for the proposed road upgrades. Under Section 89K of the EP&A Act, the assessment of the impacts of these upgrades is integrated into the planning approval process, and the conditions of these approvals must be consistent with the conditions of any development consent.

The Department has consulted with both RMS and Council during the approval process. Council has no concerns with the project, and RMS has no objections to the project subject to conditions. These conditions have been incorporated into the proposed conditions of consent.

3. CONSULTATION

The Department publicly exhibited the EIS from 24 March 2017 until 7 May 2017, and received twelve submissions on the project. These included nine from public authorities and three from members of the public.

3.1 Agency submissions

The Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) initially raised some concerns with biodiversity and heritage aspects of the project. However, these concerns have been addressed in the Applicant's Response to Submissions and through recommended conditions of consent. OEH has no residual concerns subject to the implementation of the recommended conditions.

The former Division of Resources and Energy (DRE) supports the project, as it aligns with the NSW Government policy to increase renewable energy generation, jobs and investment in the State.

Armidale Regional Council has confirmed it also supports the project, noting the environmental, social and economic benefits to the region.

The recommendations from other public authorities are discussed in the relevant sections of this report.

3.2 Public submissions

The Nature Conservation Council (NCC) supports the project, noting the environmental and social benefits.

An objection was received from the landowner of the nearest residential dwelling (220 m south of the site). This submission and subsequent correspondence from the landowner raised concerns about visual impacts, noise impacts, effects of glint and glare on road users and land compatibility. The concerns raised in this public submission are addressed in detail in **section 4** of this report.

The other two public submissions (one objecting and one providing comments) primarily raised concerns about the impact of solar energy on electricity security and prices. These matters are addressed in **section 4.5** below.

The Department and various Government agency representatives inspected the project site with the Applicant on 20 September 2016. During a second site inspection on 21 June 2017, the Department and Council also separately visited the owner of the nearest residence to discuss their concerns.

4. ASSESSMENT

The Department has undertaken a comprehensive assessment of the merits of the project. This report provides a detailed discussion of the five key issues below, including the compatibility of the proposed land use, visual impacts, biodiversity impacts, traffic impacts and electricity security and prices.

The Department has also considered the full range of potential impacts associated with the project and has included a summary of the conclusions relating to these in **Table 2**.

4.1 Compatibility of proposed land use

Provisions of the Armidale Dumaresq LEP

The project site is located wholly within the RU1 Primary Production zone under the Armidale Dumaresq LEP.

The RU1 zone includes various land uses that are permitted both with, and without, consent. As a solar farm is not expressly listed as permitted with consent or without consent, it would be considered a prohibited land use under a strict reading of the LEP zoning table.

However, based on a broader reading of the LEP, and consideration of the objectives of the RU1 zone and other Council strategic documents, the Department is satisfied that there is no clear intention to prevent the development of a solar farm on the project site.

Firstly, the Armidale Dumaresq LEP expressly references the Infrastructure SEPP and acknowledges that electricity generating works and solar energy systems are regulated by the Infrastructure SEPP, rather than the LEP. As described above, a solar farm is permitted with consent under the Infrastructure SEPP.

Secondly, the project is consistent with the objectives of the RU1 zone, particularly in relation to:

- encouraging diversity in primary industry enterprises;
- allowing non-agricultural land uses that will not restrict the use of other land in the locality for agricultural purposes; and
- minimising fragmentation and alienation of resource lands.

Thirdly, the proposed solar farm is in line with Council's strategic objectives relating to sustainability and the custodianship of the local environment. Specifically, the project would improve energy efficiency and increase the use of renewable energy, which is a strategic objective of the *Armidale Dumaresq Community Strategic Plan (2013-2028)*.

The project would encourage a new element of agricultural enterprise and diversity through the generation of solar energy. The proposed solar farm would not fragment or alienate any resource lands during its operation as it has generally low impacts and it could be easily returned to agricultural land in the future once decommissioned, whilst managed grazing may also occur during operations.

Further, the Department notes that Council and Department of Primary Industries (DPI) – Agriculture has no concerns with the project.

Potential impacts on agricultural land

The project site is located within the north-eastern region of NSW, which has a strong and diverse agricultural sector. Grazing is the most significant land use in the region.

The site covers a 507 ha area and currently supports cattle and some sheep grazing. Given the relatively small size of the site, the loss of grazing land would result in a negligible reduction in the overall productivity of the region.

Furthermore, the inherent agricultural capability of the land would not be affected by the project due to the relatively low scale of the development. Managed grazing may be used to maintain the height of ground cover during operations and the land returned to agricultural use following decommissioning.

The potential loss of a small area of grazing and/or cropping land in the region must be balanced against:

- the broader strategic goals of the Commonwealth and NSW governments for the development of renewable energy;
- the environmental benefits of solar energy, particularly in relation to reducing greenhouse gas emissions; and
- the economic benefits of solar energy in an area with good solar resources and capacity in the existing electricity infrastructure.

Based on these considerations, the Department is satisfied that the proposed solar farm represents an effective and compatible use of the land within the region.

In addition, the Department has recommended suitable conditions to maintain the productivity of the agricultural land during the construction, operation and decommissioning of the project.

4.2 Visual

The two residences located south of the site would have views of parts of the solar farm.

The Department has visited the project site during the assessment process, and considers that the topography and existing trees scattered between the residences and the project boundary would restrict views of the site from these residences. In addition, the elevation in the south and south-west of the site would naturally screen the majority of the solar farm from residences.

The Department considers the undulating topography and scattered vegetation, in combination with the distance from the project site (more than 1 km), would result in minimal visual impacts to Residence 2.

The Department has received several submissions from the landowner of the nearest residence to the project (Residence 1), which is located approximately 220 m to the south of the site and approximately 550 m south of the nearest solar array (see **Figure 2**). This landowner raised concerns about potential visual impacts, specifically in relation to solar arrays positioned on a slightly elevated area in the southern area of the project.

In response to these concerns, the Applicant has amended the location of solar arrays in the southern area of the project by moving the solar arrays 100 m further away from Residence 1 (ie. to 550 m from the residence). The Applicant has also proposed a vegetation buffer along the southern boundary of the site to mitigate visual impacts on this residence.

The amended location of the solar arrays in the southern area of the project significantly reduces the number of solar arrays that would be visible from Residence 1. The Department considers any residual solar arrays that would be visible from Residence 1 would be effectively screened through the implementation of a vegetation buffer.

The landowner of Residence 1 raised concerns about the adequacy of the proposed vegetation buffer to screen views of the solar farm from their dwelling and property. However, the Department has included several requirements in the recommended conditions to ensure that the proposed vegetation buffer would adequately screen views from surrounding residences (particularly Residence 1), including requirements for the buffer to:

- be established prior to the commencement of operations, and to include planting in the buffer to augment the existing vegetation within the curtilage of the site;
- effectively at screening views of the solar panels and ancillary infrastructure from surrounding residences within 3 years of the commencement of construction; and
- consist of species that facilitates the best possible outcome in terms of visual screening (i.e. the buffer does not have to consist only of native vegetation).

Further, the Applicant must prepare a Landscaping Plan for the site in consultation with RMS, OEH, Council and the owners of Residence 1, which would include a detailed description of the measures to ensure the effectiveness of the vegetation buffer. This plan must also include a program to monitor and report on the effectiveness of these measures.

Residence 1 also raised concerns relating to the visual effects of glint and glare. Photovoltaic panels are designed to absorb rather than reflect the sun's radiation, and the Department is satisfied that the project would not cause a noticeable glare compared to other roofs or building surfaces.

In relation to visual impacts to motorists travelling along Waterfall Way, the Department considers that the views to the site would be restricted and the vegetation buffer proposed for the southern boundary of the site would effectively screen any partial views of the solar farm from motorists travelling along Waterfall Way.

RMS has confirmed it is satisfied that the vegetation buffer would mitigate visual impacts to road users on Waterfall Way, noting any issues associated with project visibility distracting traffic could be addressed and incorporated into the Traffic Management Plan.

The Department has also required that external lighting is minimised and complies with the relevant Australian Standards, and prohibits any signage or advertising on the development, unless it is required for safety purposes.

Based on these considerations and subject to the recommended conditions, the Department has concluded that there would be no significant visual impacts on the surrounding residences or motorists on Waterfall Way.

4.3 Biodiversity

The project site comprises agricultural land that is mostly cleared and highly disturbed, as it was historically used for grazing or cropping. Ground cover across the site mostly comprises exotic grasses such as *Lolium* sp. and *Bromus* sp., which were introduced to improve grazing pasture.

Although there are several isolated patches of remnant native woodland vegetation scattered throughout, plantations of Radiata Pine are the dominant woodland on the project site. No threatened flora or fauna species were identified within the project site.

The Applicant has sought to avoid and minimise the biodiversity impacts of the project by locating the key project components in mostly cleared and disturbed land. Early consultation with OEH resulted in the Applicant refining and significantly reducing the proposed footprint to ensure large patches of good quality native vegetation, threatened species habitat and Endangered Ecological Communities (EECs) are avoided.

Notwithstanding this, 5.75 ha of native vegetation, comprising three distinct plant community types of moderate to good condition, would be cleared for the project. The Department and OEH accept these impacts and consider that the Applicant has significantly reduced the biodiversity impacts in comparison to the impacts initially proposed. Furthermore, the retention of this vegetation would have significant impacts on the layout and energy efficiency of the project.

The Department has recommended conditions requiring the impacts to be offset in accordance with *NSW Biodiversity Offsets Policy*. The Applicant has calculated the offset credits in accordance with the *Framework for Biodiversity Assessment (FBA)*, and OEH has confirmed that the loss of 5.75 ha of native vegetation would require 85 ecosystem credits to be retired.

The Department has also recommended a condition that requires the Applicant to retire the required biodiversity offset credits within two years. The Applicant must prepare a Biodiversity Management Plan prior to commencement of development, which would include measures to manage and minimise impacts to biodiversity.

Subject to the recommended conditions, the Department and OEH are satisfied that the project could be undertaken in a manner that maintains or improves the biodiversity values of the locality over the medium to long term.

4.4 Traffic and Transport

The project would be accessed via Waterfall Way and Bayley Park Road, with the majority of traffic associated with the project travelling from Armidale, located to the west of the project.

The main increase in traffic volumes associated with the project would occur during periods of construction, decommissioning and any infrastructure or equipment upgrades.

The construction period is expected to last up to 12 months, including a peak period of around 6 months. The estimated maximum daily vehicle movements during construction would be 150 light vehicles and 34 heavy vehicles. Three over-dimensional vehicle movements would be required to transport the substation transformer and switch room components. Traffic during operations would be negligible.

During the consultation period, RMS has specified that a Austroads Basic Left Turn (BAL) treatment be provided at the intersection of Bayley Park Road and Waterfall Way, to allow left turning in and out of Bayley Park Road. In addition, RMS advised that the site entrance should be widened and sealed for at least 80 m from the edge of Waterfall Way.

The Applicant accepts the proposed upgrades and has confirmed the upgrades would be designed and constructed to the satisfaction of RMS under a Works Authorisation Deed.

The site is currently accessed via three entry points located off Bayley Park Road. Council has advised that Bayley Park Road would not require road upgrades, provided the Applicant undertakes pre-construction dilapidation surveys to assess whether upgrades would be required following construction. This has been included in the Department's recommended conditions.

The Department has recommended conditions requiring the Applicant to:

- undertake the relevant road upgrades prior to the commencement of construction;
- ensure the length of vehicles accessing the site does not exceed 19 m;
- ensure the number of vehicles does not exceed:
 - 34 heavy vehicle movements a day during construction, upgrading or decommissioning; and
 - 8 heavy vehicle movements a day during operations;
- prepare and implement a TMP in consultation with RMS and Council.

Subject to the recommended conditions, the Department, RMS and Council are satisfied that the project would not result in significant impacts on road network capacity, efficiency or safety.

4.5 Electricity security

Concerns were raised in two submissions that the project, or a combination of the project and a range of other renewable energy projects, could have an adverse impact on energy security in NSW and increase electricity prices.

These concerns were expressed at a high level, and were not supported by any detailed evidence showing how intermittent energy in general could act affect energy security and/or electricity prices, or how this project in particular would do that.

This makes it difficult, if not impossible, for the Department to evaluate these concerns in any meaningful way, particularly in the context where it is required to look at the planning merits of this particular project.

Any such evaluation, however, would need to have regard to the broader strategic context on these matters.

First, there is strong policy support - at both the Commonwealth and State level - for the increased development of renewable energy projects to ensure a greater proportion of electricity is generated by the renewable energy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with any electricity generation.

Second, NSW forms part of the National electricity market. This market is complex, and is governed by a robust statutory framework – at both Commonwealth and State level – covering the regulation of electricity generation, distribution and pricing.

In the Department's view, the likelihood of the project having an adverse impact on energy security or electricity prices in NSW is extremely low, given that it would only add 100 MW of capacity to the National electricity market, which at this stage has a total generation capacity of over 47,000 MW.

Further, any incremental or cumulative impacts associated with the potential intermittency of renewable energy projects could be mitigated through the operation of electricity market.

4.6 Other Issues

A summary of the Department's consideration of other issues is provided in **Table 2**.

Table 2: Other issues

Issue	Consideration	Recommendations
Noise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed construction, upgrading and decommissioning activities would largely comply with the noise management levels in the <i>Interim Construction Noise Guideline</i> (ICNG). • However, there would be short-term exceedances at one residence (Residence 1) when construction works occur at the project boundary adjacent to this residence. 	<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 ICNG. • Restrict construction hours to Monday to Friday 7 am - 6 pm, and

Issue	Consideration	Recommendations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Applicant has refined the location of the solar arrays to increase the distance from Residence 1. The noise levels would only be only for a limited period and would still remain well below the highly affected noise level of 75dB(A) in the ICNG. Additionally, the Department considers construction noise can be minimised by implementing the noise mitigation work practices set out in the EIS and in Tables 5 and 8 of the <i>Interim Construction Noise Guideline</i> (ICNG). These include scheduling activities to minimise noise, using quieter equipment, informing the immediately surrounding landowners and establishing a complaints handling procedure. There would be negligible noise during operation. 	<p>Saturday 8 am - 1 pm, and at no time on Sundays and NSW public holidays.</p>
Water and Erosion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project would require approximately 11 megalitres (ML) of water during construction (primarily for dust suppression), and approximately 0.25 megalitres per year during operation (primarily to wash the solar panels). The water source is not yet defined but for construction is likely to be either groundwater from offsite delivered to site by truck, or rain water captured and stored on site. Potential erosion and sedimentation risks associated with the project can be effectively managed using best practice construction techniques. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prohibit water pollution. Undertake activities in accordance with OEH's <i>Managing Urban Stormwater: Soils and Construction</i> (Landcom, 2004) manual.
Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two Aboriginal scarred trees (moderate to high significance) and one stone arrangement (high significance) were identified during on-site inspections. None of these items would be impacted by the proposal. One scarred tree is outside the development footprint and a 10 m buffer zone surrounding the remaining scarred tree and stone arrangement would be established. Given the highly disturbed nature of the site, the likelihood of identifying unexpected items during construction is low. If Aboriginal artefacts or skeletal material are identified, all work would cease and the Chance Finds Protocol would be implemented. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cease works and notify the NSW Police and OEH if human remains are identified over the life of the project. Prepare a Chance Finds Protocol. Protect all heritage items on site, including those that would remain in situ as well as those that are relocated, from any impact.
Hazards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project would comply with the National Health and Medical Research Council standards for electro-magnetic fields. There are fire risks associated with all large solar farm developments. These risks can be suitably controlled through the implementation of standard fire management procedures. Fire and Rescue NSW recommended a Emergency Response Plan to be prepared for the development outlining how these risks would be managed. The Rural Fire Service advised that the site should be maintained to Asset Protection Zone Standards, including a 10 m asset protection zone, and that a Bushfire Management Plan be implemented. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare an Emergency Response Plan in consultation with the Rural Fire Service and Fire & Rescue NSW. Prepare a Bushfire Management Plan in consultation with the Rural Fire Service. Ensure that the development complies with the relevant asset protection requirements in the RFS's <i>Planning for Bushfire Protection 2006</i> (or equivalent). Establish on-site water tank dedicated for firefighting purposes (as referred to in EIS).
Mineral Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DRE did not identify any potential resource sterilisation issues with the project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No recommendations.

5. CONCLUSION

The Department has assessed the development application, the EIS, the submissions, the Applicant's Response to Submissions (see **Appendices B, C and D**), and additional information provided by the Applicant and relevant government agencies. The Department has considered the objects of the EP&A Act and the relevant considerations under section 79C in its assessment of the project.

The Department considers the site to be appropriate for a solar farm as it has good solar resources, has been largely cleared for agricultural uses and can be developed with minimal vegetation clearing or impact

to items of Aboriginal cultural heritage significance. In addition, the site is located close to the electricity grid, which has spare capacity to accommodate any electricity generated by the project.

The project would not result in any significant reduction in the overall agricultural productivity of the region. Additionally, the site could be easily returned to agricultural uses after the project is decommissioned and the inherent agricultural capability of the land would not be affected.

Potential visual impacts of the solar farm on surrounding residences could also be managed through the establishment of a vegetation buffer along the southern boundary of the project.

The project would assist in transitioning the electricity sector from coal and gas-fired power stations to renewable energy sources. It would generate up to approximately 236,000 MWh of clean electricity annually, which would power about 40,000 homes and save up to 227,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions per year. Consequently, it is consistent with the goals of the Commonwealth RET and the NSW *Renewable Energy Action Plan*.

The Department is satisfied that the project achieves a reasonable balance between maximising the use of the solar resources on site and spare capacity in the electricity grid, and minimising the potential impacts on surrounding land users and the environment. The project would also stimulate economic investment in renewable energy and provide flow-on benefits to the local community through job creation and capital investment.

On balance, the Department believes that the project is in the public interest and should be approved, subject to conditions

6. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Executive Director:

- **considers** the findings and recommendations of this assessment report;
- **approves** the development application for the Metz Solar Farm; and
- **signs** the attached recommended conditions of consent (**Appendix A**).

 14/07/17

Tim Stuckey
Planning Officer
Resource and Energy Assessments

 14/7/17

Clay Preshaw
Director
Resource and Energy Assessments

APPENDIX A:

Recommended Conditions of Consent

See website at http://majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au/index.pl?action=view_job&job_id=7931

APPENDIX B:

Environmental Impact Statement

See website at http://majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au/index.pl?action=view_job&job_id=7931

APPENDIX C:

Submissions

See website at http://majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au/index.pl?action=view_job&job_id=7931

APPENDIX D:

Response to Submissions

See website at http://majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au/index.pl?action=view_job&job_id=7931

APPENDIX E: **Additional Information**

See website at http://majorprojects.planning.nsw.gov.au/index.pl?action=view_job&job_id=7931
