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# Mologa Solar Hybrid

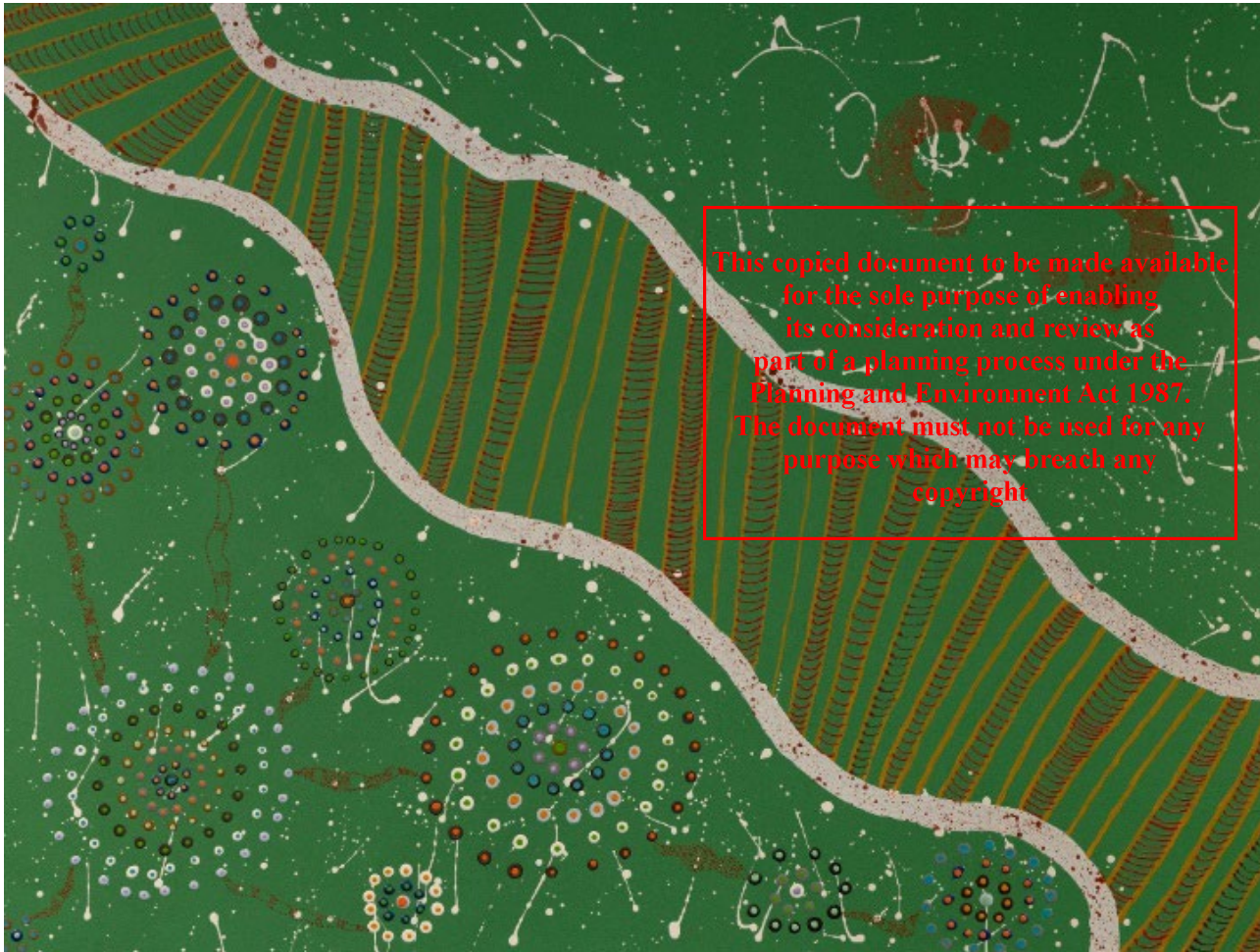
## *Town Planning Report*

July 2026

Prepared for: Potentia Energy

# Acknowledgment of Country

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Urbis acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands we operate on.

We recognise that First Nations sovereignty was never ceded and respect First Nations peoples continuing connection to these lands, waterways and ecosystems for over 60,000 years.

We pay our respects to First Nations Elders, past and present.

*The river is the symbol of the Dreaming and the journey of life. The circles and lines represent people meeting and connections across time and space. When we are working in different places, we can still be connected and work towards the same goal.*

Urbis is committed to incorporating our respect for First Nations cultures, peoples and storytelling in our work across the Country. We are proud to have partnered with Darug Nation artist, **Hayley Pigram**, and to profile her artwork - **Sacred River Dreaming**.

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| Report Number      | VI                                |

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## Submission documents:

This report is to be read in conjunction with:

- Appendix A – Certificates of Title
- Appendix B – Engagement Outcomes Report prepared by Urbis, dated March 2026
- Appendix C – Agricultural Impact Assessment prepared by RMCG, dated 13 April 2026
- Appendix D – Biodiversity Impact Assessment prepared by Ecology Systems, dated 1 June 2026
- Appendix E – Bushfire Risk Assessment prepared by Ecology and Heritage Partners, dated 29 June 2026
- Appendix F – Risk Management Plan prepared by Ecology and Heritage Partners 29 June 2026
- Appendix G – Hydrology and Irrigation District Assessment prepared by EcoLogical Australia, dated 23 July 2026
- Appendix H – Cultural Heritage Management Plan Draft prepared by Urbis Heritage, dated April 2026
- Appendix I – Site Plan prepared by Urbis, dated 23 July 2026
- Appendix J – Elevations and Specifications prepared by Urbis 23 July 2026
- Appendix K – Traffic Impact Assessment prepared by Urbis, dated 23 July 2026
- Appendix L – Landscape Strategy prepared by Urbis 23 July 2026
- Appendix M – Visual Impact Assessment prepared by Urbis, dated 23 July 2026
- Appendix N – Noise Impact Assessment prepared by WSP, dated 23 July 2026
- Appendix O – Environmental Management Plan Framework prepared by Urbis, dated May 2026
- Appendix S – GHG Emissions Reduction Benefits Report prepared by Urbis, dated July 2026

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## Executive Summary

Urbis Ltd acts on behalf of Potentia Energy (the permit applicant) in support of a planning permit application to use and develop land for renewable energy facility (solar energy facility) and utility installation (Battery Energy Storage System), on land in Mologa, more specifically east of Bendigo-Pyramid Road, and south of Mologa-Durham Ox Road.

Approval of this application is sought under Clause 53.22 – Significant Economic Development of the Loddon Planning Scheme.

Pursuant to Clause 72.01-1 of the Loddon Planning Scheme, the Minister for Planning is the responsible authority for a use or development to which Clause 53.22 applies.

### 1.1 Project Summary

#### Site Particulars

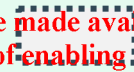


**Location |** to the east of Bendigo-Pyramid Road and south of Mologa-Durham Ox Road, in Mologa.

The subject site is described by the following Certificates of Title:

- Crown Allotment 6 Section A Parish of Mologa.
  - Volume: 9056 & Folio: 961
- Crown Allotment 7 Section A Parish of Mologa
  - Volume: 2429 & Folio: 740
- Crown Allotment 8 Section A Parish of Mologa
  - Volume: 7628 & Folio: 185
- Crown Allotment 17 Section A Parish of Mologa
  - Volume: 9056 & Folio: 962

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- Crown Allotments 17A, 18A, & 18 Section A Parish of Mologa
  - Volume: 10991 & Folio: 175
- Crown Allotment 17B Section A Parish of Mologa
  - Volume: 2667 & Folio: 397
- Crown Allotment 17C Section A Parish of Mologa
  - Volume: 10407 & Folio: 536

**Nearest townships:** Mitiamo (9km), Pyramid Hill (12km)

**Size |** Approx. 591 Hectares

**Energy Contribution |** 325MWdc / 250MW Solar Farm. 250MW, 4-hour BESS, connected to an existing 220kV transmission line.

**Land use |** A combination of a solar energy facility and BESS, and sheep grazing retains agricultural use. The site is suitable for seasonal grazing during drier months. See Proposal and Agricultural Assessment.



**Victoria's emissions reductions target |** The proposal will contribute to Victoria's emissions reductions target by providing 250MW of clean energy to the grid.

### 1.2 Loddon Planning Scheme

The site is affected by the following planning controls and permissions.

Table 1 – Planning Controls and Permissions

#### Controls/Provisions

#### Permissions

|                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Farming Zone (FZ)</b>                             | <p>A permit is required to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For the use of the land as a Renewable Energy Facility and Utility Installation under Clause 35.07-1 (Section 2)</li> <li>To construct or carry out a building or works associated with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A use in Section 2 of Clause 35.07-1</li> <li>Earthworks (includes changing the rate of flow)</li> <li>100 metres from a waterway, wetlands or designated flood plain or, the distance specified in the schedule to this zone.</li> <li>Minimum setback from a TRZ2 – 100 metres</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
| <b>Land Subject to Inundation Overlay (LSIO)</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A permit is required to construct a building or to construct or carry out works within the LSIO area.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Specific Controls Overlay – Schedule 2 (SCO2)</b> | <p>Incorporated Document affects the site:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SCO2 – Goulburn–Murray Water: Connections Project and Water Efficiency Project Incorporated Document, November 2021</li> <li>No permit triggers under this overlay</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Clause 52.06 – Signs</b>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A permit is required to display signage (Business identification sign)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Clause 52.17 – Native Vegetation</b>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A permit is required to remove, destroy or lop native vegetation, including dead native vegetation, subject to some exemptions.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

#### Bushfire Prone Area

- Compliance with the bushfire construction requirements required under the BPA.

## 1.3 Planning Pathway

### Clause 53.22 ‘Significant Economic Development’

On 4 April 2024 Amendment VC261 was gazetted into the Loddon Planning Scheme. Amendment VC261 introduced additional land uses to Table 2 of Clause 53.22-1, being:

- ✓ Renewable energy facility with an installed capacity of 1 megawatt or greater.
- ✓ Utility installation used to transmit or distribute electricity or store electricity with an installed capacity of 1 megawatt or greater.

As the proposal is for a renewable energy facility and for a utility installation with capacity of approximately 250 MW and 250 MW respectively, the proposal qualifies for assessment under this Clause.

Ver further note that:

- ✓ According to the Biodiversity Impact Assessment no referral is required to be submitted to the Impact Assessment team within the Victorian Department of Transport and Planning, given the proposed impacts to biodiversity do not meet the criteria for an Environmental Effects Statement referral.
- ✓ No referral is required under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act). The project will not result in a significant impact to any biodiversity-related MNES as all TECs and habitat for threatened species identified within the study area will be avoided. No Ramsar wetlands are situated within or near the study area. Notwithstanding, the applicant will lodge an EPBC referral to confirm no EPBC vegetation is impacted by the proposed development.

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As such, the proposal is eligible for expedited assessment as part of the Department of Transport and Planning's Development Facilitation Program.

Pursuant to Clause 72.01-1, the Minister for Planning is the Responsible Authority for the application.

## 1.4 Assessment Summary

This planning report describes the subject site and surrounding context. It further details the proposed works and provides detailed assessment against the relevant planning controls and policies contained within the Loddon Planning Scheme.

Overall, this report demonstrates that the proposal is an acceptable and appropriate outcome for the site for the following reasons:

- ✓ The proposal is considered suitable for assessment under the Development Facilitation Program pursuant to Clause 53.22. It is consistent with the statutory and strategic frameworks of the Loddon Planning Scheme.
- ✓ The development will deliver approximately 250MW of Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) capacity to hold solar energy generated by the developments solar panels, making it a Hybrid project. This will make a significant contribution to Victoria's renewable energy and emissions reduction targets, while also supporting grid stability, as detailed in this report.
- ✓ A Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP) is currently being prepared.
- ✓ The design has sought to minimise environmental impacts, with large areas of native vegetation being avoided and only minimal removal required, to the extent required to meet CFA requirements. Where removal is necessary, appropriate offsets will be provided.
- ✓ The siting and design respond sensitively to site conditions, preserving on-site waterbodies and existing vegetation. The proposal has been designed to manage bushfire risk in accordance with all relevant legislation and guidelines.

- ✓ Flood assessment found low overall flood risk (H1 classification) with negligible change in peak flows under proposed conditions; all infrastructure sited at least 30 m from Blind Creek and drainage channels.
- ✓ The proposal will not impact on the current or future viability of the irrigation district as the site is not currently irrigated and there is an insufficient amount of water under the current delivery share or spare capacity in the channel to support a future commercial irrigation operation of the site. The project will allow for the continuation of agricultural use, with sheep grazing across the solar farm. Following decommissioning, the site can be restored to its existing condition.
- ✓ The proposal will not result in unreasonable amenity impacts for surrounding properties, including in relation to visual appearance and noise.

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For these reasons, Urbis, on behalf of the permit applicant, requests that the Minister for Planning resolve to issue a planning permit for the proposal as outlined in the submission.

## 1.5 Summary of Documentation

The application demonstrates that the proposed renewable energy installation (solar farm) and utility installation (BESS) is an appropriate use and form of development for the site when assessed against the Loddon Planning Scheme and all relevant State and Commonwealth legislation, policies and guidelines. In support of the application, the following documents are, or will be, provided at a later date.

- Certificates of Title (Appendix A)
- Engagement Outcomes Report (Urbis) (Appendix B)
- Agricultural Impact Assessment (RMCG) (Appendix C)
- Biodiversity Impact Assessment (Ecology Systems) (Appendix D)
- Bushfire Risk Assessment (Ecology and Heritage Partners) (Appendix E)
- Risk Management Plan (Ecology and Heritage Partners) (Appendix F)

- Hydrology and Irrigation District Assessment (EcoLogical Australia) (Appendix G)
- Cultural Heritage Management Plan Draft (Urbis) (Appendix H)
- Site Plan (Urbis) (Appendix I)
- Elevations and Specifications (Urbis) (Appendix J)
- Traffic Impact Assessment (Urbis) (Appendix K)
- Landscape Strategy (Urbis) (Appendix L)
- Visual Impact Assessment (Urbis) (Appendix M)
- Noise Impact Assessment (WSP) (Appendix N)
- Environmental Management Plan Framework (Urbis) (Appendix O)
- Clause 53.13 Assessment (Urbis) (Appendix P)
- Farming Zone Assessment (Urbis) (Appendix Q)
- Solar Energy Facility Design and Development Guidelines Assessment (Urbis) (Appendix R)
- Appendix S – GHG Emissions Reduction Benefits Report (Urbis) (Appendix S)

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## 2 Site Context

### 2.1 Subject Site

Key details of the site are as follows.

Table 2 – Site Details

| Category                   | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Area                       | Frontages                                                                                                     | Title / Easements                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Existing Conditions</b> | Agricultural land mainly used for cropping and some limited grazing. Two shed buildings located in the western portion of the site. Blind Creek extends through the eastern portion of the site. Twelve dams are located on site. Native vegetation is predominantly located on the eastern edge of the site. A transmission line runs north-south through the western portion of the site. Old Church Road bisects the eastern portion of the site.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Approximately 591 hectares | North: Mologa-Durham Ox Road (3km)<br>East: Mitiamo-Mologa Road (1.5km)<br>West: Bendigo-Pyramid Road (2.1km) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Titles:</b> CA 17, CA18 and CA18A Section A Parish of Mologa; CA 17A Section A Parish of Mologa; CA 17B Section A Parish of Mologa; CA 17C Section A Parish of Mologa; CA 8 Section A Parish of Mologa; CA 7 Section A Parish Mologa; CA 6 Section A Parish of Mologa.</li> <li><b>Easements:</b> Water supply and drainage easement   E-2 – Transmission Line easement   E2 – Access easement</li> <li><b>Agreement:</b> Section 72(1) Conservation Forest and Lands Act 1987 – X210216E 14/12/2000</li> </ul> |
| <b>Location</b>            | <p>The site is located in Mologa, a locality in Loddon Shire. The site is approximately 65km north of Bendigo and 51km west of Echuca.</p> <p>The subject site is described by the following Certificates of Title:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Crown Allotment 6 Section A Parish of Mologa. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Volume: 9056 &amp; Folio: 961</li> </ul> </li> <li>Crown Allotment 7 Section A Parish of Mologa <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Volume: 2429 &amp; Folio: 740</li> </ul> </li> <li>Crown Allotment 8 Section A Parish of Mologa <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Volume: 7628 &amp; Folio: 185</li> </ul> </li> <li>Crown Allotment 17 Section A Parish of Mologa</li> </ul> |                            |                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                            | <b>Vehicle Access</b>                                                                                         | Access is currently provided via Bendigo-Pyramid Road to the west (sealed), Mologa-Durham Ox Road                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

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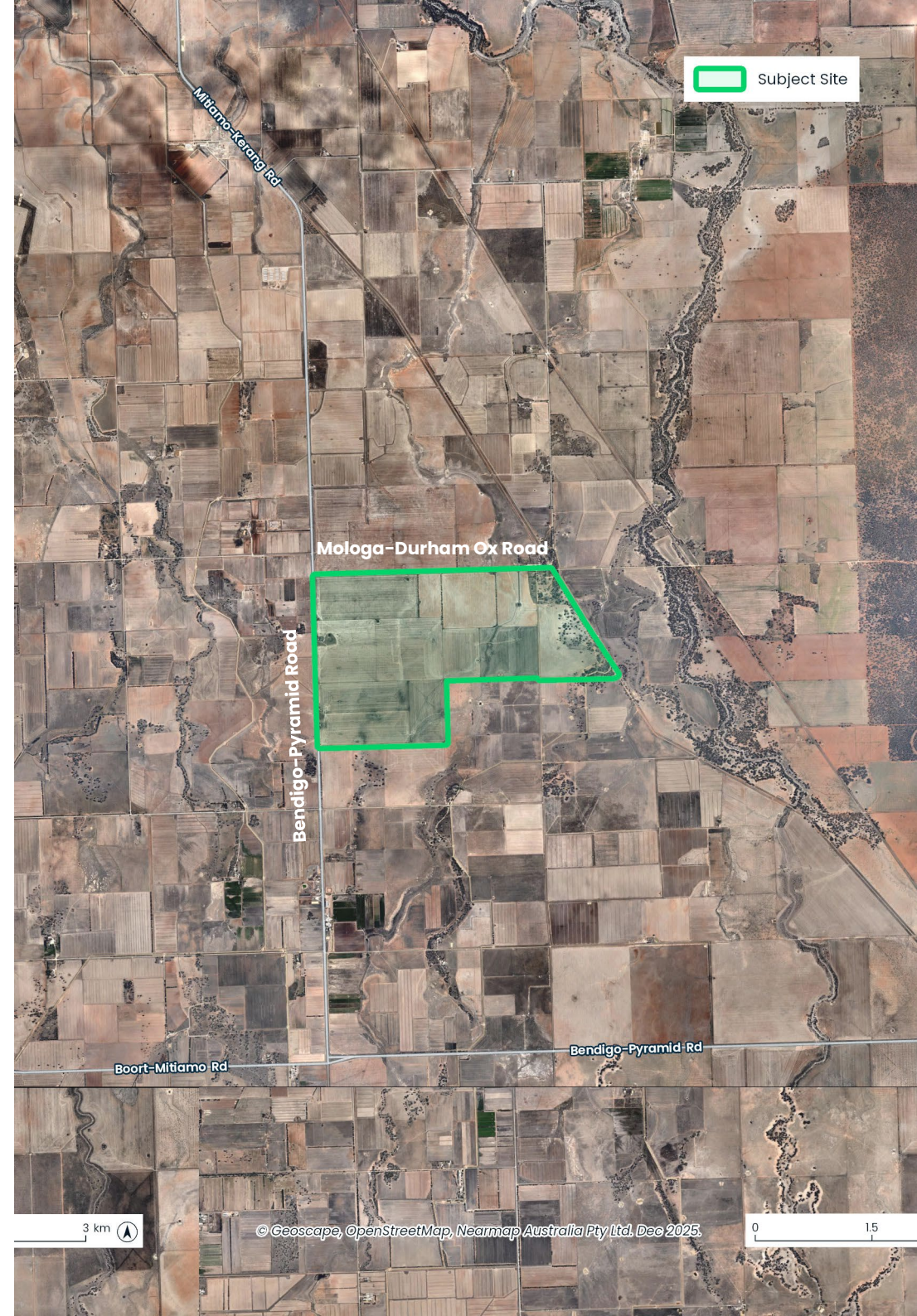
to the north (unsealed), and Old Church Road (unsealed) in the eastern portion of the site.

### Vegetation

Areas of native vegetation are primarily located in the eastern areas of the site, and some native grassland in the area around the sheds and uncropped area adjacent to Bendigo-Pyramid Road. Rows of trees and native understorey are also present running north to south in the northern portion of the site.

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## 2.2 Immediate Surrounds

### 2.2.1 North

Immediately north of the site is Mologa-Durham Ox Road, running east to west. The parcels of land to the north are primarily farming paddocks used for cropping and grazing. To the north-east is 5 Mitiamo-Kerang Road, Mologa, the closest neighbouring residential property.

### 2.2.2 East

Immediately east of the site is Mitiamo-Kerang Road, running from north-west to south-east. Further east is Irrigation Channel No. 3-1 and 2518 Mologa-Durham Ox Road, Mologa, another nearby residential property. The land parcels to the east are primarily farming paddocks used for cropping and grazing. Bullock Creek and Terrick Terrick National Park are located further to the east.



Figure 1 - 5 Mitiamo-Kerang Road, Mologa

Figure 2 - 2518 Mologa-Durham Ox Road, Mologa

### 2.2.3 South

Immediately south of the site are parcels of land that are primarily farming paddocks used for cropping and grazing. Further south is 1107 Yarrowalla East Road, Mitiamo, 1108 Yarrowalla East Road, Mitiamo, & 843 Yarrowalla East Road Mologa, and the irrigation Channel No 3-1.

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### 2.2.4 West

Immediately west of the site is Bendigo-Pyramid Road, which forms part of the Principal Road Network, Further west is 7405 Bendigo-Pyramid Road, Mologa, another close neighbouring residential property. The parcels of land to the west are primarily farming paddocks used for cropping and grazing.

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Figure 3 - 1107 Yarrowalla East Road, Mitiamo



Figure 4 - 7405 Bendigo-Pyramid Road, Mologa

## 2.3 Surrounding Context

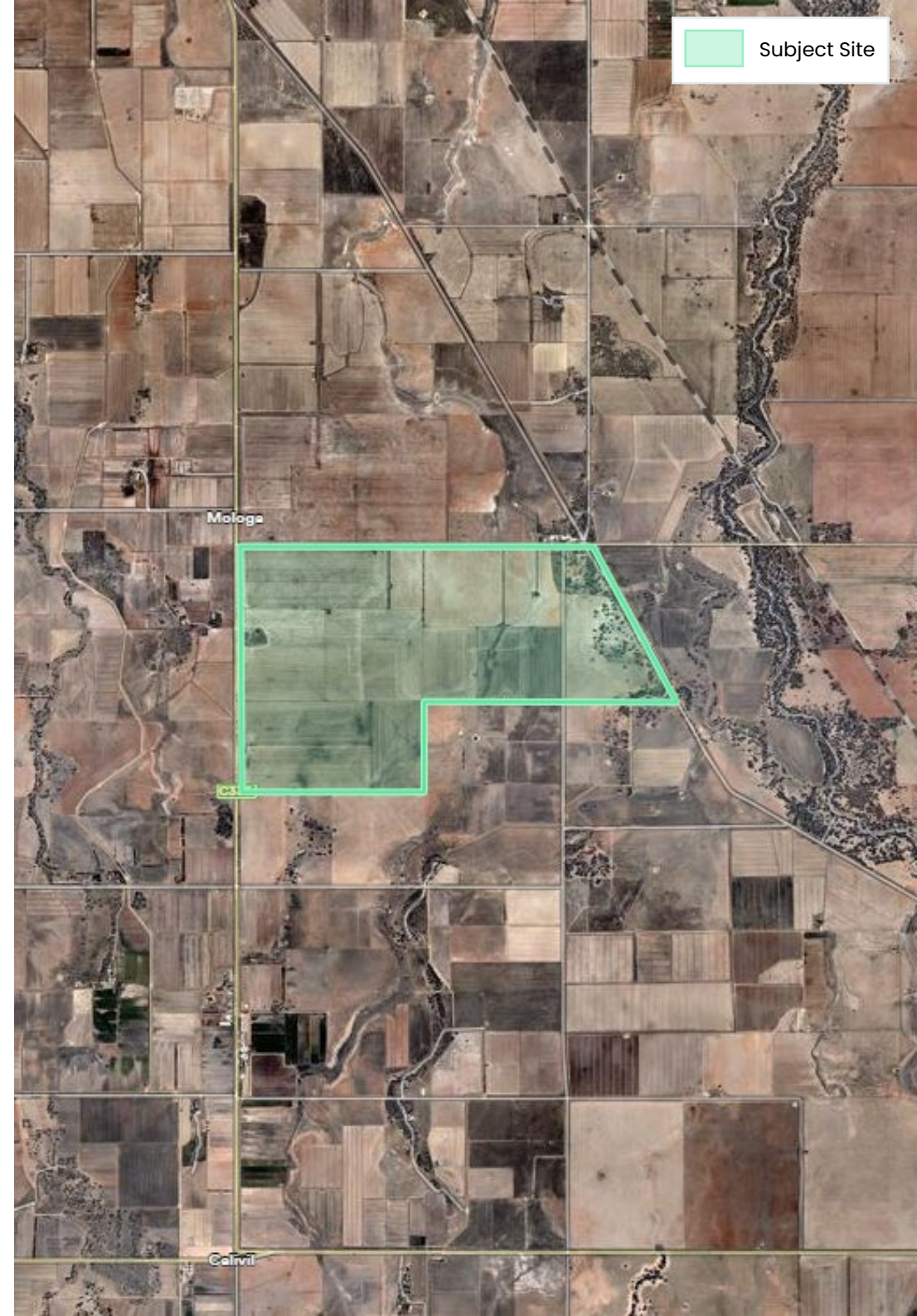
The surrounding area is characterised predominantly by rural land, featuring a mix of farmland, open pastures, and scattered residential properties.

The site is located within the Farming Zone, which applies to most of the surrounding area. Bendigo-Pyramid Road to the west of the site is zoned Transport Road Zone 2 (TRZ2). The site is affected by the Land Subject to Inundation Overlay (LSIO) and the Specific Controls Overlay (SCO).

The Bushfire Prone Area and Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Sensitivity Area also affect the site.

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### 3 Proposal

Mologa Solar Hybrid project is located approximately 65km north of Bendigo and 51km west of Echuca. The site is located to the east of Bendigo-Pyramid Road and south of Mologa-Durham Ox Road, in Mologa. The site extends across approximately 591 hectares and is currently used predominantly for dryland cropping and some grazing.

The proposed solar hybrid project comprises:

- 250 MW solar farm
- 250 MW 4-hour Battery Energy Storage System (BESS)
- Substation
- Terminal station

A 220 kV transmission line easement runs north-south through the western side of the site. The proposed BESS and substation will connect directly to this existing line, enabling efficient integration with the grid.

The layout has been informed by detailed mapping of ecological values within the study area, with careful consideration given to avoiding or minimising environmental impacts and addressing bushfire risk.

The site's flat topography, minimal native vegetation removal requirements, good access, minor flood risk, and absence of bushfire overlays further support its suitability for renewable energy development.

Importantly, the site benefits from high solar exposure and immediate proximity to grid infrastructure with available capacity. Combined with the limited need for site disturbance and minimal planning constraints, these factors make the location highly favourable for delivering large-scale solar generation and storage.

All existing outbuildings on site are to be retained.

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## 3.1 Built Form and Layout

The facility consists of the following key elements:

### 3.1.1 Battery Energy Storage System (BESS)

250 MW 4-hour Battery Energy Storage System, expected to include approximately:

- 272 x BESS containers
- 68 x PCU inverters
- Electrical equipment including primary transformers, HV substation, auxiliary transformers, harmonic filters and control rooms.

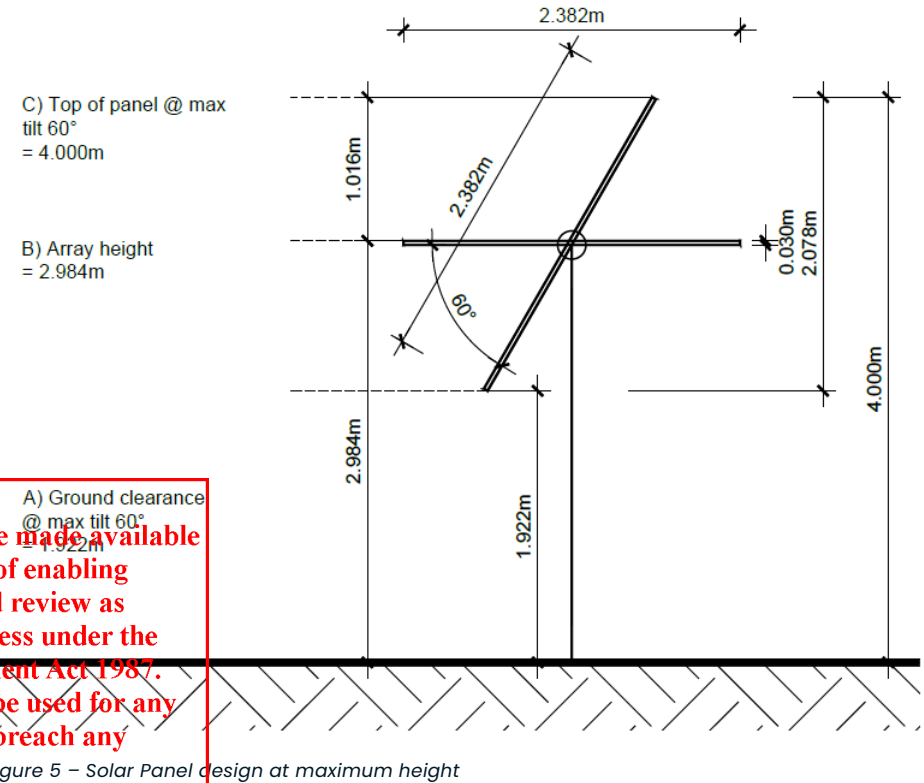
An Operation & Maintenance building (O&M) is to be included within the BESS site.

### 3.1.2 Solar Panels

The proposal includes the installation of approx. 500,000 photovoltaic solar modules, with a combined energy capacity of approximately 250MW, and a maximum height of 4 metres. The glass surfaced panels are coated to maximise daylight absorption, and therefore to minimise glare potential. The panels consist of an encapsulant, the silicon solar cells themselves, a backing sheet and an aluminium frame.

The panels will be attached to a horizontal 'tracker' which allows the panels to track the sun by pivoting in the east/west plane, to maximise solar exposure (Figure 5).

The mounting frames are pile-driven into the ground without concrete foundations. The base of the frames are thin 'H' or 'Z' shapes, and will therefore have minimal impact on the ground, requiring no prior excavation. When the site is decommissioned, the frame piles can be pulled from the ground, resulting in minimal disturbance. This light construction approach minimises impacts on the site.



### 3.1.3 Inverters

Panels generate Direct Current (DC) electricity, which is converted by an inverter to Alternative Current (AC) before being fed into the electricity grid. A total of 76 PV inverters will be distributed across the panel area, and 68 BESS inverters located within the BESS compound.

### 3.1.4 Transformers

Transformers change the voltage of the electricity generated, allowing for generated energy to be fed into the local grid. There will be 10 transformers across the site, 8 AUX transformers, 1 sub-AUX transformer and 1 HV Main Power Transformer. Each inverter will be coupled with a MV transformer.

### 3.1.5 Substation

The proposed substation is the on-site point of connection, where electricity enters and exits the transmission network. The substation and switchgear facilitate the connection or disconnection of electrical assets. The switchgear also acts as a safety mechanism to protect the solar installation and BESS from faults in the transmission network, and vice versa. The switchgear monitors for faults and disconnects the system from the network when a fault is detected. This is comparable to a household safety switch.

The substation is located adjacent to the BESS site.

### 3.1.6 Grid Connection

The substation will connect directly to the existing 220 kV transmission line running north-south through the site. The transmission tower will be upgraded to enable this connection. Grid connection infrastructure will be located within the Terminal Station area and will include an overhead connection to the transmission line and a 220 kV switchyard.

### 3.1.7 Signage

The proposal incorporates business identification signage to be located at the main site access. Dimensions are to be approximately 1800mm x 1200mm, for a total area of 2.16 sqm.

An indicative design for the signage is reproduced in Figure 6.

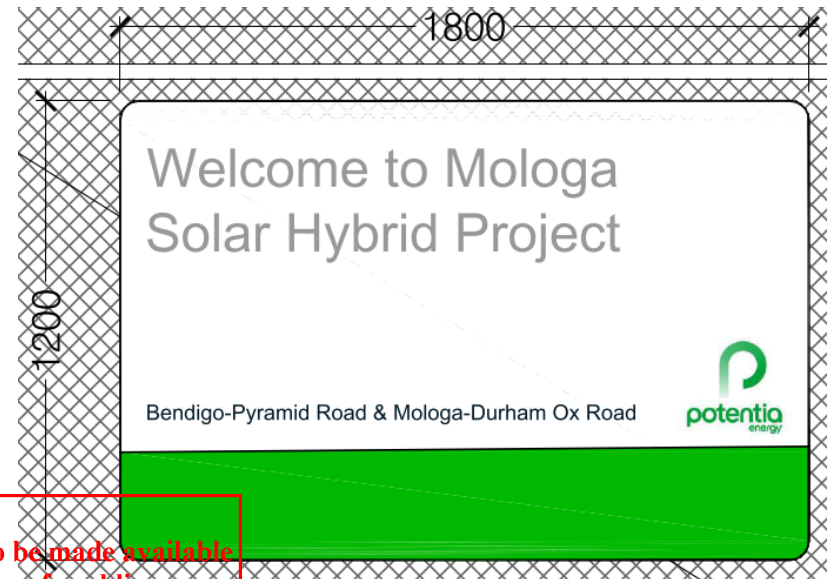


Figure 6: Indicative design of signage on site

### 3.1.8 Ancillary Infrastructure

Toilets are to be provided on site for operators and maintenance staff. The toilets are to either be composting toilets which are waterless, chemical free and self-composting, resulting in an odour free compost collected annually for processing off-site. Or the toilets will not be composting and be pumped on a regular basis.

### 3.1.9 Terminal Station

The Mologa BESS and Mologa Substation will be connected to the proposed Mologa Terminal Station. The Mologa Terminal Station will connect into the existing overhead 220 kV transmission network between the Kerang Terminal Station and the Bendigo Terminal Station.

The proposed works associated with the Mologa Terminal Station include the establishment of the terminal station, control room and a 220 kV switchyard.

The Mologa Terminal Station will initially contain three bays, with provision for up to eight bays in total. Of the initial three bays, one will connect to the 220 kV

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transmission line between the Kerang and Bendigo Terminal Stations, and another will facilitate the connection of the Mologa Substation to the terminal station. Any future works associated with the remaining bays will be subject to separate and relevant planning approvals.

## 3.2 Design Considerations

The car parking, warehouse and workshop will be located within the O&M footprint, which is showed on the Site Plan as a hatched area. The O&M layouts will be informed by final detailed design which is done after the planning permit is approved.

The applicant is willing to accept a condition on the permit that endorsed plans nominate the location of carparking and buildings within the O&M area.

### 3.2.1 Native Vegetation Removal

The proposal requires limited removal of native vegetation. The proposal has been designed in accordance with the 'avoid, minimise, and offset' framework outlined within the Guidelines for the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation, DELWP 2017, with the only vegetation to be removed is required to meet CFA requirements.

A total of 0.171 hectares of native vegetation removal is required. An impact assessment of the proposed native vegetation removal is detailed in Section 6.3 of this report (Biodiversity and Vegetation Removal). A biodiversity assessment has been prepared by Ecology Systems and includes a native vegetation removal report prepared by DEECA at **Appendix D**.

In accordance with the Guidelines, vegetation removal which cannot be avoided or minimised must be offset. The total offset required is 0.109 general habitat units. This must be located within the North Central CMA or the Loddon Shire LGA and have a minimum biodiversity score of 0.709 including no large trees.

### 3.2.2 Setbacks and Landscaping

The proposal has been substantially set back to ensure that visual impact on the public realm and surrounding properties is effectively managed. Panel

setbacks are a minimum of approximately 33 metres to all boundaries. The perimeter road and vegetation screens are located within these setbacks (Figure 7).

Taking into consideration the findings of the Visual Impact Assessment, and the proposed Bushfire mitigation measures (**Appendix E, F, L & M**) the following landscape treatments are proposed:

- Implementation of 5-metre-wide vegetative screening to the south and east, and 10-metre-wide vegetative screening to the north and west boundaries of the site to mitigate any potential visual impact from the solar farm.
- 10-metre-wide firebreaks and perimeter access roads between the solar arrays and the vegetative screening buffers.
- The screening vegetation to be positioned in front (outward facing), of the proposed 2.2-metre-high wire mesh security fence.

### 3.2.3 Easements and Agreements

The proposal complies with the restrictions outlined in the Section 72(1) Agreement under the *Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987* (Instrument X210216E, dated 14 December 2000). The agreement applies to native vegetation and land within Crown Allotment 17C, Section A, Parish of Mologa. No development is proposed within this area, and the land subject to the agreement will be retained. Accordingly, the proposed development will not affect the operation of the agreement or the restrictions applying to that land.

Additionally, all easements affecting the land will not be affected by the proposed development.

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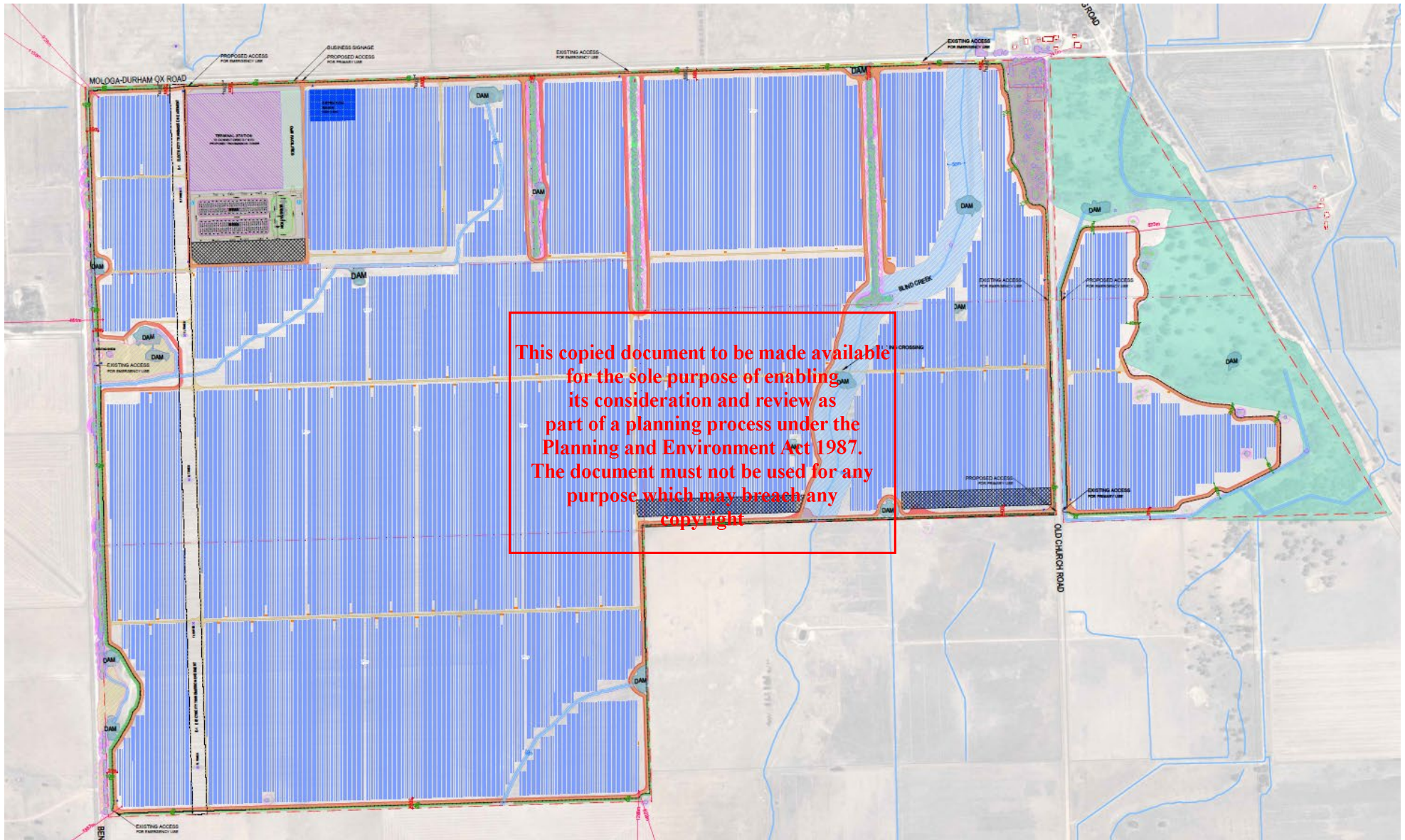


Figure 7 – Proposed Site Plan (Urbis Ltd)

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## 4 Loddon Planning Scheme

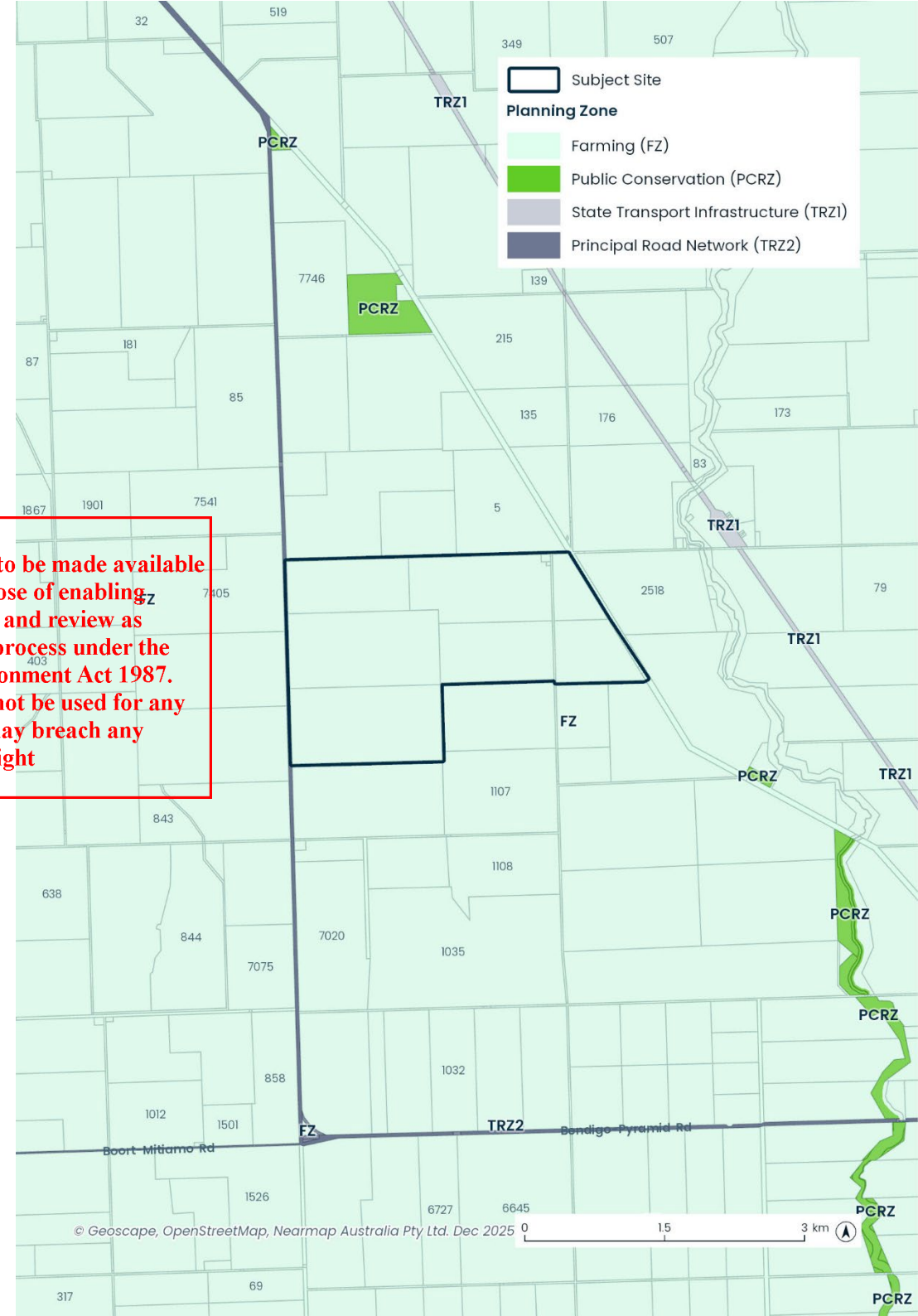
### 4.1 Zone - Farming Zone (FZ)

The subject site is located within the Farming Zone. The relevant purpose of the zone is:

- To implement the Municipal Planning Strategy and the Planning Policy Framework.
- To provide for the use of land for agriculture.
- To encourage the retention of productive agricultural land.
- To ensure that non-agricultural uses, including dwellings, do not adversely affect the use of land for agriculture.
- To encourage the retention of employment and population to support rural communities.
- To encourage use and development of land based on comprehensive and sustainable land management practices and infrastructure provision.
- To provide for the use and development of land for the specific purposes identified in a schedule to this zone.

Pursuant to Clause 35.07 a planning permit is required to:

- For the use of the land as a Renewable Energy Facility and Utility Installation under Clause 35.07-1 (Section 2)
- To construct or carry out a building or works associated with:
  - A use in Section 2 of Clause 35.07-1
  - Earthworks (includes changing the rate of flow)
  - 100 metres from a waterway, wetlands or designated flood plain or, the distance specified in the schedule to this zone.
  - Minimum setback from a TR22 – 100 metres



## 4.2 Overlays

### 4.2.1 Land Subject to Inundation Overlay – Schedule (LSIO)

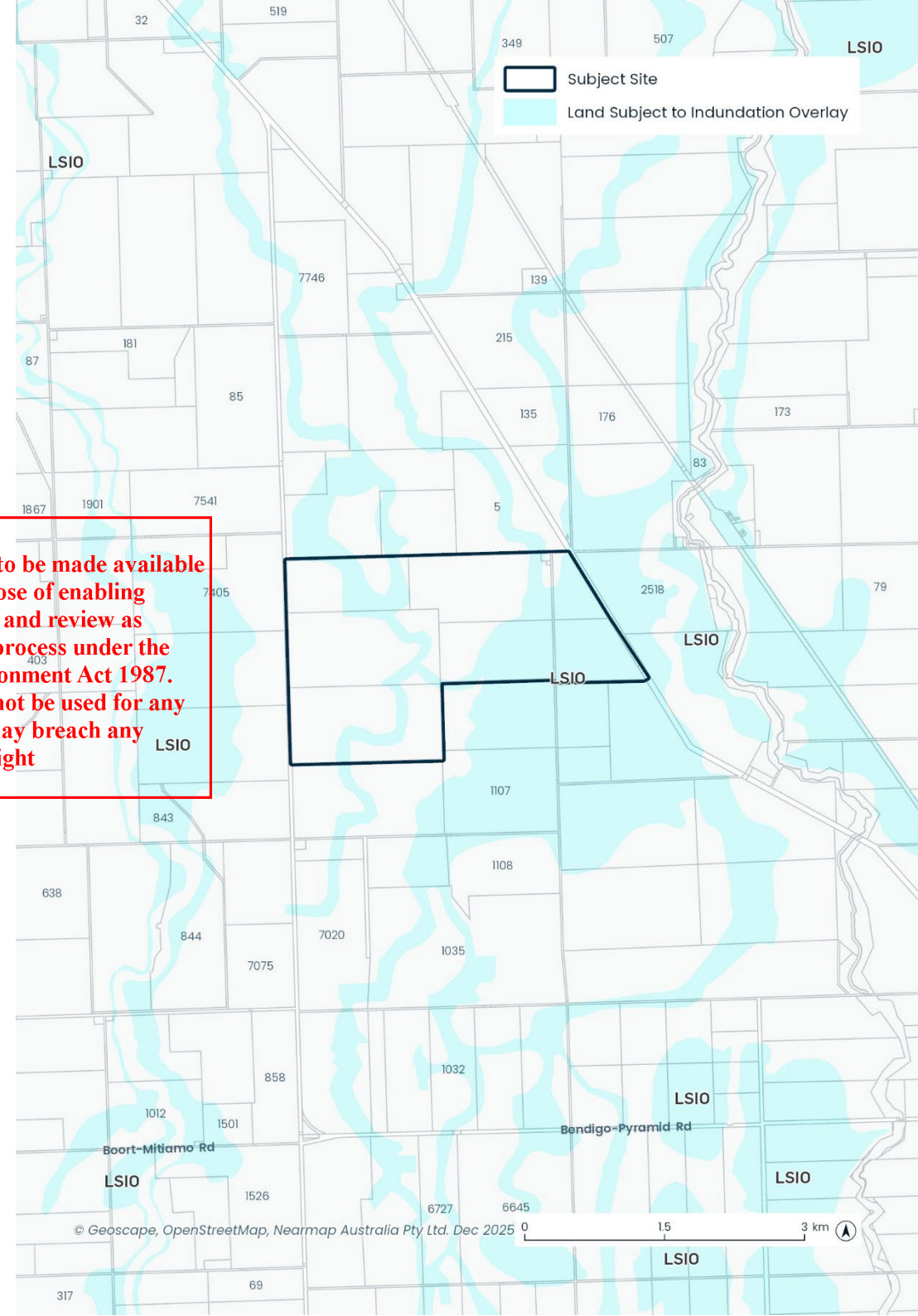
The subject site is affected by the LSIO. The purpose of the LSIO is:

- To implement the Municipal Planning Strategy and the Planning Policy Framework.
- To identify flood prone land in a riverine or coastal area affected by the 1 in 100 (1 per cent Annual Exceedance Probability) year flood or any other area determined by the floodplain management authority.
- To ensure that development maintains the free passage and temporary storage of floodwaters, minimises flood damage, responds to the flood hazard and local drainage conditions and will not cause any significant rise in flood level or flow velocity.
- To minimise the potential flood risk to life, health and safety associated with development.
- To reflect a declaration under Division 4 of Part 10 of the Water Act 1989.
- To protect water quality and waterways as natural resources by managing urban stormwater, protecting water supply catchment areas, and managing saline discharges to minimise the risks to the environmental quality of water and groundwater.
- To ensure that development maintains or improves river, marine, coastal and wetland health, waterway protection and floodplain health.

Pursuant to Clause 44.04 a planning permit is required to:

- Construct a building or to construct or carry out works within the LSIO area

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## 4.2.2 Specific Controls Overlay – Schedule 2 (SCO2)

The subject site is affected by the SCO2. The purpose of the SCO2 is:

- *To apply specific controls designed to achieve a particular land use and development outcome in extraordinary circumstances.*

The SCO2 applies the controls of the Goulburn–Murray Water: Connections Project and Water Efficiency Project Incorporated Document, November 2021. However, these controls have now expired.

There are no permit triggers for the proposal under Clause 45.12.

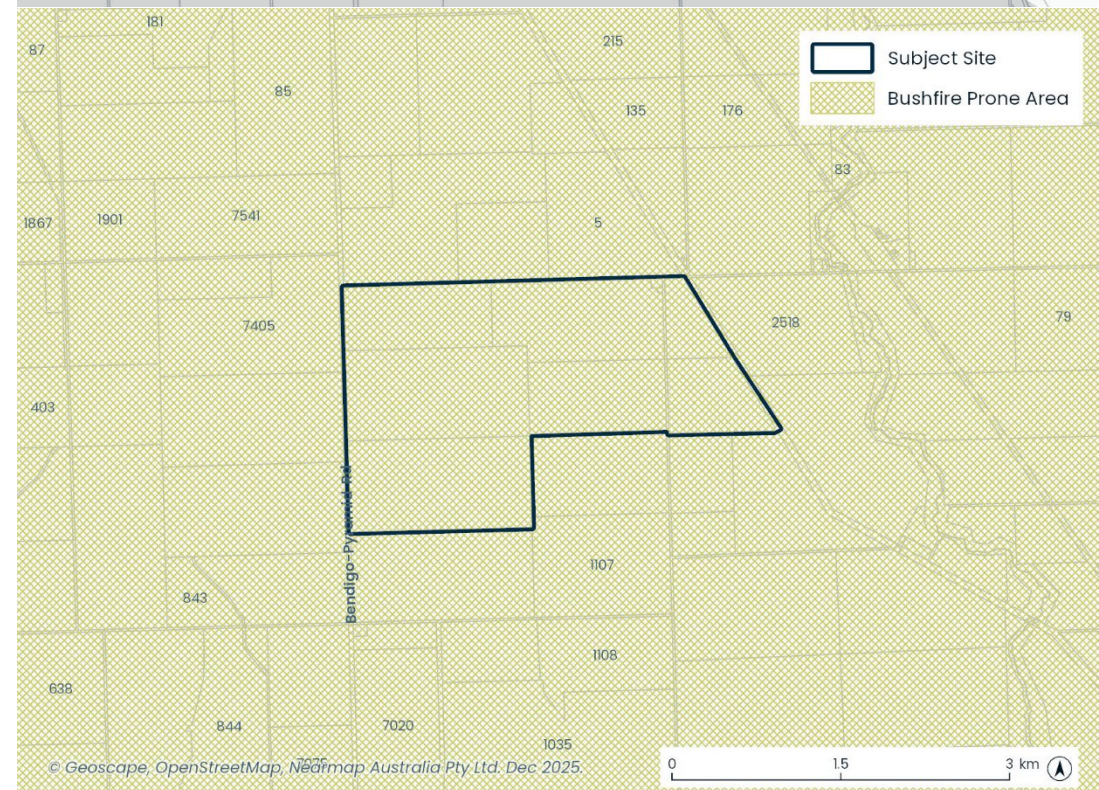
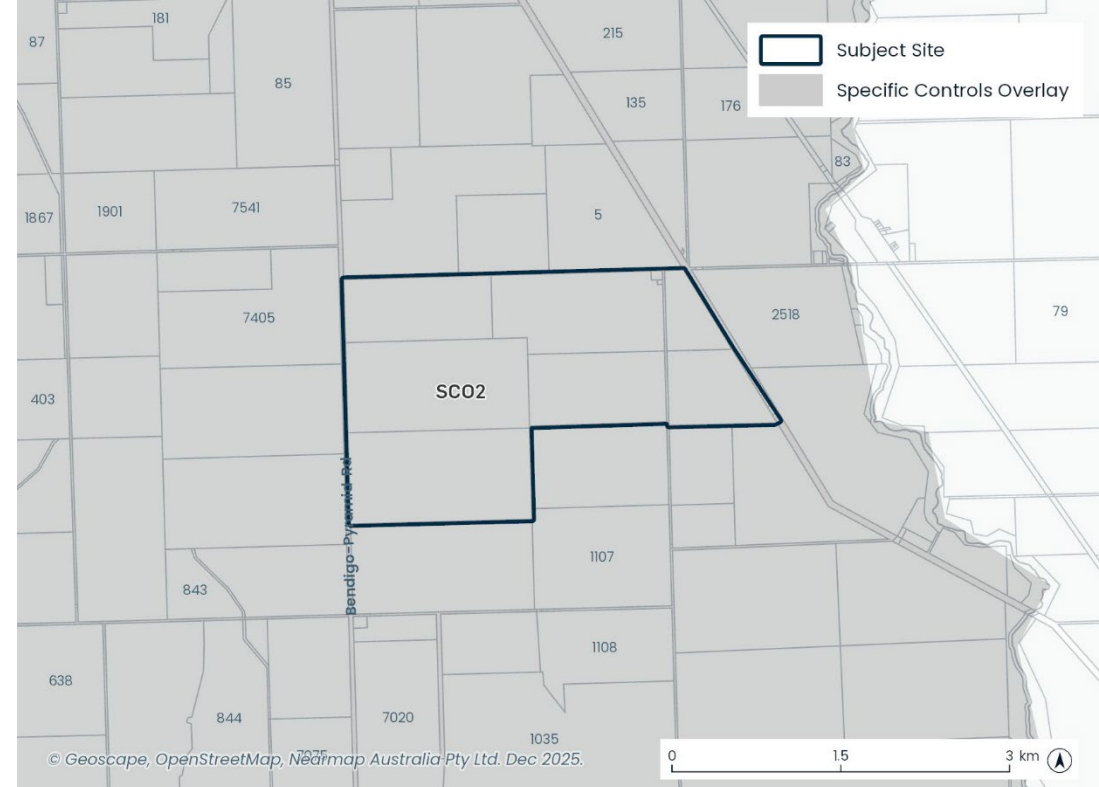
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## 4.2.3 Bushfire Prone Area

The subject site is within a designated bushfire prone area; therefore, special bushfire construction requirements apply. The proposed development must be designed to meet the requirements set out by the Country Fire Authority (CFA) found within the *Design Guidelines and Model Requirements Renewable Energy Facilities v4.4 – 2025*.

Additionally, the proposed development must apply Clause 13.02-1S (Bushfire planning) from the Loddon Planning Scheme. This clause's objective is to strengthen the resilience of settlements and communities to bushfire through risk-based planning that prioritises the protection of human life.

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#### 4.2.4 Area of Cultural Heritage Sensitivity (ACHS)

The site includes areas of Cultural Heritage Sensitivity that run through the middle of the site from north to south.

The *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* provides for the protection of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage in Victoria, and the *Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2018* sets out the circumstances in which a Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP) is required for a development.

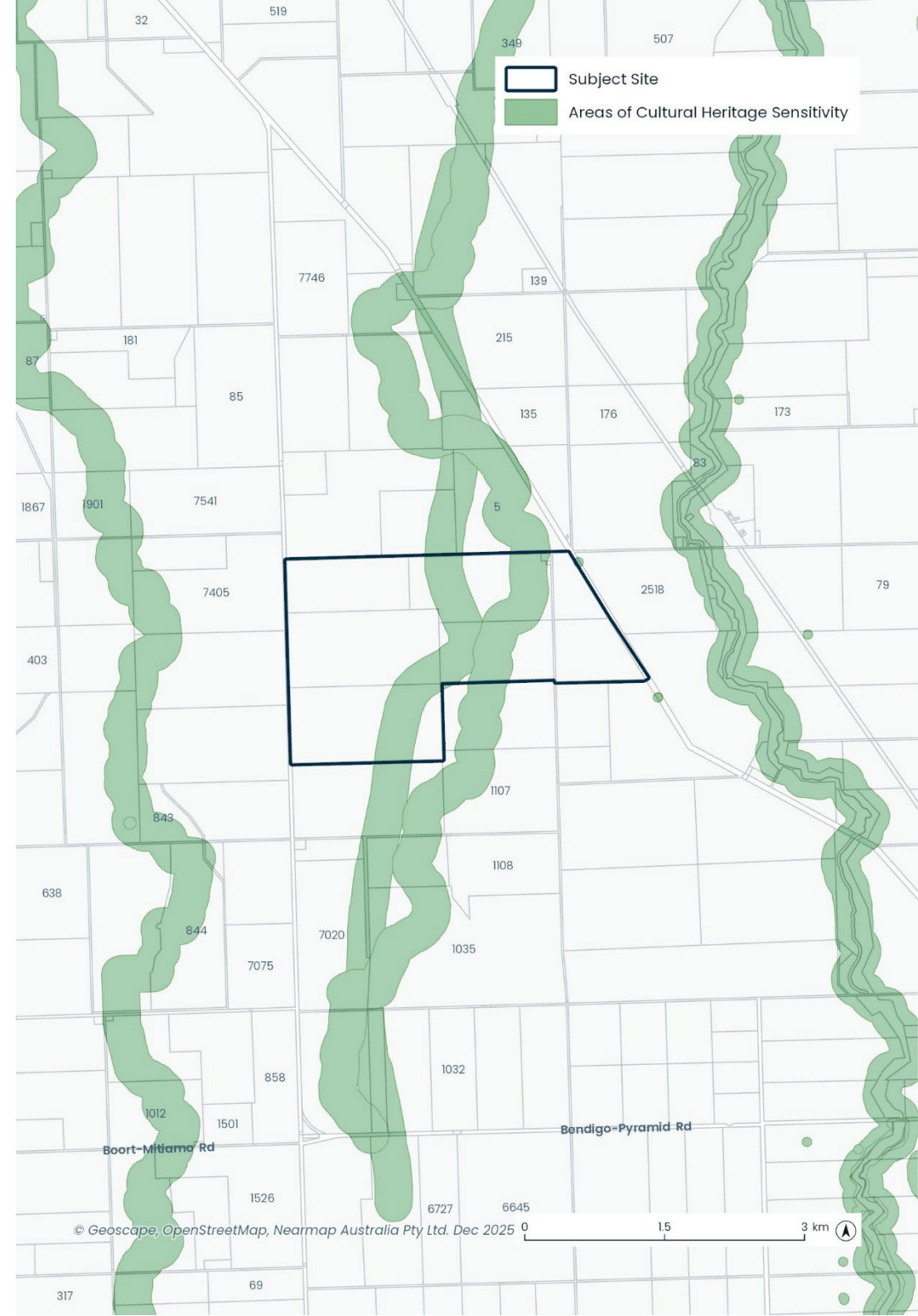
The Regulations require a mandatory CHMP if:

1. All or part of the proposed activity is a high impact activity; and
2. All or part of the activity area is an area of cultural heritage sensitivity (subject to whether the entire area of cultural heritage sensitivity has been subject to significant ground disturbance. Section 52 of the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 specifies that a statutory authorisation (including a permit under the Planning and Environment Act 1987) may not be granted until a CHMP is prepared, if a CHMP is required.

As discussed in section 6.7 of this report, the proposal will impact the ACHS area, and as such a mandatory CHMP is required and is being prepared.

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## 4.3 General and Particular Provisions

The following general and particular provisions are related to the proposal:

- **Clause 52.05 – Signs**
- **Clause 52.17 – Native vegetation**
- **Clause 53.13 – Renewable Energy Facilities (other than Wind Energy Facility)**
- **Clause 53.22 – Significant Economic Development**
- **Clause 71.02-3 – Integrated decision making**

## 4.4 Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS)

- **Clause 02.03-2 – Environmental and landscape values** set out strategic directions encouraging protection of areas of environmental landscape or scenic value, particularly including ridgelines and roadside vegetation. Especially the Terrick Terrick National Park, which contains a forest of Murray Pines, grasslands and the nationally endangered ecological community of the Buloke Woodlands.
- **Clause 02.03-3 – Environmental risks and amenity** recognise risks to development from natural hazards, including bushfire.
- **Clause 02.03-4 – Natural resource management** seeks to protect Loddon's high quality agricultural land, as well as the resources upon which agricultural industries rely.
- **Clause 02.03-7 – Economic development** recognises agriculture as an important industry within the municipality. It also identifies key economic areas on the strategy plan. The availability of a diverse range of commodities in the Shire provides significant opportunities for new industries.

## 4.5 Planning Policy Framework (PPF)

The following Clauses of the PPF are relevant to the proposal:

- Clause 11.02-1S – Development capacity
- Clause 11.02-2S – Structure planning
- Clause 12.01-1S – Protection of biodiversity
- Clause 12.01-2S – Native vegetation management
- Clause 12.03-1S – River and riparian corridors, waterways, lakes, wetlands and billabongs
- Clause 12.05-2S – Landscapes
- Clause 13.01-1S – Natural hazards and climate change
- Clause 13.02-1S – Bushfire planning
- Clause 13.03-1S – Floodplain management
- Clause 13.03-1L – Flooding
- Clause 13.05-1S – Noise management
- Clause 13.07-1S – Land Use Compatibility
- Clause 14.01-1S – Protection of agricultural land
- Clause 14.01-1L – Agricultural
- Clause 14.01-2S – Sustainable agricultural land use
- Clause 14.02-1S – Catchment planning and management
- Clause 14.02-3S – Protection of declared irrigation districts
- Clause 15.01-6L – Development in rural areas
- Clause 15.03-2S – Aboriginal cultural heritage
- Clause 17.01-1S – Diversified economy
- Clause 17.01-1R – Diversified economy – Loddon Mallee South
- Clause 18.02-7S – Airports and airfields
- Clause 19.01-1S – Energy supply
- Clause 19.01-2S – Renewable energy

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- Clause 19.01-2R – Renewable energy – Loddon Mallee South
- Clause 19.01-2L – Renewable energy facilities

## 4.6 Summary of Permit Requirements

| Controls/Provisions                                  | Permissions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Farming Zone (FZ)</b>                             | <p>A permit is required to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For the use of the land as a Renewable Energy Facility and Utility Installation under Clause 35.07-1 (Section 2)</li> <li>• To construct or carry out a building or works associated with:</li> <li>• A use in Section 2 of Clause 35.07-1</li> <li>• Earthworks (includes changing the rate of flow)</li> <li>• 100 metres from a waterway, wetlands or designated flood plain or the distance specified in the schedule to this zone.</li> <li>• Minimum setback from a TRZ2 – 100 metres</li> </ul> |
| <b>Land Subject to Inundation Overlay (LSIO)</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A permit is required to construct a building or to construct or carry out works within the LSIO area</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Specific Controls Overlay – Schedule 2 (SCO2)</b> | <p>Incorporated Document affects the site:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SCO2 – Goulburn-Murray Water: Connections Project and Water Efficiency Project Incorporated Document, November 2021</li> <li>• No permit triggers under this overlay</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

### Clause 52.06 – Signs

- A permit is required to erect signage (Business identification sign)

### Clause 52.17 – Native Vegetation

- A permit is required to remove, destroy or lop native vegetation, including dead native vegetation.

### Bushfire Prone Area

- Compliance with the bushfire construction requirements required under the BPA.

### 4.6.1 Clause 53.22 ‘Significant Economic Development’

On 4 April 2024 amendment VC261 was gazetted into the Loddon Planning Scheme. Amendment VC261 introduces additional land uses to Table 2 of Clause 53.22-1, being:

- ✓ Renewable energy facility with an installed capacity of 1 megawatt or greater.
- ✓ Utility installation used to transmit or distribute electricity or store electricity with an installed capacity of 1 megawatt or greater.

As the proposal is for a renewable energy facility (solar) and for a utility installation (BESS) with capacity of approximately 250 MW and 250 MW respectively, the proposal qualifies for assessment under this Clause.

We further note that:

- ✓ According to the Biodiversity Impact Assessment no referral is required to be submitted to the Impact Assessment team within the Victorian Department of Transport and Planning, given the proposed impacts to biodiversity do not meet the criteria for an Environmental Effects Statement referral.
- ✓ No referral is required under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act). The project will not result in a significant impact to any biodiversity-related MNES as all

TECs and habitat for threatened species identified within the study area will be avoided. No Ramsar wetlands are situated within or near the study area. Notwithstanding, the applicant will lodge an EPBC referral to confirm no EPBC vegetation is impacted by the proposed development.

As such, the proposal is eligible for expedited assessment as part of the Department of Transport and Planning's Development Facilitation Program.

Pursuant to Clause 72.01-1, the Minister for Planning is the Responsible Authority for the application.

## 4.7 Relevant Legislation

The following legislation, guidelines and policies are applicable to the proposed Mologa Solar Hybrid:

### Commonwealth Legislation

- *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*

### State Legislation

- *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 and Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2018*
- *Climate Change Act 2017*
- *Environmental Effects Act 1978*
- *Environmental Protection Act 2017 – Environmental Reference Standards*
- *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*
- *Planning and Environment Act 1987 and Loddon Planning Scheme*

### Guidelines and Policies

- Victoria's Guidelines for the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation (DELWP, 2017)
- Solar Energy Facilities – Design and Development Guidelines (DTP, 2022)

- Design Guidelines and Model Requirements – Renewable Energy Facilities v4.4 (CFA, June 2025)
- Renewable Energy Amendment Bill 2019 (Vic)
- Victorian Climate Change Strategy

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## 5 Community and Stakeholder Engagement

Community consultation and engagement is an integral part of the design process for renewable energy facilities in Victoria. DTP has produced a guide for renewable energy developers to undertake community consultation.

Engagement on the proposal has been ongoing since August 2025 in line with best practice guidance outlined in the Victorian Government's Community Engagement and Benefit Sharing in Renewable Energy Development, A Guide for Renewable Energy Developers, the Clean Energy Council's (CEC) Community Engagement Guidelines and the International Association of Public Participation's (IAP2) Public Participation Spectrum.

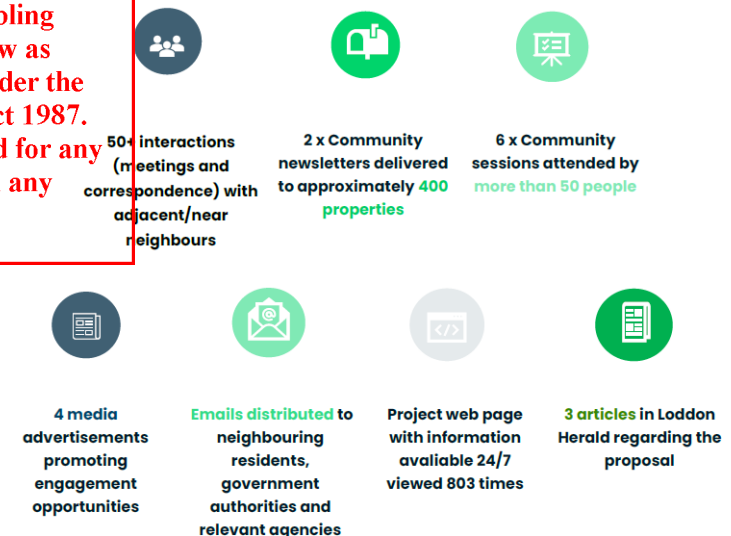
The engagement activities sought to deliver an appropriate engagement process to provide opportunities for community and stakeholders to learn about the proposal, understand the process and provide feedback. The feedback received informed the design, included within this submission.

The following **core engagement principles** guided our engagement project.



- Government stakeholders, including Department of Transport and Planning and Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA)
- Loddon Shire Council officers
- Members of Parliament including the Hon. Peter Walsh, Member for Murray Plains
- Relevant agencies including VicGrid, Environmental Protection Authority, Ausnet services, Goulburn Murray Water and CFA
- Project introduction with Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation
- Direct and targeted engagement with adjacent/near neighbours
- Community stakeholders, including the wider Mologa, Mitiamo and Pyramid Hill community, and community and representative groups.

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### 5.1 Key engagement activities

Engagement on the proposal included engagement with:

Figure 8 Summary of engagement activities

## 5.2 What we heard

The key themes that arose from engagement with community during the engagement process are shown in Figure 9 below.



Figure 9 Key themes from community feedback

Trust and governance emerged as underlying factors shaping sentiment. Some participants questioned the proponent's long-term commitment sought greater transparency on ownership and decision-making and expressed scepticism about broader renewable energy policy. A small number referenced global political frameworks and voiced doubts about climate change, reflecting broader ideological positions rather than site-specific concerns.

Several nearby proposals for renewable developments in the local area also heightened the distrust and uncertainty amongst the local community.

While opposition emerged, there were also voices of support and interest in potential benefits. These included opportunities for local procurement, contributions to community facilities and the possibility of reduced electricity costs. A few stakeholders saw the project as a good fit for the region's climate and land conditions, particularly if Agrivoltaic models could be implemented.

Across all perspectives, there was a clear desire for more information, particularly technical studies, environmental assessments, and details on risk management. Preferences for communication channels, event timing, and notice periods were shared, with an emphasis on early, transparent, and two-way engagement.

A more detail description of how the project responds to these concerns is outlined in the Engagement Outcomes Report – Appendix B.

## 5.3 General sentiment

Community sentiment towards the proposal was mixed, reflecting a wide spectrum of views ranging from strong opposition to cautious support.

A significant proportion of participants expressed concern about the project's compatibility with local agricultural priorities, environmental protection, and community safety. For these stakeholders, the loss of productive farmland, potential impacts on waterways and biodiversity, and risks such as fire were central issues. Some stakeholders also raised questions about the adequacy of insurance arrangements, the visual impact of infrastructure, and the capacity of transmission lines.

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## 6 Assessment

This section assesses the proposed works against the relevant provisions of the Loddon Planning Scheme, as well as against key legislation guiding the development of renewable energy projects in Victoria.

A thematic approach has been taken in assessing the proposal's suitability against the Loddon Planning Scheme together with other relevant legislation.

The key themes, relevant legislation, and applicable referrals are outlined in Table 3 below, and addressed in the remainder of this section.

1. Renewable energy and climate response
2. Agricultural Land
3. Biodiversity and vegetation removal
4. Bushfire
5. Hydrology
6. Declared Irrigation District
7. Aboriginal Cultural Heritage
8. Siting and Design
9. Traffic and Access
10. Visual Impacts
11. Noise Impacts
12. Signage

Each of these matters is dealt with in turn below.

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Table 3 – Statutory Framework

| Theme                                 | Applicable Statutory Framework                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Statutory Referral / Notice                                                                                                                                  | Technical Assessment                                                                                                   |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Renewable energy and climate response | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Climate Change Act 2017 and associated strategies</li> <li>Loddon Planning Scheme: Clauses 11.02, 13.01, 14.01, 17.01, 19.01, 19.01-2R, 19.01-2L</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Not applicable.                                                                                                                                              | Not applicable                                                                                                         |
| Agricultural Land                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Loddon Planning Scheme: Farming Zone, Clauses 02.03-4, 14.01</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Not applicable.                                                                                                                                              | <p>Appendix C – Agricultural Impact Assessment</p> <p>Appendix Q – Farming Zone assessment</p>                         |
| Biodiversity and vegetation removal   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC Act – Cth) 1999</li> <li>Environment Effects Act 1978</li> <li>Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988</li> <li>Victoria's Guidelines for the Removal, Destruction, or Lopping of Native Vegetation, DELWP 2017</li> <li>Loddon Planning Scheme: Clause 02.03-2, Clause 12.01-1S, Clause 12.01-2S, 12.01-2L, 52.17</li> </ul> | <p>Referral and Informal notice to Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action (DEECA) – pursuant to Clause 52.17.</p> <p>Referral to the EPBC.</p> | <p>Appendix D – Biodiversity Impact Assessment</p> <p>EPBC Assessment – in parallel to Planning Permit Application</p> |
| Bushfire                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CFA Design Guidelines and Model Requirements for Renewable Energy Facilities v4.4</li> <li>Bushfire Prone Area</li> <li>Loddon Planning Scheme: Clause 02.03-3, Clause 13.02-1S, Clause 53.02</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                  | Informal notice to the Country Fire Authority.                                                                                                               | <p>Appendix E – Bushfire Risk Assessment</p> <p>Appendix F – Risk Management Plan</p>                                  |
| Hydrology                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Loddon Planning Scheme: Land Subject to Inundation Overlay, Clause 12.03-1S, 13.03-1S, 14.02-1S 14.02-1S, 14.02-3S, Clause 19.01-2L</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <p>Formal referral and notice to North Central Catchment Management Authority (CMA)</p> <p>Formal referral and notice to Department of Environment,</p>      | <p>Appendix G – Hydrology and Irrigation District Assessment</p> <p>Appendix C – Agricultural Impact Assessment</p>    |

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|                              |                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                          |                                                                                                         |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                              |                                                                                                                                                                                        | Energy and Climate Action (DEECA).<br>Referral and informal notice to the Goulburn Murray Water (GMW).   |                                                                                                         |
| Aboriginal Cultural Heritage | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006</li> <li>Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2018</li> <li>Loddon Planning Scheme: Clause 02.03-5, 15.03-2S</li> </ul> | Mandatory CHMP to be provided in consultation with Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation (DJAARA) | A Mandatory CHMP is being prepared by Urbis                                                             |
| Siting and Design            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Solar Energy Facilities Design and Development Guidelines, DELWP 2022</li> <li>Loddon Planning Scheme: Clause 53.13</li> </ul>                  | Not applicable                                                                                           | Appendix I – Site Plan<br>Appendix J – Elevations and Specifications<br>Appendix L – Landscape Strategy |
| Traffic and Access           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Loddon Planning Scheme: Clause 19</li> </ul>                                                                                                    | Referral to Head, Transport for Victoria (Department of Transport and Planning) –                        | Appendix K – Transport Impact Assessment                                                                |
| Visual Impacts               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Solar Energy Facilities Design and Development Guidelines, DELWP 2022</li> <li>Loddon Planning Scheme: Clause 12.05-2S, Clause 53.13</li> </ul> | Not applicable.                                                                                          | Appendix L – Landscape Strategy<br>Appendix M – Visual Impact Assessment and Glare and Glint Assessment |
| Noise Impacts                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Solar Energy Facilities Design and Development Guidelines, DELWP 2022</li> <li>Loddon Planning Scheme: Clause 13.05</li> </ul>                  | Not applicable                                                                                           | Appendix N – Noise Impact Assessment                                                                    |
| Environmental Management     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Solar Energy Facilities Design and Development Guidelines, DELWP 2022</li> </ul>                                                                | Not applicable                                                                                           | Appendix O – Environmental Management Plan Framework                                                    |

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## 6.1 Renewable energy and climate response – Planning policy considerations

### Municipal Planning Strategy and Planning Policy Framework

Renewable energy sources contribute to reducing Victoria's greenhouse gas emissions and therefore assist in mitigating climate change. It is State policy to accelerate well-sited and well-designed renewable energy generation facilities as an essential part of meeting the targets outlined above. Such facilities produce additional benefits for the State through job creation and placing downward pressure on energy prices.

Significant renewable energy development has already taken place within the Loddon region, due to the area's excellent access to wind and solar resources.

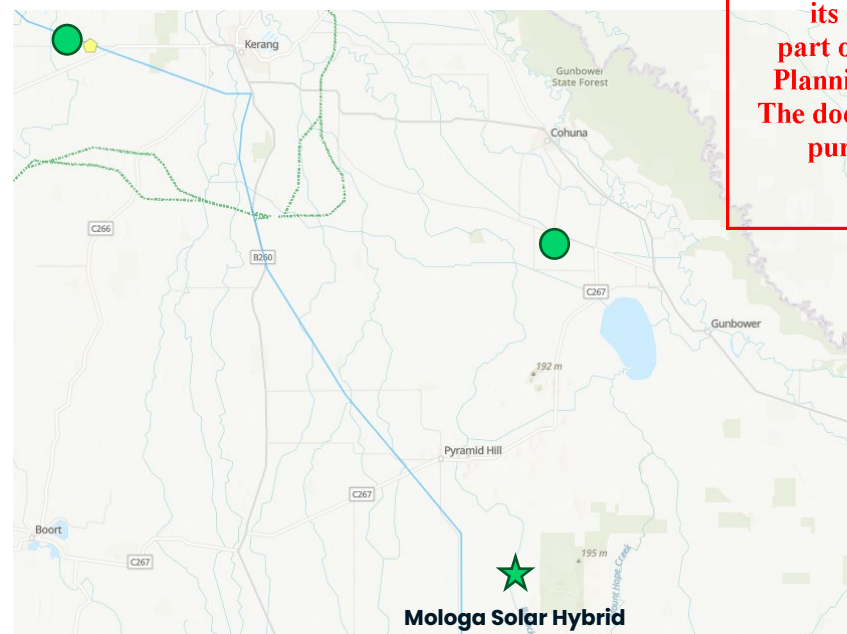


Figure 10 – Nearby Renewable energy generation and BESS sites. Site = Star. Source: Victorian draft renewable energy zones.

The Victorian Government continues to amend the Victoria Planning Provisions to ensure they provide up-to-date policy guidance for development of renewable energy facilities. However, the Loddon Planning Scheme provides minimal direction for solar energy facilities, other than that they be encouraged and supported to be developed in the Loddon Mallee South area (**Clause 19.01-2R**). The proposal has been designed in response to the broader directions and targets of policy reform for climate change response in Victoria, that may not yet be entirely reflected within the Victoria Planning Provisions.

Policy at **Clause 11.02-1S** seeks to ensure sufficient land is available to meet forecast demand and the needs of current and future Victorians for commercial, retail, recreational, institutional and other community needs. This includes the provision of 'an adequate supply of well-located land for energy generation, infrastructure and industry'. The site has been identified as a Tier 2/3 area in the State Victorian Transmission Plan guidelines. This places it in a suitable area that includes a combination of moderate-high opportunities and low to moderate constraints.

It has direct access to transmission infrastructure that runs north to south through the subject site which will allow for connection to the 220kV transmission line between Kerang and Bendigo terminal station. The proposal clearly demonstrates the suitability of the location for such a development. Development of the site for a renewable (solar) energy facility and BESS will contribute to climate change adaptation and mitigation outcomes and provide storage and network resilience/reliability (**Clause 11**).

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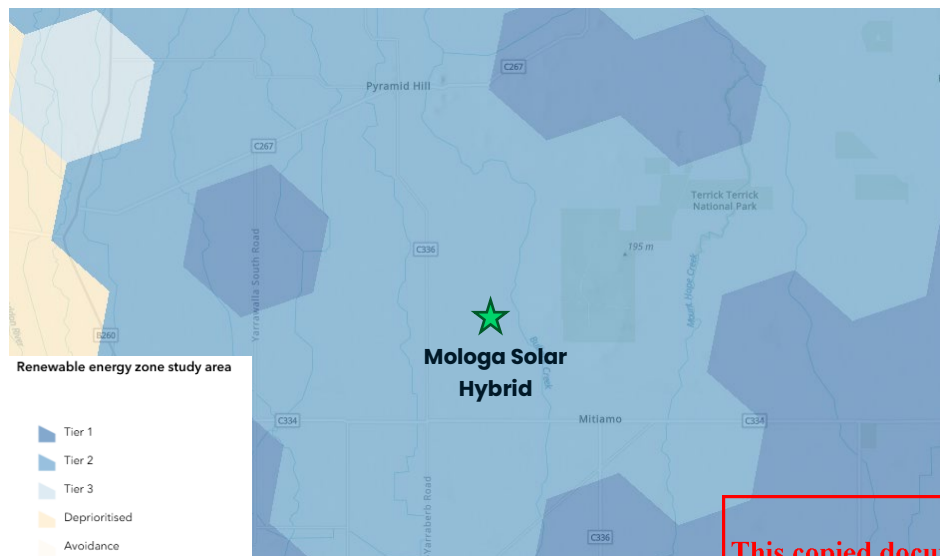


Figure 11 – Renewable energy zone Tier system. Site = Star. Source: Victorian draft renewable energy zones

The proposal prepares for and responds to the impact of climate change (Clause 13) and assists Victoria and Loddon in adapting to climate change through its contribution to the renewable energy targets (discussed above). The development responds appropriately to State policy at Clause 19.01-1S and 19.01-2S which seeks 'development of energy generation, storage, transmission and distribution infrastructure' which facilitates the 'transition to a low-carbon economy.' Development of renewable energy facilities is encouraged in appropriate locations and where design and siting issues are appropriately resolved. Ultimately, decisions to approve renewable energy facilities rest on consideration of 'the economic, social and environmental benefits to the broader community' (Clause 19.01-2S) against potential adverse impacts.

At a local level, the proposal accords with Clause 19.01-2R which supports and facilitates development in renewable energy generation in appropriate locations.

A detailed discussion of the siting and design considerations for the proposal, the potential for adverse impacts, and the cumulative effects of renewable

energy development within the Loddon region (Clause 19.01-2S), is included within Section 6.8 of this report. The environmental benefits from the proposal have been clearly outlined in the preceding assessment. Development of the site for renewable energy generation and storage will have significant economic benefits for the region. The proposal is projected to create a significant number of jobs during the construction period, with ongoing employees facilitating growth in a range of employment sectors and supporting the diversity of the rural economy of Loddon (Clause 17.01-1R).

### Clause 71.02-3 – Integrated decision making

Planning involves balancing the diverse needs of Victorians, including housing, environmental protection, employment, community wellbeing, and the effective use of land, infrastructure and resources. Planning decisions are made by considering economic, environmental and social impacts together, with the aim of achieving outcomes that benefit the community now and into the future. Where policies conflict, decision-makers are expected to seek the best overall community outcome, noting that in bushfire-prone areas the preservation of human life takes precedence. Planning authorities are also expected to consider impacts beyond their local area and work with neighbouring councils and agencies to support sustainable and efficient development.

The proposed solar energy facility and BESS support sustainable development and must be weighed against potentially competing policies, including the location of the facility within the declared irrigation district. Consistent with the purpose of Clause 71.03-3, decision-makers within the Department are required to consider the supporting documents and assessments submitted with this application. These materials demonstrate that the proposal represents a supportable project that contributes to sustainable energy generation and storage and aligns with relevant State policy, including renewable energy objectives (Clauses 10.01-1S and 19.01-2S).

In addition, Section 6.6 provides an extensive review of the declared irrigation district and sets out sufficient justification for why the proposed solar development will not have a tangible impact on the irrigation infrastructure of the area.

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## GHG Emissions Reduction Benefits

The proposed Mologa Solar Hybrid Project comprises a 250 MW solar farm and a co-located 250 MW / 1,000 MWh battery energy storage system (BESS) on a 591-hectare site in the Loddon Shire, approximately 50 km north-west of Bendigo. The project is expected to generate around 637,290 MWh of renewable electricity annually in its first year of operation, resulting in an estimated avoided emissions benefit of approximately 497,086 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>-e per year through displacement of emissions-intensive Victorian grid electricity. The project will support Victoria's legislated renewable energy, energy storage and emissions reduction targets, while the integrated BESS will improve grid reliability and maximise emissions reduction outcomes by storing excess daytime solar generation and discharging it during higher-emissions evening peak demand periods. Please refer to the GHG Emissions Reduction Benefits report prepared by Urbis at Appendix S.

## 6.2 Agricultural Land

### Response to the Farming Zone

The Farming Zone seeks, amongst other things, to ensure that agricultural uses do not adversely affect the use of land for agricultural purposes. The Farming Zone additionally seeks to ensure the protection of productive agricultural land. A comprehensive Agricultural Impact Assessment of the proposal is provided within **Appendix C** of this report. The Agricultural Impact Assessment has been prepared by RM Consulting Group Pty Ltd which assess numerous physical and strategic considerations that impact the viability of agricultural production to be unduly affected by a change in use. The report includes a detailed site description that of the site and surrounding area and examines the impact of the proposal on strategically important agricultural land.

Pursuant to the *Solar Energy Facilities Design and Development Guidelines* (October 2022), agricultural land may be of high value and strategically important due to a combination of features such as high-quality soils, good rainfall, access to water, resilience to climate change, infrastructure investment and integration with industry. RM Consulting's assessment has concluded that the land has relatively average productivity, the highest and

best agricultural use is considered to be its current use as a dryland cropping enterprise in rotation with livestock grazing. Furthermore, the intended land use will not have a detrimental effect on the agricultural activities in the area. It was concluded in the Agricultural Impact Assessment that the consequential effect of agricultural land loss on the agricultural sector would be mitigated through the implementation of an agri-solar facility at the site in the form of sheep grazing.

The proposal has been designed such that the mitigation of agricultural production by including the agri-solar component, such that would allow for seasonal sheep grazing under the solar panel areas once construction is completed, ensuring a continued and sustained agricultural practice on site. At the end of the proposal's lifetime, the site will be decommissioned. Panels can be removed without any meaningful impact to the soil quality, and the land can be returned to its original state.

The use of the land for a solar energy facility and BESS will have no impact on the ongoing operation of neighbouring properties or the wider area for agricultural purposes. As such, it is considered that the proposed solar energy facility and BESS will not adversely affect the use of the land for agriculture, and that the impacts to productive agricultural land are not unreasonable.

### Municipal Planning Strategy and Planning Policy Framework

The Municipal Planning Scheme and Planning Policy Framework of Loddon recognise the significance agricultural production in the municipality. The proposed development aligns with the direction included within the MPS PPF as follows:

- The Loddon Planning Scheme does not recognise the site as prime agricultural land within the Strategic framework plan at Clause 02.04, nor the Loddon Mallee South Settlement Framework (**Clause 11.01-1R**). As discussed previously in RM Consulting's agricultural impact assessment, the agricultural land is used as dry cropping but is not recognised as prime agricultural land.
- The proposed development does not unreasonably impact the use of the site for agricultural purposes. The use of the site for a solar energy

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facility and BESS will not preclude the ongoing agricultural use of the site and is appropriate given the attributes outlined in previous sections of this report and having regard to the principles of integrated decision making (**Clause 71.02-3, Clause 02.03-4, Clause 02.04**)

- The proposal does not adversely impact the state’s agricultural base as the farmland is not of particular significance and will not be permanently removed from productive use – both due to the ability to reinstate the agricultural use once the site is decommissioned, and for sheep grazing to continue on site during operation (**Clauses 14.01-1S, 14.01-1L**). Consistent with **Clause 14.01S**, the proposal will avoid permanent removal of productive agricultural land from the state’s agricultural base without consideration of the economic importance of the land for the agricultural production and processing sectors.
- The proposal incorporates an innovative agricultural model whereby sheep will continue to graze on the land beneath the solar panels, complementing the solar energy facility and BESS with ongoing agricultural productivity, and contributing to the safe management of vegetation on the site. The proposed use also assists in supporting development in agricultural areas that is directly related to ongoing agricultural use of the land (**Clause 14.01-1L**). Consistent with **Clause 14.01-2S** the proposal aligns with specified directions that support the development of innovative and sustainable approaches to agricultural and associated rural land use practices.

For a detailed discussion of the proposal’s agricultural impacts, please refer to the Agricultural impact Assessment included at **Appendix C** of this report.

### 6.3 Biodiversity and vegetation removal

Please refer to the Biodiversity Impact Assessment prepared by Ecology Systems (ES) (Appendix D) for further information to the below.

### Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (Cth) 1999

The EPBC Act provides protection for Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES). Any action that has, will have, or is likely to have a significant impact on an MNES must be referred to the Commonwealth Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW). The referral process determines whether the action is a ‘controlled action’ requiring further assessment, or if no additional assessment is needed.

Ecology Systems (ES) have undertaken a detailed assessment of the biodiversity values of the site. Their findings indicate the project is unlikely to cause a significant impact on any MNES and, if referred, should not be considered a controlled action.

Notwithstanding, the applicant seeks to undertake an EPBC referral process to confirm that no EPBC vegetation is to be impacted by the development. Please refer to the provided Biodiversity Impact Assessment prepared by ES at Appendix D.

### Environment Effects Act 1987

The EE Act requires an Environment Effects Statement (EES) for activities that are likely, or have the potential, to significantly affect the environment. The triggers for an EES are outlined in the Ministerial Guidelines for Assessment of Environment Effects and listed below.

- ✓ The proposal does not impact 10 hectares or more of native vegetation (0.171 ha are impacted).
- ✓ The proposal does not propose clearing of an area of ‘critical habitat’ as declared under the *FFG Act*.
- ✓ No national or state significant flora species is impacted by the proposal.
- ✓ No national or state significant fauna were recorded.
- ✓ The proposal has no impacts on Ramsar Wetlands.

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- ✓ The proposal will not impact a significant area of a listed ecological community or genetically important population of a native species.

The biodiversity impacts of the proposal do not meet these criteria, and an EES referral is not required.

## Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988

The Flora and Fauna Guarantee (FFG) Act 1988 Act provides for the protection and management of biodiversity, including the conservation of threatened species and communities, and the control of processes that threaten them. As the works are largely on private land, and the public land access points are not linked to any listed threatened species or communities, a permit under the FFG Act is not required.

## Municipal Planning Strategy and Planning Policy Framework

The Municipal Planning Strategy and Planning Policy Framework of the Loddon Planning Scheme seeks to protect biodiversity within the municipality, including native vegetation and areas which support ecological communities. The proposal responds appropriately to these policy directions, as outlined below:

- ✓ The proposal responds to the important areas of biodiversity on site, providing significant buffers between these and the development area. The proposal will protect them for the long term by leaving these undeveloped. (**Clause 12.01-1S**).
- ✓ As discussed below, the proposal ensures that there is no net loss to biodiversity through impacts to native vegetation, in accordance with the three-step approach (**Clause 12.01-2S**).

## Planning and Environment Act 1987 – Clause 52.17 and Guidelines for the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation (DELWP 2017)

Clause 52.17 of the Loddon Planning Scheme specifies that a planning permit is required to remove, destroy or lop native vegetation. Native vegetation

removal is to be assessed in accordance with the *Guidelines* (DELWP 2017), which require proposals to follow the ‘three-step approach’ to designing proposals which impact native vegetation:

1. Avoid
2. Minimise
3. Offset

The proposal has been informed from the outset by the three-step approach, which has allowed for an exemplary response to the native vegetation located on site. It is proposed that only 0.171 hectares of planted Plains Woodland vegetation is to be removed, which is only being removed to meet CFA requirements for the implementation of a boundary road. Only patches are proposed for removal. No scattered trees, large patch trees or large scattered trees are proposed for removal.

It is clear from the above that the proposal has been sited to minimise impacts to most of the native vegetation located on site. The unavoidable impacts will be appropriately offset in accordance with the *Guidelines*. The total offset required is 0.109 General Habitat Units. This must be located within the Loddon Shire CMA or Loddon Shire Local Government area. ES’s investigations confirm suitable offsets are available.

The above demonstrates that the proposal has been sensitively designed to avoid and minimise unreasonable impacts to native vegetation. The vast majority of native vegetation on site will be unaffected, and appropriate offsets will be secured for the patches which are to be removed.

Table 4 – Response to application requirements for the detailed assessment pathway – Clause 52.17

| Requirement                                    | Response                                                                                                                                                    |
|------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Native vegetation to be removed or lost</b> |                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Assessment pathway</b>                      | Intermediate                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Description</b>                             | 0.171 hectares of planted Plains Woodland vegetation (Habitat Zones 5, 6 and 7, Figure 3) to allow for the establishment of an access track and fire break. |

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|                          |                                                                                                                                                          |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Location</b>          | Bendigo-Pyramid Road & Mologa-Durham Ox Road, Mologa                                                                                                     |
| <b>Extent</b>            | 0.171 ha                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Condition score</b>   | 0.2 - 0.72                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Location category</b> | Location 2                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Modelled habitat</b>  | No                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Offset</b>            | 0.109 general habitat units<br>North Central Catchment Management Authority (CMA) or Loddon Shire Council<br>Minimum strategic biodiversity score: 0.709 |

**Topography and land information**

|                                 |                                                                     |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Topography</b>               | The area of clearance is flat, cropping land with limited features. |
| <b>Waterbodies and features</b> | None observed.                                                      |
| <b>Saline discharge areas</b>   | None observed.                                                      |
| <b>Erosion risk</b>             | Low                                                                 |

**1. Photographs of vegetation removed**



Vegetation proposed to be removed from Habitat Zone 5

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Vegetation proposed to be removed from Habitat Zone 6



Vegetation proposed to be removed from Habitat Zone 7

|                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>4. Additional vegetation clearance or approvals</b> | Not applicable – there is no known application to remove native vegetation at the property in the past five years.                                                                                    |
| <b>5. Avoid and minimise statement</b>                 | A detailed avoid and minimise statement is provided in Section 4: Avoidance, minimisation and mitigation, and includes measures to protect retained vegetation during construction and ensure for its |

|                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                          | ongoing conservation through establishing an onsite offset area.                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 6. <b>Property management plans</b>                      | Not applicable – There is no property vegetation plan for this parcel of land.                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 7. <b>Defendable space statement</b>                     | Not applicable – the removal of native vegetation is not required to create defendable space for bushfire mitigation.                                                                                                                           |
| 8. <b>Native Vegetation Precinct Plan considerations</b> | Not applicable – There is no native vegetation precinct plan covering this parcel of land.                                                                                                                                                      |
| 9. <b>Offset statement</b>                               | The offset will be achieved through purchase of third-party offset via the credit register (a search of the native vegetation credit register on 27 March 2026, as shown in Appendix B, confirmed suitable offsets are available for purchase). |
| 10. <b>Site assessment report</b>                        | See Section 3. Results / Vegetation section of this report.                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 11. <b>Impacts to threatened species habitat</b>         | See Section 3. Results / Threatened species section of this report.                                                                                                                                                                             |

Please refer to the Biodiversity Impact Assessment prepared by Ecology Systems (ES) (Appendix D) for further information to the below.

6.4 Bushfire

Planning Policy Framework and Bushfire Prone Area

The proposal is not located within a Bushfire Management Overlay.

The proposal is located within a Bushfire Prone Area, and it is therefore necessary to assess the proposal’s potential bushfire risk. A report has been prepared by Ecology and Heritage Partners outlining the potential threat to the proposal from a bushfire risk perspective, and detailing measures to appropriately manage this risk.

The assessment has concluded that, subject to appropriate vegetation management measures on the subject site, bushfire risk can be reduced to acceptable levels.

The following measures have been observed during the design phase to ensure the proposal responds appropriately to the risk of bushfire:

- The overall design adheres to CFA’s (2025) Design Guidelines and Model Requirements for Renewable Energy Facilities.
- The solar panels and other infrastructure are set back an appropriate distance from areas of retained native vegetation towards the site’s east.
- The internal road network has a minimum width of six metres, which has been designed to accommodate a standard CFA fire truck and room for another to pass. Roads provide extensive access to the BESS, substation, and panel areas, including multiple access points from the public road into different sections of the facility.
- 45,000 litre static water supply tanks at each vehicle entrance from a public road, with an additional static water supply provided for the BESS.
- A 5-metre-wide landscape buffer is proposed around the boundary of the site to screen the solar energy facility and BESS from view. This planting is not considered to be a fire risk due to its narrow width and location at least 20 metres from solar panels and other infrastructure.
- 10-metre-wide perimeter fire breaks have been incorporated around the facilities perimeter, which will be trafficable, to ensure appropriate separations from the solar panel extent. A 10-metre-wide fire break has also been provided around the BESS perimeter.

The Bushfire Risk Assessment (Appendix E) prepared by Ecology and Heritage Partners provides a comprehensive assessment against the requirements of Clause 13.02-IS Bushfire of the Victoria Planning Provisions. The Risk Management Plan (Appendix F) also prepared by Ecology and Heritage Partners complies with the model requirements stated in CFA’s (2025) Design Guidelines and Model Requirements for Renewable Energy Facilities. These

reports provide a detailed bushfire hazard and risk assessment, which has resulted in the implementation of mitigation measures that reduce the bushfire risk to an acceptable level.

## 6.5 Hydrology

### Land Subject to Inundation Overlay

Parts of the site falls within the Land Subject to Inundation Overlay (LSIO), with Blind Creek running north to south through the site and other areas subject to inundation.

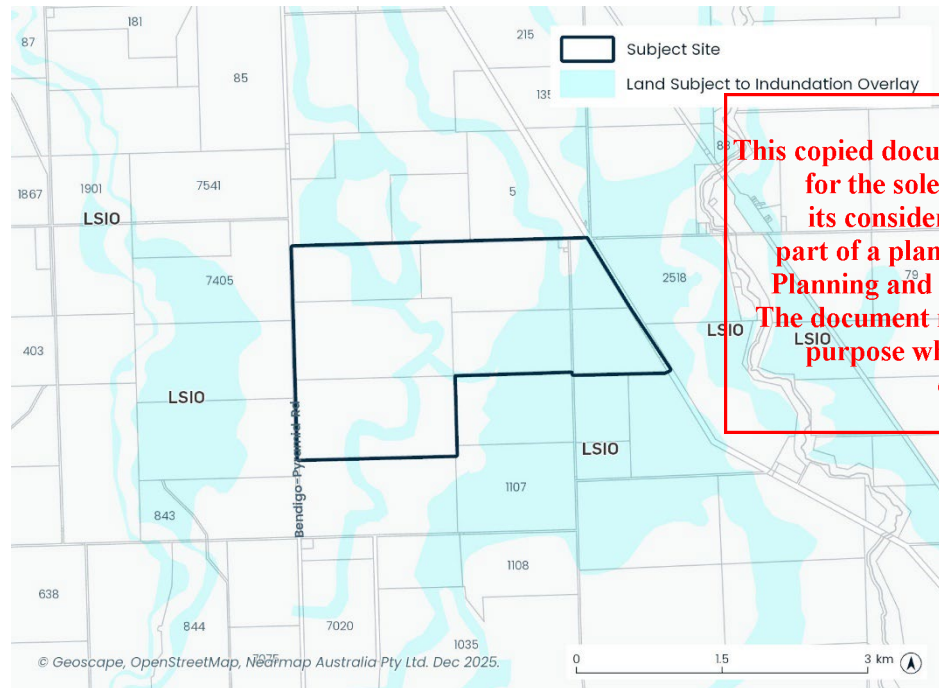


Figure 12 – Land Subject to Inundation Overlay

A flood assessment study has been prepared by Eco Logical Australia (ELA). The study characterises baseline hydrology, models 10%, 2% and 1% Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP) flood events under existing and proposed

conditions, examines long-term climate scenarios and assesses potential effects on irrigation infrastructure and water quality.

Assessment indicated that baseline surface water flows are shallow and slow moving, with deeper water are confined to Blind Creek, where the modelled maximum flood depth and velocity were recorded, and existing dam features. Shallow inundation was present over much of the Site.

Modelling of the proposed conditions undertaken based on the preliminary layout design indicated negligible change in peak flows (<1%) relative to baseline existing conditions, with very limited diversion of localised flows within the Site and proposed development area.

Flood risk at the Site was generally assessed as low under the 10%, 2% and 1% AEP events with a flood hazard classification of H1 (generally safe for people, vehicles and buildings) in accordance with the VIC (2019) *Guidelines for Development in Flood Affected Areas*.

### Planning Policy Framework

Clause 12.03-1S (River and riparian corridors, waterways, lakes, wetlands and billabongs) and Clause 14.02-1S (Catchment planning and management) of the Loddon Planning Scheme seek to protect waterway systems. The policy guidelines within these clauses have recently been updated to encourage the retention of natural drainage corridors with vegetated buffer zones of at least 50 metres on each side of waterways, replacing the previous 30 metre setback guidance.

- In accordance with the updated planning policy, all panels, infrastructure and access roads associated with the proposal are located a minimum of 50 metres from the banks of Blind Creek. This setback will maintain the ongoing drainage and functional role of this waterway within the broader catchment network. The proposed setback will maintain the ongoing drainage and functional role of this waterway within the broader catchment network.

There are other drainage channels and natural depressions that connect dams across the site which are not defined as waterways as per Planning

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Practice Note 97 – Strategic planning for waterways (PPN97). This Planning Practice Note states that a waterway does not include:

- artificial channel or works which diverts water away from a waterway, such as an irrigation channel.
- water collected in private dams or natural depressions not forming part of a defined waterway.

Accordingly, 50 metre setbacks are not required to these channels.

The Hydrology Assessment clearly details that the proposed development will avoid intensifying the impact of flooding and will not contaminate the flooding waters (**Clause 13.03-1S**). Furthermore, the development does not include any levee banks that will constrict or redirect flood flows or remove land from the flood plain (**Clause 13.03-1L**). Mitigation measures will be taken during construction and in the design of the development to protect the waterways that run through the subject site (**Clause 14.02-1S**).

## 6.6 Declared Irrigation District

The site is located in the Goulburn-Murray Declared Irrigation District. However, the site has been used for dryland cropping for many years with some opportunistic grazing.

There is a water service point (PH 333) in the eastern side of the site that has a farm channel entering the property. This has been used to deliver stock and domestic (S&D) water to a number of farm dams. The northern part of the property has a S&D supply delivered via a 50 mm pipe from a service point (PH 714) that is located on a neighbouring property.

To achieve improved cropping efficiency, the majority of the stock and domestic water delivery channels within the site have been filled in to allow for unimpeded use of cropping equipment.

Other than the delivery channel there is no irrigation infrastructure on the property. From a review of aerial photography, irrigation infrastructure does not appear to have existed on site for over 15 years. Evidence that the site has not been used for irrigation purposes is further demonstrated by a review of the last ten years of water use data sourced from Goulburn Murray Water. The

data shows that a total water delivery through the PH 333 service point has only totalled 6 ML over the 10 years, which has been used to support stock water needs. The data also showed that water use was only recorded in 3 of those ten years.

## Solar Energy Facilities Design and Development Guidelines, DELWP 2022

These guidelines indicate that “if the site is a serviced property, has a water use licence in place, and the infrastructure is planned to be retained by the rural water corporation (not decommissioned), then these three factors, collectively, will mean that this site is unlikely to be a suitable location for development of a solar energy facility.”

The Mologa site is a serviced property, it does have a water use licence in place, and the infrastructure is planned to be retained by the rural water corporation. However, the following demonstrates why this site would be a suitable location for the development of a solar energy facility and BESS (see Section 8 of the Agricultural Impact Assessment prepared by RMCG for full justification).

Low quality soils – the soils on the site are of low to moderate quality (predominantly Grade 3 and 4) and have some limitations for their suitability for irrigation primarily due to low water infiltration with a hard-setting surface and moderate to high subsoil salinity.

- The ongoing contribution of annual charges on delivery shares will continue through the life of the project which will contribute to the ongoing upkeep and maintenance of the irrigation network.
- There is insufficient Delivery Share (DS) associated with the property (0.32 ML/day) to support a commercial irrigation property. This property cannot be considered for irrigation without the purchase of a substantial volume of DS. That can only happen if they are purchased from another property which then has to reduce their irrigating or cease to be able to irrigate. Furthermore, the channel system servicing PH 333 experiences rationing which means acquiring more DS to support irrigation at this site is limited. Accordingly, the solar facility will not impact the viability or integrity of the irrigation system.

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- The solar facility would not negate the potential opportunities for adjustments to the footprint of a declared irrigation district.
- The solar facility would not limit the ability of future investment in irrigation infrastructure to realise the intended benefits of minimising water loss, improving irrigation service efficiency and increasing overall agricultural productivity. There is a significant buffer between the solar farm infrastructure and the GMW irrigation structures to allow for any works on the channel to be implemented whether that be channel rationalisation to reduce the irrigation footprint or future investment in irrigation infrastructure to improve efficiencies.
- It is the available water that is the limiting factor in utilisation of the irrigation infrastructure not land. Compared to the 1990s, there is significantly less water available but similar area to access the irrigation network. Consequently, there has been a significant increase in the amount of non-irrigated land in the district. This has created a swiss cheese effect affect with pockets of irrigation spread across the region with significant areas of dryland in between. The introduction of solar farms will not make a material difference to the significant swiss cheese affect that already exists. It is further noted that the site is located towards the edge of the Irrigation District.

- *Ensure non-agricultural land use does not undermine the integrity of irrigation infrastructure and complements existing and future agricultural production.*
- *Ensure land use change within an irrigation district does not negate the potential opportunities for a rural water corporation to make adjustments to the footprint of an irrigation district that are identified under an approved plan or strategy.*
- *Ensure land use change does not limit the ability of future investment in irrigation infrastructure that achieves the intended benefits of minimising water loss, and improved irrigation service efficiency to the farm gate and overall agricultural production.*

As demonstrated when assessed against the solar guidelines above, the proposed solar hybrid facility will not impact on the future viability of the irrigation district as the site is not currently irrigated (and has not been for at least 15 years) and there is insufficient amount of water under the current delivery share for a future commercial irrigation operation of the site. The current delivery share water is used for occasional water for stock which can be used with the proposed agrisolar operation at the site. This will ensure the continued agricultural use of the land to complement the agricultural production in the district.

The solar facility land use will not undermine the integrity of irrigation infrastructure as the existing irrigation channel extents only a small section of the site, outside of the proposed solar facility development area, with sufficient setbacks of solar panels from the irrigation channel of more than 30 metres. Furthermore, the small amount of delivery share water provided to this site would not support commercial irrigation of the site and the rationing experienced on the channel demonstrates there is no spare capacity to support irrigation on the site.

Clause 71.02.2 of the Loddon Planning Scheme states that in relation to the Operation of the Planning Policy Framework 'A responsible authority must take a relevant policy guideline into account when it makes a decision under this planning scheme, but is not required to give effect to it. If the responsible authority is satisfied that an alternative approach meets the objective, the alternative may be considered.'

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## Planning Policy Framework

**Clause 14.02-3S's** overall objective is 'To plan and manage for sustainable change within irrigation districts declared under Part 6A of the Water Act 1989.'

The clause includes key strategies to achieve this objective, including:

- *Identify and plan for the future needs of communities to adapt and adjust to strategic land use change within an irrigation district.*
- *Ensure the future viability of an irrigation district by preventing non-agricultural use of land in a declared irrigation district where the land is serviced, or was serviced as at 17 September 2019, by rural water corporation irrigation infrastructure, unless the rural water corporation infrastructure has been, or is planned to be, decommissioned.*

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It is submitted that the proposed Solar Hybrid project is a sustainable change within the Irrigation district, whilst maintaining the agricultural use of the land with proposed grazing, in accordance with the objective of Clause 41.02-3S, which seeks to *plan and manage for sustainable change within irrigation districts*.

In accordance with Clause 71.02-3 Integrated decision making, it is stated that *'Planning Policy Framework operates together with the remainder of the scheme to deliver integrated decision making. Planning and responsible authorities should endeavour to integrate the range of planning policies relevant to the issues to be determined and balance conflicting objectives in favour of net community benefit and sustainable development for the benefit of present and future generations.'*

It is our view that the high compliance of the proposed solar hybrid project with all other strategies in the Planning Policy Framework and the benefits that the solar hybrid facility will bring assist in reducing Victoria's greenhouse gas emissions and mitigating climate change, weighs in favour of net community benefit and sustainable development for current and future generations.

We note that in the VCAT Decision *Green Gold Energy Pty Ltd v Minister for Planning [2022] VCAT 118*, VCAT determined to grant a permit for the solar farm in a declared irrigation district. In terms of the application of planning policy relating to the declared irrigation district, the VCAT Member concluded that:

- *'There is considerable variability within the irrigation district – for example:*
  - a. *Variation in land use activity in the FZ.*
  - b. *Susceptibility to flooding where included in the FO.*
  - c. *Variation in soil quality as identified by the soil mapping.*
  - d. *Patterns of land fragmentation.*
- *The irrigation district is not a level playing field and to form a view considering only the high level policy implications is in our view unrealistic because there will always be exceptions. The policies and guidance introduced by VC161 do not ask us to generalise in the sense*

*that all land commanded by the modernisation system must remain sacrosanct for agriculture. If that were the case, the variability described above becomes meaningless because the protection of all agricultural land, irrespective of condition and quality, would probably consign considerable areas of the modernisation district to disuse.'*

Key matters of the VCAT Decision *Green Gold Energy Pty Ltd v Minister for Planning* establishes a relevant precedent for the Mologa Solar Hybrid proposal in the following ways:

- it does not permanently remove the land from agricultural production;
- it is unlikely to jeopardise the future viability of this irrigation district;
- the connectivity of the irrigation supply system is unaffected;
- it does not limit the future investment in irrigation infrastructure.

Overall, it is considered that the particular circumstances of the Mologa Solar Hybrid project site weigh in favour of it being acceptable in this location.

## 6.7 Aboriginal Cultural Heritage

### Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006, Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2018 and Clause 15.03-2S

The Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 provides for the protection of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage in Victoria, and the Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2018 sets out the circumstances in which a Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP) is required for a development.

The Regulations require a mandatory CHMP if:

1. All or part of the proposed activity is a high impact activity; and
2. All or part of the activity area is an area of cultural heritage sensitivity (subject to whether the entire area of cultural heritage sensitivity has been subject to significant ground disturbance).

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Section 52 of the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 specifies that a statutory authorisation (including a permit under the Planning and Environment Act 1987) may not be granted until a CHMP is prepared, if a CHMP is required.

The proposed activity is a high impact activity pursuant to regulation 46(1)(b)(xxvii and xxx). The Activity Area (considering the development footprint only) does intersect with areas of Aboriginal cultural heritage sensitivity, therefore a mandatory CHMP is required.

Urbis is currently preparing a mandatory Cultural Heritage Management Plan 20827 with the Registered Aboriginal Party, the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation, to ensure that the development of the proposal will minimise any adverse impacts on the heritage significance of the place and that those parts of the wider property with heritage significance are appropriately managed, in accordance with Clause 15.03-2S.

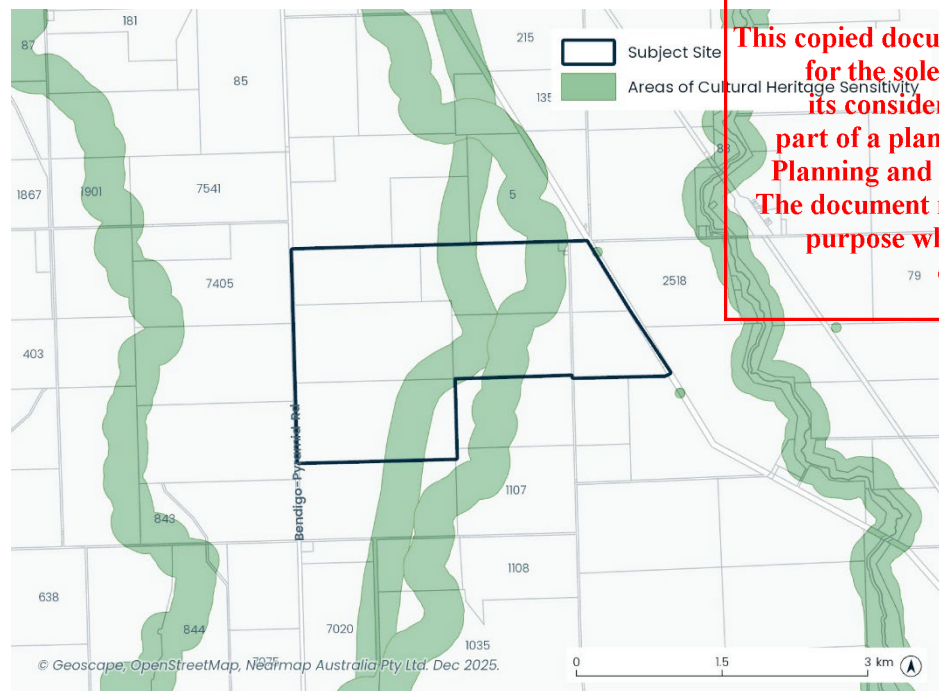


Figure 13 – Areas of Cultural Heritage Sensitivity

## Cultural Heritage Management Plan 20827

A mandatory Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP 20827) is being prepared for the Mologa Solar Hybrid project in accordance with the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (the Act).

In accordance with section 54(1)(a) of the Act, a Notice of Intent (NoI) was submitted to the Registered Aboriginal Party, Dja Dja Wurrung Aboriginal Corporation (Djaara), on 18 August 2025. Djaara advised on 20 August 2025 that they intended to evaluate the CHMP.

A desktop assessment was undertaken in accordance with the Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2018 (the Regulations). Based on the results, it was concluded that it is reasonably possible that Aboriginal cultural heritage is present within the activity area. Accordingly, a standard assessment was required under Regulation 62(1). Please see Appendix H for further details regarding the desktop assessment.

An in-person inception meeting with Djaara was held on 11 November 2025 to present the desktop assessment findings and confirm the methodology for the standard assessment.

A standard assessment was subsequently undertaken on the 3-5 December 2025 in accordance with the approved methodology. This assessment comprised a combination of transect survey and auger testing with four archaeologists and four Djaara representatives.

The standard assessment identified:

- Poor ground surface visibility across the majority of the activity area
- One Aboriginal Place, a scarred tree which has now been registered as VAHR 7725-0367
- Minimal topsoils across the majority of the activity area, with the exception of an ephemeral waterway in the western extent, which displayed alluvial deposits with ironstone inclusions, indicating low potential for cultural heritage deposits

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- An area of moderate archaeological potential was identified in the undisturbed wooded area to the east of the property. This area will not be impacted by the proposed activity

The assessment concluded that most of the activity area has minimal to no potential for Aboriginal cultural heritage due to the extent of ground disturbances and absence of intact natural topsoils. Although it is considered unlikely that Aboriginal cultural heritage will be present in other locations within the activity area, the auger testing results indicate low potential for cultural heritage deposits to be present within alluvial contexts in the ephemeral waterway

A standard assessment results meeting was held with Djaara on 15 January 2026 to present the standard assessment results. Djaara acknowledged the results of the standard assessment and requested additional time to consider the complex assessment methodology.

An additional online meeting was held on 5 February 2026 to provide details regarding the proposed activity and construction methodology so that Djaara could assess the proposed impacts and propose an appropriate complex assessment methodology. Djaara have now confirmed that they have provided the required information regarding the proposed activity.

Urbis and Djaara are now engaged in further discussions regarding the timing of further CHMP assessments and other aspects of the project. The complex assessment will proceed in 2026 in accordance with the Djaara's requirements when they are provided.

## 6.8 Siting and Design

The proposal has been sited and designed having regard to the key guidelines and design advice applicable to renewable energy facilities under the Loddon Planning Scheme.

### Clause 53.13 'Renewable Energy Facility (other than Wind Energy Facility)'

Clause 53.13 applies to applications to use or develop land for a renewable energy facility other than a wind energy facility. The clause outlines

application requirements which must be provided with an application, and decision guidelines for consideration by the responsible authority.

The Clause requires an Environmental Management Plan Framework (EMPF) to be submitted, please see Appendix O for the EMPF prepared by Urbis. This specifies measures to avoid and minimise environmental and amenity impacts during the operation of the proposal; design measures and procedures to manage dust, odour, light spill, mud, flood, surface water quality and stormwater run-off; response measures for environmental incidents, including a program for recording and reporting; and organisational responsibilities.

Please refer to Appendix P for an outline of the proposal's response to the application requirements and decision guidelines of Clause 53.13. This assessment finds that the proposal is an appropriate response to the requirements of Clause 53.13.

### Solar Energy Facilities – Design and Development Guideline (DELWP, October 2022)

The Solar Energy Facilities – Design and Development Guideline (the Guidelines) provide an overview of the policy, legislative and statutory planning requirements for solar energy facility proposals in Victoria.

The proposal has been designed having regard to the requirements of the Guidelines, with all relevant matters having been considered, and representing a well-resolved response to the requirements. A detailed assessment against the Guidelines is provided at **Appendix R** of this report. In brief, the proposal:

- ✓ Has been sited to minimise impacts to biodiversity including native vegetation, as demonstrated by the accompanying ecology report.
- ✓ Minimises cumulative impacts.
- ✓ An existing 220 kV transmission line runs through the site allowing access to the electricity grid.
- ✓ Has good access to main roads.

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- ✓ Minimises landscape impacts, through retaining native vegetation, provision of vegetation screening, and siting to avoid dominating the landscape.
- ✓ Avoids strategically significant agricultural land within region.
- ✓ Is informed by extensive and ongoing consultation with the local community, as demonstrated by the consultation documentation prepared by Urbis.
- ✓ Suitably manages its bushfire risk, as demonstrated by the Bushfire Risk Assessment prepared by Ecology and Heritage Partners.
- ✓ Is appropriately set back and provides suitable landscape screening, as demonstrated by the Landscape Plan prepared by Urbis.

## Response to the Farming Zone

While panels are located within 100 metres of the road in the Transport Zone 2, the panel location and proposed screening will ensure that the proposal does not result in any unreasonable visual impacts to roadways or to nearby sensitive receivers.

Otherwise, the proposal has been appropriately sited having regard to the design and siting requirements of the Farming Zone. Detailed discussion of visual impacts is included in a subsequent section of this report, which confirms that the siting and design of the proposal are appropriate having regard to the character of the area.

For more detail, please refer to **Appendix Q** of this report.

## 6.9 Traffic and Access

A Transport Impact Assessment (TIA) prepared by Urbis Transport assesses the road network impacts of the proposed solar energy facility and BESS during construction and operation.

Site access is proposed via a primary access point on Mologa–Durham Ox Road, approximately 650 metres east of Bendigo–Pyramid Road. The access

is designed to accommodate the largest construction vehicles, with a width of 15.7 metres and supporting swept path analysis provided in Section 5.

Mologa–Durham Ox Road is unsealed with an approximate carriageway width of 6.5 metres, allowing two-way traffic. The access is suitably located, with adequate separation from nearby intersections and sufficient sight distance to support safe operation of the surrounding road network.

Construction traffic management measures are outlined in Section 7.4 of the TIA. Emergency access will be maintained via existing crossovers on Bendigo–Pyramid Road, Mologa–Durham Ox Road and Old Church Road, with no changes proposed.

## Traffic Impacts – Construction

It is anticipated that two OSOM vehicle movements will be required to deliver the transformer and switchroom to the site. The OSOM origin point has not yet been confirmed; however, a preliminary route between the site and the Northern Highway is shown in Figure 17. The Northern Highway is pre-approved for the reference OSOM vehicle and provides connections to other pre-approved routes, including the Hume Freeway, Goulburn Valley Freeway and Murray Valley Highway, subject to confirmation of the OSOM origin point.

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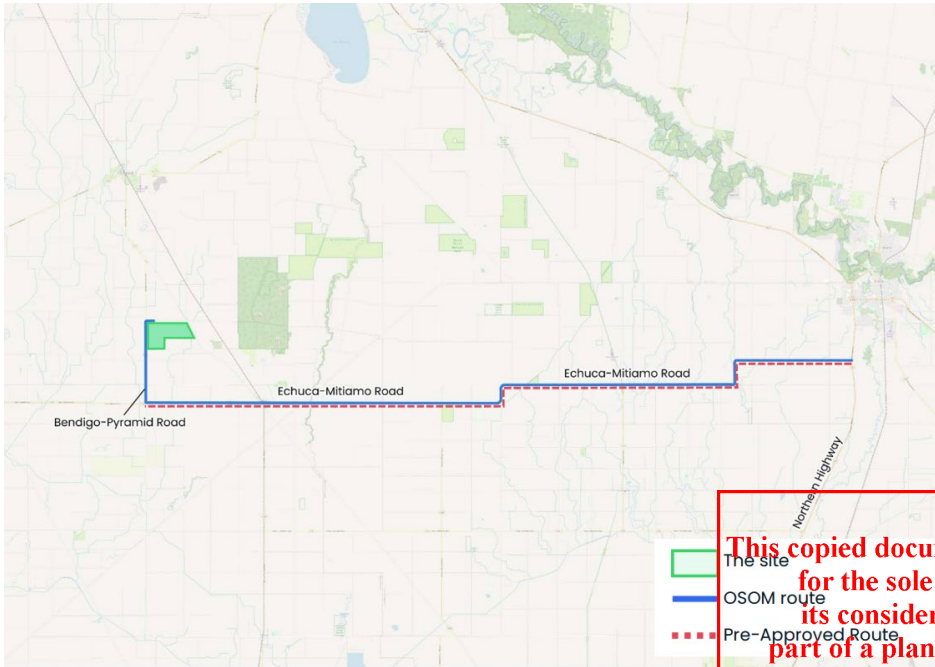


Figure 14 – Preliminary route between the site and the Northern Highway

Construction vehicles will be sourced from the Port of Melbourne, subject to supplier selection, and will approach the site from the south, likely via the Loddon Valley Highway, Boort–Mitiamo Road and Bendigo–Pyramid Road. Final construction routes will be confirmed post-planning approval through a Transport Management Plan or similar document.

The Traffic Impact Assessment (TIA) and swept path diagrams identify the likely service vehicles and confirm that site access is suitable. The largest anticipated delivery vehicle is a 26 m B-double. Any requirement for over-size over-mass vehicles will be subject to separate approval from the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator.

At peak construction, up to 300 workers may be on site. It is expected that around 80 per cent will arrive by minibus (average occupancy of 10) and 20 per cent by light vehicle (average occupancy of 3), generating up to 88 daily vehicle trips (44 inbound and 44 outbound). This level of traffic is low and can be readily accommodated by the surrounding road network.

A Traffic Management Plan will be prepared following planning approval. A dilapidation survey will be undertaken to document existing road conditions and ensure any construction-related damage is appropriately addressed.

## Traffic Impacts – Operation

During its operation phase, the site will operate with up to eight staff personnel and generate up to 16 regular daily traffic movements. This is minor in comparison with the traffic impacts during construction and clearly demonstrates that no unreasonable impacts will result from the proposal. CFA vehicles will have appropriate access to the site and will be able to access the panels via the internal road network.

Please refer to the Transport Impact Assessment prepared by Urbis Transport for more information.

## 6.10 Visual Impacts

The Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) for the proposed Mologa Solar Hybrid in Central-Northern Victoria concludes that the project will have low to moderate-low impacts on the landscape and visual amenity. The site is primarily flat agricultural land with limited scenic value, and the project will be visually absorbed into its context.

## Key Findings

- **Landscape Character:** The area is divided into three zones—agricultural plains, cypress pine woodland, and creek corridor. Impacts are rated moderate-low or low due to the landscape’s capacity to absorb change.
- **Visual Impact:** Direct views are limited by flat terrain, existing vegetation, and the orientation of dwellings and roads. Only three viewpoints (two public, one private) were assessed in detail, all with low visual impact.
- **Glint and Glare:** Modelling shows no predicted glare for any receptor (roads, dwellings, aerodrome) with recommended panel angles.

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- **Mitigation:** Perimeter planting is recommended and will further reduce visual impacts over time.
- **Cumulative Impacts:** None expected, as there are no other significant projects nearby.

## Visual Analysis

- **Visibility:** The project's low profile and existing screening mean it will be largely hidden from most public and private views.
- **Scenic Quality:** The region is open, flat farmland with moderate scenic value and existing infrastructure; the solar farm will not introduce a discordant element.
- **View Corridors:** No significant view corridors or shared vistas are affected.
- **Photomontages:** Simulations show the project is screened or visually integrated, with very low residual impact after planting matures.

## Key Data

- Site area: approx. 591 hectares
- Solar farm capacity: 250 MW; BESS: 250 MW/4 hours
- PV panels: ~500,000; max height: 4.0m
- Closest receptors: 25m (road), 160m and 840m (dwellings)
- Glare: 0 minutes/year for all receptors with panel angles 4°–60°
- Perimeter landscape buffer: 10m (west), 5m (other sides)
- Security fencing: 2m high, 12.7 km total

## Recommendations

- Set panel resting angles between 4° and 60° to eliminate glare.
- Implement perimeter planting to screen the project.
- Minimise and manage temporary construction lighting.

- Monitor planting establishment for at least 5 years.
- No off-site mitigation or further cumulative assessment is required unless new projects arise.

Please refer to the Visual Impact Assessment (**Appendix M**) prepared by Urbis for more information.

## 6.11 Noise Impacts

### Planning Policy Framework and EPA Protocol 1826.4

The proposal has been designed to mitigate any potential for noise arising from its operations in accordance with **Clause 13.05-IS** of the Loddon Planning Scheme. Development will not be prejudiced, and community amenity and human health will not be adversely impacted by noise emissions from the proposal.

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Solar energy facilities are largely silent during operation – however, ancillary systems such as inverters and BESS units do create noise. WSP have prepared a Noise Impact Assessment summarising the operational noise modelling undertaken to assess potential noise impacts from the proposal. The report concludes that noise from the operational solar facility will comply with the requirements of EPA Publication 1826 to all sensitive receivers.

Predicted noise levels associated with the operation of the Proposal during the day, evening and night period have been demonstrated to comply with the applicable noise limits, provided reasonable and practicable noise controls are in place. Noise barriers are not proposed for the project.

Please refer to the Noise Impact Assessment (**Appendix N**) for further detail regarding the proposal's acoustic impacts.

## 6.12 Signage

Pursuant to the Farming Zone the proposal is included in Category 4 (Sensitive areas) pursuant to Clause 52.05 (Signs). Category 4 is the most restrictive category, and a permit is required for business identification signage.

The proposal incorporates business identification signage to be located at the main site access. Dimensions are to be approximately 1800mm x 1200mm, for a total area of 2.16 sqm.

An indicative design for the signage is reproduced in Figure 15.

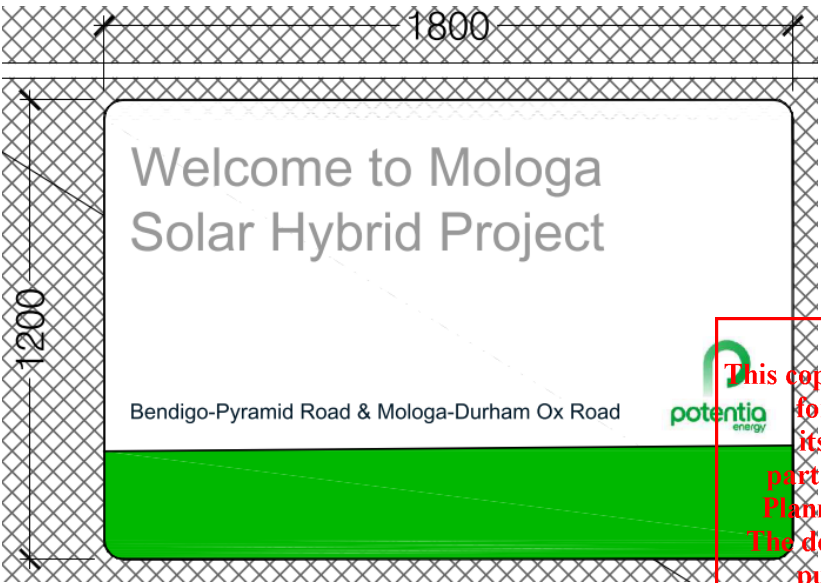


Figure 15 - Indicative design of signage on site

The proposal responds positively to the Decision Guidelines of Clause 52.05 – Signs as follows:

Table 5 – 52.06 Signs – Decision Guidelines assessment

| Criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Assessment against proposal                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><i>The character of the area including:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><i>The sensitivity of the area in terms of the natural environment, heritage values, waterways and open space, rural landscape or residential character.</i></li></ul> | <p>The proposed business identification sign is modest in scale, with a total area of 2.16sqm, and is compatible with the rural character of the Farming Zone and the infrastructure context of the solar energy facility use. The sign</p> |

- The compatibility of the proposed sign with the existing or desired future character of the area in which it is proposed to be located.*
  - The cumulative impact of signs on the character of an area or route, including the need to avoid visual disorder or clutter of signs.*
  - The consistency with any identifiable outdoor advertising theme in the area.*
- will be attached to the security fencing at the primary access point along Mologa–Durham Ox Rd, integrating with existing site infrastructure and avoiding the need for additional standalone signage structures. The proposal is limited to site identification and will not result in visual clutter or adverse impacts on the character of the area.

*Impacts on views and vistas:*

- The potential to obscure or compromise important views from the public realm.*
- The potential to dominate the skyline.*
- The potential to impact on the quality of significant public views.*
- The potential to impede views to existing signs.*

The sign is low-scale and mounted to the security fencing at the primary access point Mologa–Durham Ox Rd. It will not obscure important public views, dominate the skyline, or adversely impact significant views within the rural landscape.

*The relationship to the streetscape, setting or landscape:*

- The proportion, scale and form of the proposed sign relative to the streetscape, setting or landscape.*
- The position of the sign, including the extent to which it protrudes above existing buildings or landscape and natural elements.*

The sign is proportionate to the rural road interface and broader solar farm site within the Farming Zone. Its attachment to the security fencing minimises visual impact and avoids additional freestanding structures. The proposal is limited to a single identification sign at the site access point and will not protrude above built form or landscape features.

- *The ability to screen unsightly built or other elements.*
- *The ability to reduce the number of signs by rationalising or simplifying signs.*
- *The ability to include landscaping to reduce the visual impact of parts of the sign structure.*

*The relationship to the site and building:*

- *The scale and form of the sign relative to the scale, proportion and any other significant characteristics of the host site and host building.*
- *The extent to which the sign displays innovation relative to the host site and host building.*
- *The extent to which the sign requires the removal of vegetation or includes new landscaping.*

*The impact of structures associated with the sign:*

- *The extent to which associated structures integrate with the sign.*
- *The potential of associated structures to impact any important or significant features of the building, site, streetscape, setting or landscape, views and vistas or area.*

The sign is appropriately scaled relative to the expansive solar energy facility site and integrated into the existing security fencing.

The proposal is functional in nature and designed solely for site identification purposes. No vegetation removal is required.

The sign is attached directly to the existing security fencing and does not require substantial additional structures. The proposal will not impact significant site features, the rural landscape character, or important views and vistas.

*The impact of any illumination:*

- *The impact of glare and illumination on the safety of pedestrians and vehicles.*
- *The impact of illumination on the amenity of nearby residents and the amenity of the area.*
- *The potential to control illumination temporally or in terms of intensity.*

The sign is not proposed to be illuminated. Accordingly, there will be no impacts relating to glare, road safety or residential amenity.

*The impact of any logo box associated with the sign:*

- *The extent to which the logo box forms an integral part of the sign through its position, lighting and any structures used to attach the logo box to the sign.*
- *The suitability of the size of the logo box in relation to its identification purpose and the size of the sign.*

Any logo or branding component forms an integrated part of the business identification sign and remains proportionate to the overall sign dimensions. The proposal remains visually recessive within the Farming Zone context.

*The need for identification and the opportunities for adequate identification on the site or locality.*

The sign provides clear identification of the solar farm at the primary access point Mologa-Durham Ox Rd and is appropriately integrated into the security fencing. The proposal represents a reasonable and limited signage outcome commensurate with the operational requirements of the development.

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## 7 Conclusion

Based on the foregoing assessment and the enclosed appendices, it has been demonstrated that the proposal is a well-resolved solar energy facility and BESS, and once delivered, will make an important contribution to achieving the state's renewable energy goals.

In summary:

- ✓ The proposal is suitable for assessment under the Development Facilitation Program pursuant to Clause 53.22.
- ✓ The proposal is consistent with the statutory and strategic frameworks of the Loddon Planning Scheme.
- ✓ The proposal will contribute approximately 250MW BESS capacity. Based on these figures, the proposal will contribute significantly to Victoria's emissions reduction and renewable energy targets, as well as to the overall grid stability, as outlined within this report.
- ✓ A Cultural Heritage Management Plan is being prepared.
- ✓ The proposed installation has sought to minimise impacts on native vegetation, with large areas of the site avoided, and only minimal removal required for bushfire protection measures (construction of the boundary road) which is required to meet CFA requirements. Where removal is required and not exempt under Clause 52.17 for bushfire protection measures, this will be appropriately offset.
- ✓ The proposal has been sited and designed in response to the conditions on the site, seeking to preserve on existing native vegetation and site waterbodies from impacts.
- ✓ Flood assessment found low overall flood risk (H1 classification) with negligible change in peak flows under proposed conditions; all infrastructure sited at least 50 m from Blind Creek.
- ✓ The proposal will not impact on the current or future viability of the irrigation district as the site is not currently irrigated and there is an

insufficient amount of water under the current delivery share or spare capacity in the channel to support a future commercial irrigation operation of the site. The proposal appropriately manages its bushfire impacts and has been designed in accordance with all relevant legislation and guidelines.

- ✓ The proposal allows for the ongoing agricultural use of the land as sheep will continue to graze beneath the panels. Following the decommissioning of the proposal, the site can be restored to its existing conditions.
- ✓ The proposal will not unreasonably impact the amenity of surrounding properties, with respect to visual impact and noise.

For these reasons, Urbis, on behalf of the permit applicant, requests that the Minister for Planning resolve to issue a planning permit for the proposal as outlined within this submission.

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# *Appendix* **A**

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## Engagement Outcomes Report

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## Agricultural Impact Assessment

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## Biodiversity Impact Assessment

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## Bushfire Risk Assessment

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## Risk Management Plan

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## Hydrology & Irrigation District Assessment

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## Cultural Heritage Management Plan Draft

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# *Appendix I*

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## Site Plan

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## Elevations and Specifications

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# *Appendix K*

## Traffic Impact Assessment

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## Landscape Strategy

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## Visual Impact Assessment (VIA)

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## Noise Impact Assessment

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Environmental  
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## Clause 53.13 Assessment

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## P.1 Application Requirements

| Application Requirement                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | ASSESSMENT                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>A site and context analysis, including:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| A site plan, photographs or other techniques to accurately describe the site and the surrounding area.                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <div>✓</div> <p>Site plans, aerial maps and photographs identifying the site location and surrounds have been provided as part of the planning submission.</p> <p>The proposed development has been carefully designed to consider the potential environmental and amenity impacts on the site and its surrounds.</p> |
| A location plan showing the full site area, local electricity grid, access roads to the site and direction and distance to nearby accommodation, hospital or education centre.                                                                                                                                                 | <div>✓</div> <p>Mapping indicating the site in its wider context, including the site access and location of nearby electrical infrastructure, have been included within the planning submission.</p>                                                                                                                  |
| <b>A design response, including:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Detailed plans of the proposed development including, the layout and height of the facility and associated building and works, materials, reflectivity, colour, lighting, landscaping, the electricity distribution starting point (where the electricity will enter the distribution system), access roads and parking areas. | <div>✓</div> <p>Site layout plans and elevations are provided at <b>Appendix I &amp; J</b>. Refer to Section 3 of the planning report for equipment specification and details.</p>                                                                                                                                    |
| Accurate visual simulations illustrating the development in the context of the surrounding area and from key public view points.                                                                                                                                                                                               | <div>✓</div> <p>Photo simulations and a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment are provided at <b>Appendix L &amp; M</b> of this report.</p>                                                                                                                                                                          |
| The extent of vegetation removal and a rehabilitation plan for the site.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <div>✓</div> <p>The site plan clearly indicates the extent of proposed vegetation removal. The removal, revegetation and proposed offsets are also detailed in the Biodiversity Impact Assessment at <b>Appendix D</b> and within the body of this report.</p>                                                        |
| <b>Written report and assessment, including:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

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| An explanation of how the proposed design derives from and responds to the site analysis.                                                            |  Please refer to Section 6.7 of this report for a discussion of the key design considerations for the proposal.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| A description of the proposal, including the types of process to be utilised, materials to be stored and the treatment of waste.                     |  The proposed installation is a solar energy facility and BESS. The proposal is described in detail in section 3 of this report. Materials will not be stored at the site, and no waste will be produced.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Whether a Development Licence, Operating Licence, Permit or Registration is required from the Environment Protection Authority.                      |  There is no requirement for a Works Approval or Licence from the EPA for the proposed works.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| The potential amenity impacts such as noise, glint, light spill, emissions to air, land or water, vibration, smell and electromagnetic interference. |  Detailed consideration of potential amenity impacts has been provided within the body of this report, including: <div> <p>This copied document to be made available for the sole purpose of enabling its consideration and review as part of a planning process under the Planning and Environment Act 1987. The document must not be used for any purpose which may breach any copyright</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visual impact and glare analysis (Appendix M)</li> <li>Noise impacts (Appendix N)</li> <li>Cultural heritage impacts</li> <li>Traffic and access (Appendix K)</li> </ul> <p>Relevant technical reports are also included assessing each of these considerations. These assessments have found that amenity impacts are acceptable and can be appropriately managed as part of the development.</p> </div> |
| The effect of traffic to be generated on roads.                                                                                                      |  Please refer to <b>Appendix K</b> as a Traffic Impact Assessment has been prepared by Urbis which assessed the traffic impact the construction and operation of the solar hybrid will have on the roads.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| The impact upon Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal cultural heritage.                                                                                      |  A mandatory Cultural Heritage Management Plan is being prepared by Urbis.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| The impact of the proposal on any species listed under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 or                                                     |  The proposal does not result in any unreasonable impacts on species listed under the FFG Act or EPBC Act. However, please refer to the discussion in the body of this report and the Biodiversity Impact Assessment at <b>Appendix D</b> for further detail.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

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Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.

A statement of why the site is suitable for a renewable energy facility including, a calculation of the greenhouse benefits.



Refer to Section 6.1 of this report for a detailed assessment.

An environmental management plan including, a construction management plan, any rehabilitation and monitoring.



Please refer to **Appendix O** – Environmental Management Plan Framework prepared by Urbis.

## P.2 Decision Guidelines

### Decision Guideline

The Municipal Planning Strategy and the Planning Policy Framework.



Please refer to Section 6.1 of this report for an assessment of the proposal against the Municipal Planning Strategy and Planning Policy Framework.

The effect of the proposal on the surrounding area in terms of noise, glint, light spill, vibration, smell and electromagnetic interference.



The proposal has appropriately considered its amenity impacts, with technical assessments determining that these impacts can be appropriately managed. Refer to the body of this report and technical assessments as discussed above.

The impact of the proposal on significant views, including visual corridors and sightlines.



Please refer to Section 6 of the Visual Impact Assessment prepared by Urbis for more information.

The impact of the proposal on strategically important agricultural land.



The agricultural assessment confirms that the land is not strategically important from an agricultural perspective. Sheep grazing may continue under the panels post development. The use will not have any adverse impact on adjoining agricultural uses.

Please refer to the body of this report for a detailed discussion of agricultural issues (Appendix F).

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| The impact of the proposal on the protection of declared irrigation districts.                                                       | ✓ The site is within a declared irrigation district. Please refer to the Agricultural Impact Assessment (Appendix F), the Hydrology and Irrigation District Assessment, and section 6.6 of this report for more information and justification.          |
| The impact of the proposal on the natural environment and natural systems.                                                           | ✓ The proposal has appropriately managed its impacts on the natural environment, including through the three-step process for managing impacts to native vegetation. No unreasonable impacts will result to the natural environment or natural systems. |
| The impact of the proposal on the road network.                                                                                      | ✓ Please refer to Section 7 & 8 of the Traffic Impact Assessment ( <b>Appendix K</b> ) prepared by Urbis for more information.                                                                                                                          |
| <i>Solar Energy Facilities Design and Development Guideline</i> (Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, October 2022). | ✓ <b>Appendix R</b> provides a full assessment against these guidelines.                                                                                                                                                                                |

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# Appendix Q

## Farming Zone Assessment

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## Q.3 Farming Zone Assessment

### Guideline

### ASSESSMENT

|                       |                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>General issues</b> | The Municipal Planning Strategy and Planning Policy Framework                                                  |  Please refer to the body of this report for a thematic assessment against the provisions of the Loddon Planning Scheme (including the Municipal Planning Strategy and Planning Policy Framework).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|                       | Any Regional Catchment Strategy and associated plan applying to the land                                       |  The subject site is located within the Loddon Mallee South area. The proposal aligns with the Loddon Mallee South local strategy, through supporting and facilitating development in renewable energy. The proposed agrivoltaics model on the site represents an innovative approach to both energy generation and agriculture.                                                                                                                                                                          |
|                       | The capability of the land to accommodate the proposed use or development, including the disposal of effluent. |  The land can accommodate the proposed use and development, as described within this report. No effluent management is required as the proposal includes a composting toilet. The proposal presents minimal amenity impacts to surrounding properties and will not compromise the long-term use of the site for agricultural purposes.                                                                                                                                                                    |
|                       | How the use or development relates to sustainable land management.                                             |  The proposed land use provides a source of renewable energy for the surrounding area, with no operational waste resulting from the proposal.<br><br>The proposed construction is low impact, avoiding heavy duty foundations and significant disturbance of the land. As a result, the agricultural potential of the land will be retained following development.<br><br>The site will also be retained for agricultural use during its operation as the land can continue to be used for sheep grazing. |
|                       | Whether the site is suitable for the use or development and whether the proposal is                            |  The use and development of the land as a solar energy facility and BESS is appropriate. As previously discussed, it is not notable from an agricultural perspective. The site has a 220 kV transmission line                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

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|                                                                       |                                                                                                                            |   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
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|                                                                       | compatible with adjoining and nearby land uses.                                                                            |   | running north to south through the site. Given the existing infrastructure in the area, the use is appropriate. As discussed in section 6.2 this report, the site will also continue to be used for agricultural purposes while the proposal is in place. |
|                                                                       | How the use and development make use of existing infrastructure and services                                               | ✓ | The development will make use of the existing powerlines that run through the site to connect to the grid. Please refer to the Traffic Impact Assessment ( <b>Appendix K</b> ).                                                                           |
| <b>Agricultural issues and the impacts from non-agricultural uses</b> | Whether the use or development will support and enhance agricultural production.                                           | ✓ | The use will allow for agricultural use of the site to continue, as sheep continue to graze beneath the panels.<br><br>Due to the low-impact construction of the proposal, when it is removed the site can be returned to an exclusive agricultural use.  |
|                                                                       | Whether the use or development will adversely affect soil quality or permanently remove land from agricultural production. | ✓ | The installation will not permanently remove the land from agricultural use, as discussed above. The use will not compromise soil quality.<br><br>When decommissioned, the site can be returned to agricultural use.                                      |
|                                                                       | The potential for the use or development to limit the operation and expansion of adjoining and nearby agricultural uses.   | ✓ | The proposal will not impact the operation or expansion of adjoining and nearby agricultural uses as it is contained within the site, produces no emissions, and appropriately manages its noise impacts.                                                 |
|                                                                       | The capacity of the site to sustain the agricultural uses.                                                                 | ✓ | The site is anticipated to continue to be used for sheep grazing in conjunction with the renewable energy facility.                                                                                                                                       |
|                                                                       | The agricultural qualities of the land, such as soil quality, access to water and access to rural infrastructure.          | ✓ | The development will not affect the agricultural qualities of the land.<br><br>Please refer to the Agricultural Impact Assessment prepared by RMCG at <b>Appendix C</b> for further detail.                                                               |

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Any integrated land management plan prepared for the site.



There is no integrated land management plan that applies to the site.

## Accommodation issues

***Not applicable to a proposal for a Renewable Energy Facility or a Utility Installation***

## Environmental issues

The impact of the proposal on the natural physical features and resources of the area, on soil and water quality.



The proposal will not adversely impact soil and water quality.

The design and development of the proposal has avoided areas of ecological importance and areas proximate to existing waterways.

Please refer to the Agricultural Impact Assessment at **C** and the Hydrology and Irrigation District Assessment at **Appendix G** for further detail.

The impact of the use or development on the flora and fauna on the site and its surrounds.



The proposal has sought to minimise its impacts on the flora and fauna on the site. Please refer to the biodiversity section of this report and the Biodiversity Impact Assessment prepared by Ecology Systems for further detail (**Appendix D**).

The need to protect and enhance the biodiversity of the area, including the retention of vegetation and faunal habitat and the need to revegetate land including riparian buffers along waterways, gullies, ridgelines, property boundaries and saline discharge and recharge area.



The proposal retains the vast majority of the native vegetation located on site, with only patches to be removed. Landscape buffers are proposed along site boundaries, incorporating native species consistent with the character of the area.

The location of on-site effluent disposal areas to minimise the impact of nutrient loads on waterways and native vegetation



The effluent disposal is to be finalised at a later stage of the design process, and will either be a composting toilet, or a trucked in and out waste collection.

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| <b>Design and siting issues</b>     | The need to locate buildings in one area to avoid any adverse impacts on surrounding agricultural uses and to minimise the loss of productive agricultural land.                                                                                                                                              |  The solar installation will be distributed evenly across the site. However, the design allows for continued grazing of sheep on site.                                                                                                                |
|                                     | The impact of the siting, design, height, bulk, colours and materials to be used, on the natural environment, major roads, vistas and water features and the measures to be undertaken to minimise any adverse impacts.                                                                                       |  Please refer to Section 3 & 6 of the Visual Impact Assessment prepared by Urbis for more information.                                                                                                                                                |
|                                     | The impact on the character and appearance of the area or features of architectural, historic or scientific significance or of natural scenic beauty or importance.                                                                                                                                           |  Please refer to Section 3 & 6 of the Visual Impact Assessment prepared by Urbis for more information.                                                                                                                                                |
|                                     | The location and design of existing and proposed infrastructure including roads, gas, water, drainage, telecommunications and sewerage facilities.                                                                                                                                                            |  The site includes existing transmission infrastructure within the site which provides connection to the wider grid. No other services are proposed to be connected. The existing road network will be used for the development.                      |
|                                     | Whether the use and development will require traffic management measures.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |  Construction Management and Traffic Management plans are proposed to be prepared post-approval in response to conditions on the planning permit, should one be issued.                                                                               |
| <b>Schedule to the Farming Zone</b> | <p>The minimum setback from a road in Transport Zone 2 is 100 metres</p> <p>The minimum setback from a road (any other road) is 20 metres</p> <p>The minimum setback from a boundary (any other boundary) is 5 metres</p> <p>The minimum setback from a dwelling not in the same ownership is 100 metres.</p> |  While panels are located within the specified setback, they will not have any unreasonable visual impact on sensitive receptors, as discussed in the body of this report. <p>Please refer to the Visual Impact Assessment (<b>Appendix M</b>).</p> |

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# *Appendix R*

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## Solar Energy Facilities Design and Development Guidelines (2022) Assessment

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## R.4 Identifying Suitable Locations

### Guideline

### ASSESSMENT

#### Ideal siting conditions

A solar energy facility should not lead to:

- the loss or interruption of supply to the immediate or broader electricity transmission network
- the loss of vegetation, habitat or species of environmental importance
- the loss of cultural heritage or landscape values of significance
- the loss of productive state-significant agricultural land
- increased exposure of the area to fire, flood or other natural or environmental hazard



The proposal has been designed and sited to align with the ideal conditions outlined within the guidelines as follows:

- The development of the solar energy facility will not interrupt supply to the electricity transmission network and provide greater stability to the network.
- While some vegetation removal is necessary given the nature of the development, the proposal has been carefully designed to avoid and minimise the removal of native vegetation, with most vegetation on site retained. Necessary vegetation removal will be offset in accordance with current guidelines. A detailed avoid, minimise and offset statement has been prepared by Ecology Systems and is included at Appendix K.
- Development is proposed within areas of cultural heritage significance and as such a CHMP will be conducted prior to construction, ensuring that the site is appropriately managed at all stages of development.
- The agricultural impact assessment (**Appendix C**) has determined that the subject site is neither highly productive nor highly versatile. It is not considered to be significant or strategically important. Additionally, the land will be retained for sheep grazing in conjunction with the solar energy proposal.
- As confirmed by both the Bushfire Risk Assessment (**Appendix E**) and the Hydrology and Irrigation District Assessment (**Appendix G**), the development will not worsen the site's exposure to fire, flood or any other environmental hazard.

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|------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                  | <p>Ideally a solar energy facility should be located:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ on land with topographical conditions that avoids the need for unnecessary or excessive earthworks or changes to the natural landscape</li> <li>▪ to avoid the loss of native vegetation and biodiversity and if losses cannot be avoided, they are minimised and can be offset</li> <li>▪ close to the electricity grid network to minimise the need for additional infrastructure and associated impacts</li> <li>▪ a sufficient distance from existing urban areas or designated urban growth areas</li> <li>▪ where there can be adequate space between facilities within an area to avoid cumulative impacts of built form concentration</li> <li>▪ away from the floodplain of a major water course or wetland</li> <li>▪ where it has ready access to main roads</li> </ul> | <p>✓ The solar energy facility is located:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ On land with suitable topography, such that it does not require any major earthworks or changes to the landscape character. Panels will be supported on poles driven into the ground (or predrilled), avoiding the need for major earthworks.</li> <li>▪ To avoid and minimise impacts to native vegetation. Where vegetation removal cannot be eliminated, the removal will be appropriately offset.</li> <li>▪ Existing transmission line runs through the site which will provide connection to the wider grid.</li> <li>▪ A sufficient distance from Pyramid Hill and Mitiamo to minimise adverse impacts on the town.</li> <li>▪ Appropriately distant from other renewable projects and electricity facilities in the vicinity, whereby the nearest renewable project is located at Cohuna Solar Farm, another Potential Energy project.</li> <li>▪ Within a flooding overlay, however the proper mitigation methods have been conducted to not increase risk of flooding.</li> <li>▪ With direct access to Mologa-Durham Ox Road.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Connecting to the electricity transmission network</b></p> | <p><i>Electricity transmission network connections</i></p> <p>Consideration must be paid to electricity transmission network connections and the potential for cumulative effects in an area</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <p>✓ The proposal will connect to the grid via the existing 220 kV transmission line that runs north to south through the site. The proposal is one of relatively few renewable energy facilities in the immediate area, and as such no cumulative impacts on the grid are expected.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|                                                                  | <p><i>Managing cumulative effects in an area</i></p> <p>Too many facilities in an area can:</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <p>✓ The proposal appropriately manages its potential to contribute to cumulative effects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The land is not considered versatile or of strategic agricultural value, as detailed above. The land will be used for sheep grazing following the installation of the solar energy facility.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

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- reduce the availability and/or productivity of strategic agricultural land, particularly in irrigation districts
- result in landscape-scale visual impacts, due to an overconcentration of built form in an area
- impact the area's biodiversity, habitat or wildlife, due to an overconcentration of built form

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Agricultural productivity is not anticipated to meaningfully decrease because of the installation of the proposal.

- The development of the energy proposal will not result in any landscape-scale visual impacts to the wider area. Significant setbacks mitigate the visual impact of the proposal, and extensive landscape planting will screen the panels from public view where required.
- The development has been designed to avoid and minimise impacts to native vegetation. The design is also considered an appropriate response to the existing habitats of protected species.

### Prairie Solar Farm

- Given the separation distance of more than 5 km between the Prairie Solar Farm and the subject site, adverse cumulative impacts are not anticipated and a detailed cumulative impact assessment is not considered necessary.
- Glint and glare impacts from the proposed development are contained within the site and have been appropriately mitigated through design measures. As a result, the development is not expected to generate cumulative glint and glare impacts in combination with the Prairie Solar Farm.
- In relation to visual impacts, proposed landscaping and screening measures will provide an effective visual buffer for nearby neighbours and other sensitive interfaces. Given the distance between the two developments, the Prairie Solar Farm is not expected to contribute to any cumulative visual impact.
- Noise emissions associated with the development are expected to remain within the site boundaries. Accordingly, cumulative noise impacts are not anticipated.
- With respect to traffic, there is potential for increased traffic volumes should construction of both developments occur concurrently. However, as the timing and overlap of

construction activities cannot be confirmed at this stage, a cumulative traffic impact assessment is not currently possible.

## Protecting environmental values

### *Crown land*



No works are proposed within crown land as part of this proposal.

- Ideally, commercial infrastructure should not be located on, over, under, and should not affect public land and government roads, where it can be located on private land or where exception is provided for under legislation. The proponent must seek DELWP's approval if it requires access to public land.
- DELWP may require a proponent to undertake an environmental assessment, Native Title assessment and/or community consultation

### *Flora and fauna*

An assessment is required of the proposal's potential impact to existing natural habitats. The appropriate approvals and consents will be required under the:

- *Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act 1999 (EPBC Act)*
- *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*
- *Environment Effects Act 1978*
- *Consideration should be made to Protecting Victoria's Environment – Biodiversity 2037 strategy*

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Ecology Systems (ES) have undertaken a detailed assessment of the biodiversity values of the site. Their findings indicate the project is unlikely to cause a significant impact on any MNES and, if referred, should not be considered a controlled action.

Notwithstanding, the applicant seeks to undertake an EPBC referral process to be conducted to confirm that no EPBC vegetation is to be impacted by the development. Please refer to the provided Biodiversity Impact Assessment prepared by ES at Appendix L.

The Biodiversity Assessment finds that no species require permits under the FFG Act. Impacts are minor and therefore acceptable.

The proposal does not trigger a need for an EES referral.

Please refer to the body of this report for a detailed discussion of the potential triggers under relevant biodiversity legislation (Commonwealth and State), Biodiversity Impact Assessment at **Appendix D.**

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|                                                      | <p><i>Native vegetation and biodiversity</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An assessment is required of the proposal's potential impact to existing native vegetation</li> <li>Native vegetation requirements and offsets must be met</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <p>✓ Please refer to the body of this report, and the Biodiversity Impact Assessment at <b>Appendix D</b> for a detailed assessment of the proposed native vegetation removal.</p> <p>The proposal has adopted the 'avoid, minimise and offset' approach and has avoided most site impacts. Commensurate offsets for impacted vegetation will be provided.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Protecting cultural heritage</b>                  | <p>Aboriginal cultural heritage values are protected by Victoria's <i>Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006</i> and <i>Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2007</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A proponent must consider potential impacts and the views of relevant Aboriginal people before lodging a planning application.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <p>✓ Extensive engagement has been undertaken with the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation</p> <p>A CHMP is required for the proposal and will be undertaken by Urbis to ensure appropriate management of the site. Please refer to Section 6.7 of this report for more information.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Avoiding loss of high-value agricultural land</b> | <p><i>Strategically important agricultural land</i></p> <p>Solar farms should not undermine important agricultural land. Strategies to consider include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the impact on the loss of the site if it has high quality soils, particularly soils that are niche to a type of crop or other agricultural activity</li> <li>the potential loss of reliable, accessible water (such as irrigated areas) and its impact at a local or regional scale</li> <li>the impact of fragmentation and a change of land use to non-agriculture activity on local and regional productivity and output</li> </ul> | <p>✓ As confirmed by the agricultural assessment, the proposal is not located on strategically important agricultural land, and impacts to agricultural productivity are acceptable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low quality soils – the soils on the site are of low to moderate quality (predominantly Grade 3 and 4) and have some limitations for their suitability for irrigation primarily due to low water infiltration with a hard-setting surface and moderate to high subsoil salinity.</li> <li>Rainfall is moderate and relatively consistent across the year. No specific farm or public infrastructure is provided to the site, and the site is within an irrigation district, but has not used the irrigation infrastructure for 20 years.</li> <li>The proposal will not impact on the current or future viability of the irrigation district as the site is not currently irrigated and there is an insufficient amount of water under the current</li> </ul> |

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- the impact of a change of land use on recent and/or current efforts to modernise and reform agricultural activity in the area
- whether the land has specifically been set aside or defined for agricultural use and development in a planning scheme or other strategic document
- whether the change in land use is to the detriment of a government's previous or existing investment and support for the site or the area
- whether the proposed solar energy facility can co-locate with other agricultural activity, to help diversify farm income without reducing productivity

delivery share or spare capacity in the channel to support a future commercial irrigation operation of the site.

- Sheep grazing will continue to be possible under the panels. The proposed development will not result in a significant loss of regional agricultural productivity.
- The change of land use will not have any impact on efforts to modernise and reform agricultural activity.
- The land has not been specifically set aside or defined for agricultural use beyond the application of the Farming Zone to the site.

The proposed solar farm has been designed to allow sheep to continue to graze the land, ensuring that while some productivity must necessarily be lost to accommodate the proposal, most of the land's productive capacity will be retained. Please refer to Sections 6.2 and 6.6 of this report for more information.

#### Minimising impacts on landscape values

Consideration must be made to the visual impacts of the solar energy facility in relation to the surrounding landscape. The visual impact of a solar energy facility relates to:

- the sensitivity of the landscape and its ability to absorb change
- the size, height, scale, spacing, colour and surface reflectivity of the facility's components
- the number of solar energy facilities located close to each other another within the same landscape
- the excessive removal, or planting of inappropriate species of vegetation

The proposal's visual impact has been comprehensively considered and found to be acceptable:

While the development of the solar energy facility represents a change to the landscape, the site's character means it is well placed to absorb such a change. The landscape has already been modified by farming practices from years of cropping.

The proposal's components are generally low in profile, and fit comfortably within the open, wide landscape character of the area. Vegetation will also be planted to allow for appropriate screening of infrastructure from sensitive receptors.

In accordance with **Clause 02.03-2** and **Clause 12.01-2S**, native vegetation on site is protected in recognition of its ecological value. The proposal has been specifically designed to avoid

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- the location and scale of other ancillary uses, buildings and works including transmission lines, battery storage units and associated access roads
- the proximity to environmentally sensitive areas such as public land, water courses and low-lying areas.

sensitive areas on site that support ecological communities hosting native flora and fauna.

#### Natural hazard management

##### *Bushfire Management*

Proponents should consult the relevant fire management authority early in the site selection and design process, to ensure a facility avoids unnecessary bushfire risk exposure and has fire management planning in place to manage risk.

Within rural and regional areas, a proponent should consult the CFA's Guidelines for renewable energy installations for information about bushfire risk management and other risk management matters.



A Bushfire Risk Assessment has been prepared by Ecology and Heritage Partners is located at Appendix H. The assessment includes:

- A Bushfire Risk assessment in accordance with AS3959:2018 and **Clause 13.02-1S**, including a bushfire hazard assessment from the landscape scale.
- A Fire Risk Assessment in accordance with the CFA Design Guidelines and Model Requirements for Renewable Energy Facilities (CFA 2023)

The CFA has been consulted as part of the application process who have provided commentary which has informed the current design.

## R.5 Best Practice for Proponents

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## Engaging the community

### *Early community consultation is important*

Community engagement should start well before a planning permit application is lodged with the responsible authority, to understand the community's views and to address any concerns.

The permit applicant has undertaken extensive consultation with community groups and residents, as discussed within the body of this report. Please refer to **Appendix B** (Engagement Outcomes Report).

### *Engaging Traditional Owners*

Proponents are encouraged to consider engaging with traditional Owner groups at the inception stage of the project.

Consultation with Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation representatives have occurred and are ongoing. It is noted that a mandatory Cultural Heritage Management Plan is required to ensure the land is appropriately managed.

### *Developing well-planned consultation*

Community engagement and benefit sharing are fundamental to generating community support and delivering positive and effective outcomes for solar energy facility projects

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A comprehensive engagement process has been planned and undertaken by Urbis, consistent with the *Design and Development Guidelines* and with the *Community Engagement and Benefit Sharing in Renewable Energy Development in Victoria* guide (DELWP 2021).

Please refer to the Engagement Outcomes Report prepared by Urbis for detail (**Appendix B**)

### *Ongoing engagement*

Once a solar energy facility is built, it becomes an ongoing feature of the local community. After construction, the facility operator should shift its engagement focus to maintaining positive, mutually beneficial relationships with the community.

When planning the decommissioning process, the community should be engaged with any



Please refer to the Engagement Outcomes Report prepared by Urbis for detail (**Appendix B**)

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plan to rehabilitate the land, or to refurbish and upgrade the facility to extend its operating life.

## Design stage

### *Siting facility components*

A proponent should consider:

- 30m minimum setback
- increasing the minimum setback to an appropriate distance to manage bushfire hazard areas
- 6m separation distance
- locating inverters away from neighbouring property boundaries
- grouping ancillary infrastructure in a single location accessible from a main road
- providing appropriate landscaping to screen any buildings or solar components from view from a neighbouring sensitive use, main road, or other highly visible public vantage point.



The proposal has been carefully designed in response to the siting components outlined within the guidelines, per the below:

- Panel extents are generally set back by 30 metres from the boundaries. Roadways and vegetation are located within these setbacks. In some locations, the roadway and vegetation screening come to approximately 5 metres from the boundary. The panel extents are approximately 20 metres from the boundary in these locations; however, there are no sensitive receptors in these areas and the panels will be effectively screened. As such, the setback is considered appropriate.
- The minimum setback has been designed to respond to the C&A Design Guidelines, ensuring appropriate management of bushfire hazard.
- Inverters have been located away from neighbouring property boundaries to minimise noise impact. Please refer to the noise impact assessment prepared by WSP for details.
- Ancillary infrastructure is primarily located on the BESS site, which is readily accessed from Mologa-Durham Ox Road.
- Appropriate landscaping will be provided to the solar energy facility, ensuring sufficient screening from neighbouring properties and other public vantage points.

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### *Landscape screening*

A proponent should:

- use vegetation species that are indigenous to the area or region



Please refer to the Landscape Plan (Appendix D) and the Visual Impact Assessment (Appendix E).

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- locate vegetation along the perimeter of a site, within proposed setbacks
- ensure vegetation will be of sufficient height, width and foliage density at maturity to screen relevant solar components and the associated built form from view
- plant vegetation early in the construction stage
- plant vegetation in accordance with any fire management plan arrangements, to avoid increased bushfire risk exposure.

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### *Glint and glare management*

A proponent should:

- site and design solar components and associated buildings and infrastructure to ameliorate glint and glare impacts to within acceptable levels
- use anti-reflective solar panel coatings and non-reflective frames and avoid using reflective materials and paints on buildings and infrastructure
- adjust the orientation of panels relative to glare risks such as oncoming traffic coming down a road from an elevated area
- locate landscape screening of a sufficient height, width and foliage density at maturity to reduce glint and glare impacts.



Please refer to Section 7 of the Visual Impact Assessment

(Appendix M)

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### *Designing security measures*

Security measures should:

- prevent light spill to nearby sensitive land uses and vegetated areas
- use external lighting of a lux and colour output that provides safe levels of illumination while avoiding impacts on neighbouring habitat
- be designed to consider the impact on the movement of wildlife within the area
- be set back an appropriate distance from a property boundary and use landscaping or vegetation to screen security fencing and lighting
- provide appropriately located emergency access points as required by the relevant emergency management authority.



There is no requirement for operational lighting for the solar energy facility, however there is a requirement for lighting of the BESS. Limiting lighting to the BESS shall minimise impact from illumination to the surrounding environment. All lighting will be in accordance with the relevant Australian Standard.

Access points and roads provide suitable access to the site for emergency vehicles.

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### *Traffic impacts*

A traffic impact assessment (TIA) must be prepared as part of a planning permit application



Please refer to the Traffic Impact Assessment prepared by Urbis (**Appendix K**)

### *Noise*

Noise attenuation measures could include:

- ensuring any components operate to relevant standards



For details of noise impacts and proposed attenuation measures please refer to **Appendix N** (Noise Impact Assessment).

- acoustic housing or baffles at the noise source
- conducting maintenance and other operational activity during the daytime
- using landscaping or locating noisier components centrally within a site.

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### *Earthworks and dust management*

A proponent should minimise changes to the topography of the site caused by grading or other ground works, to avoid significant changes to the overland flow of water and visual impacts on the landscape. It is to determine appropriate dust suppression measures for the construction and operation stages of the facility.



Further detail regarding earthworks and dust management will be provided within the Environmental & Construction Management Plan, to be provided as a condition on the planning permit, should one be issued.

Please refer to the Environmental Management Plan Framework (Appendix O).

### *Natural hazard risk management – bushfire*

The MFB, CFA and DTP are the relevant fire management authorities in Victoria. A solar energy facility built within the BMO or BPA must maintain site vegetation to appropriate management levels. This includes:

- maintaining grass at below 100mm in height during a declared fire danger period
- establishing fire breaks around the perimeter of the facility
- providing adequate onsite water supply and firefighting equipment



The solar energy facility has been designed in accordance with the CFA Design Guidelines for Solar Energy Facilities, to ensure the risk of bushfire and grassfire is minimised. Appropriate firebreaks have been provided to the solar energy facility and to the BESS. Adequate water supply has also been provided throughout the site, with site access managed in accordance with CFA requirements.

Please refer to the Bushfire Risk Assessment and the Risk Management Plan at **Appendix E & F** for further detail regarding bushfire hazard management.

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- meeting site access management requirements.

#### Other matters

The following requirements should inform the design of the solar farm:

- Fire authority must be consulted if dispensation is sought for a building over 500sqm (under Dangerous Goods (Storage and Handling) Regulations 2012)
- Design and layout should provide for 50m setback from high voltage power line, and 5-10m setback from a substation
- 30m separation distance between physical structure and site boundary should be provided to mitigate against heat island effect



Appropriate setbacks are provided to the high voltage powerlines and substation.

Setbacks of a minimum of 20 metres have been provided from all site boundaries. Typical setbacks are more than 30 metres between physical structures and site boundaries.

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#### Construction and operation stage

The following documents will be required through permit conditions:

- Environment management plan
- Risk and emergency management planning
- Site access and traffic management
- Construction noise and dust management



All required documents will be prepared and endorsed by the responsible authority prior to commencement of development, in accordance with standard planning permit conditions.

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#### Decommissioning

A proponent should consider:



The permit applicant will operate the proposal throughout its operational lifecycle and will be responsible for decommissioning

- who will be responsible for decommissioning the facility
- at what stage the responsible authority will be advised the facility will be decommissioned
- the processes, plans and procedures for removing all built form and for restoring the land to its pre-developed or natural state
- where the panels and other equipment will be disposed and if they can be recycled
- the timeline for the decommissioning work.

the proposal at end of life. A condition in accordance with the above can be included on any planning permit to issue.

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## R.6 Applying for a Planning Permit

### GUIDELINE

#### Application requirements

##### *Site and context analysis*

The site and context analysis is intended to show the current lie of the land and the immediate surrounds of the proposed solar energy facility.



A Site Plan is provided at **Appendix I**.

Please refer to Section 2 of the Planning Report for details regarding the subject site and surrounds, as well as the existing site conditions. This section includes aerial maps and photographs identifying the site location, surrounds, and regional context.

##### *Design response*

The purpose of the design response is to outline the proposed use and development of land relative to the site and its immediate location.



The proposal has been carefully designed to respond to the site's context, opportunities and constraints and DTP's *Solar Energy Facilities Design and Development Guideline October 2022*. The design layout considers:

- Grid connection.

- Amenity impacts
- Landscape and visual impact to neighbouring properties.
- Noise impacts.
- Cumulative impacts
- Environmental considerations
- Potential loss of agricultural land
- Declared irrigation district
- Biodiversity and ecological values
- Native vegetation
- Bushfire mitigation
- Waterways, hydrology and flooding mitigation
- Efficiency and economic viability of the solar facility

**Decision  
guidelines**

*Clause 65 Decision Guidelines*



Refer to the body of this report for further details regarding the Clause 65 Decision Guidelines.

*Clause 53.13 Renewable Energy Facility*



Refer to **Appendix P** for an assessment against the decision guidelines of Clause 53.13.

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