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Community and Stakeholder Engagement Summary Report

Manthos Investments Pty Ltd c/o Robert Luxmoore

Hazelwood North Solar Farm

21 July 2023

Document Details

Hazelwood North Solar Farm - Engagement

Project No: 2201
 Report Name: Community and Stakeholder Engagement Summary Report
 Revision: 1
 Date: 21 July 2023
 Client: Manthos Investments Pty Ltd c/o Robert Luxmoore

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Cogency Australia Pty Ltd
 cogencyaustralia.com.au
office@cogencyaustralia.com.au

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Document history

Revision	Date	Description	Author	Approved
1	14/07/2023	Draft Community and Stakeholder Engagement Summary Report	DMc	RW
2	21/07/2023	Final Community and Stakeholder Engagement Summary Report	DMc	RW
3				

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Executive Summary

The purpose of the Community & Stakeholder Engagement Summary Report is to provide an overview of the engagement activities that took place and the key findings and outcomes for the Hazelwood North Solar Farm (the Proposal).

The Hazelwood North Solar Farm is a solar energy facility with a generation of 450 MW and battery energy storage system (BESS) and associated infrastructure, proposed to be built on former forestry land between Morwell and Traralgon. The facility will benefit from the energy infrastructure existing in the region, and utilising the excess capacity left by the recent closure of the Hazelwood Power Station (2017) as well as the upcoming closure of Yallourn (2028) and Loy Yang power stations (2035).

The Hazelwood North Solar Farm would be considered as one of the largest in the state, helping to deliver a clean source of energy generation and reach Victoria's renewable energy and climate change targets. The proposal would facilitate renewable energy development in an appropriate location, taking advantage of existing infrastructure, supporting the transition to a low-carbon economy, facilitating local energy generation, helping to diversify the local economy, and improving sustainability outcomes.

Developing solar power generation in the Latrobe Valley is an important step to transitioning the national grid to renewable energy. The region has historically been the centre of Victoria's power generation system and has therefore seen significant investment in electricity infrastructure. With the decline in coal fired power generation, there are opportunities to fill Australia's power needs with renewable energy. Developing renewable energy will also assist transitioning Latrobe City to a cleaner economy.

The Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) has identified 6 major Renewable Energy Zones within Victoria that are crucial for Victoria's clean energy future. The Proposal is located within the Gippsland Renewable Energy Zone (GREZ). Already having a major history of energy production, the Gippsland workforce has many of the skills and expertise to support Victoria in sustaining a reliable renewable energy supply.

Cogency is leading the community and stakeholder engagement program for the Proposal. A Community & Stakeholder Engagement Strategy was prepared at the outset, which outlined the objectives, principles, methodology, stakeholder mapping, monitoring and review, and action plan. Manthos Investments (the 'Proponent'), with the support of Cogency and Robert Luxmoore Project Management, has committed to early, proactive, and meaningful engagement, starting from the preliminary concept design phase.

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1. Proposal Overview

1.1 Introduction

The Proponent, Manthos Investments Pty Ltd, is seeking to develop a large-scale solar farm and Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) known as the Hazelwood North Solar Farm (the Proposal), on its 1,100-hectare property in Hazelwood North, held under single ownership. The total development area will approximate 675 hectares.

The site is currently used as a combination of grazing with sheep, grazing with cattle, fodder production and dryland cropping, and was formerly a forestry plantation. The site has been selected due to its lower agricultural productivity, poorer soil quality and relatively low environmental value. Responding to the natural and environmental landscape has been an integral part of the planning and design process, ensuring the Proposal is respectful to the site and its context, and responds to the key environmental features.

The Hazelwood North Solar Farm includes the following key components:

- The solar panels and associated infrastructure, with a potential capacity of approximately 450MW,
- A BESS of approximately 1800 MWh of storage capacity,
- Revegetation of existing creek corridors,
- 'Agrisolar', whereby the current sheep grazing activities are proposed to continue in conjunction with the solar farm, and
- Vegetation screening along certain sections of the site boundary.

1.2 Site & Context

The site is conveniently located between the towns of Morwell and Traralgon, in the heart of the Latrobe Valley and the wider Gippsland region. The site benefits from access to major transport infrastructure, being adjacent to the Princes Highway, Firmins Lane, and Hazelwood Road. Refer to Figure 1.

The site is located within the rural locality of Hazelwood North. The locality is close to the towns of Traralgon, Morwell, and Churchill, and has a population of 1,552 (ABS, 2021). It mainly comprises rural residential properties, along with a number of community facilities such as the public hall, primary school, and CFA brigade.

The wider Latrobe Valley region is the economic centre of Gippsland, with a population of 75,211 (ABS, 2021), and is known for its history in brown coal mining and power generation. It is comprised of four main towns (Traralgon, Moe-Newborough, Morwell, and Churchill) and rural areas that feature a strong forestry, mining and agricultural economy. The region is experiencing a period of economic restructuring associated with the move away from coal fired power generation and related industries.

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The stakeholder identification is provided at Chapter 4 of this report.

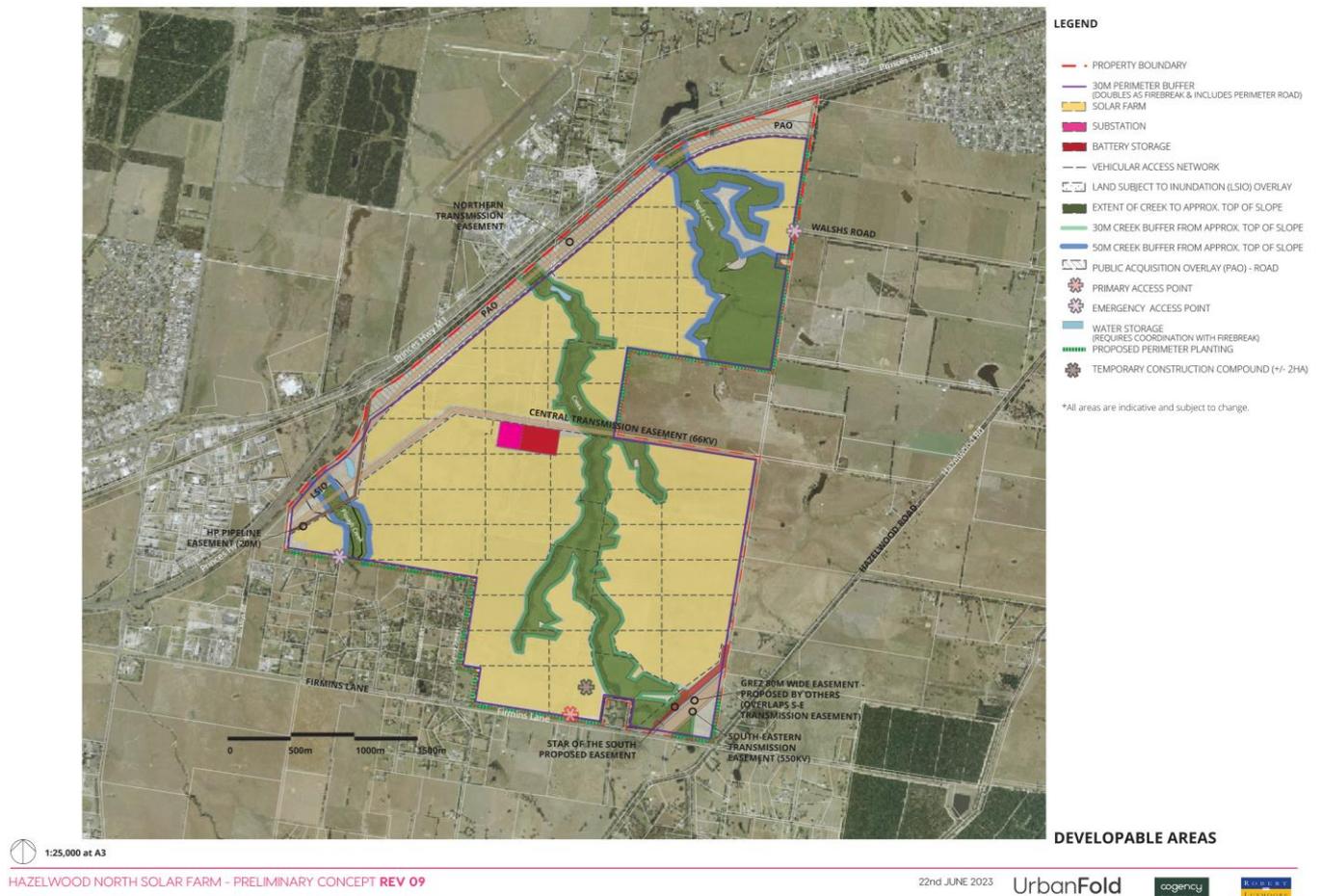


Figure 1 - Masterplan (UrbanFold)

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2. Community Snapshot

The following section provides an overview of the regional and community context of the Proposal. This helped to inform the engagement program which was tailored to reflect the local and regional setting.

2.1 Regional Context

The proposal is located within the Latrobe City Council area. Earning its name from the major geographical features that run through the North of the local government area (LGA) – the Latrobe River and the Latrobe Valley, the Latrobe City Council covers 1,426km² and supports a population of 77,168 people (ABS, 2021)¹. The majority of the population lives within the four urban areas of Moe, Morwell, Traralgon and Churchill.

The Latrobe City Council LGA features one of the largest brown coal reserves in the world. It is therefore recognised as the centre of Victoria's electricity industry, with coal-fired power being generated from the Yallourn Power Station and the Loy Yang Power Stations (Loy Yang A and Loy Yang B). Together, the Yallourn and Loy Yang power stations supply Victoria with more than 70% of Victoria's energy (1,450 MW and 3,280 MW). In 2022, Energy-Australia announced the closure of Yallourn Power Station by mid-2028, representing an upcoming gap in power supply in Victoria.

Latrobe City Council is also a major centre of the forestry industry that services Australian Paper's pulp and paper mill (the largest in Australia) and other sawmills. Other industries within the Council include food processing, engineering, and tertiary education.

2.2 Regional Renewable Energy Projects

The Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) has identified 6 major Renewable Energy Zones within Victoria that are crucial for Victoria's clean energy future. It is widely understood that producing clean, affordable and reliable energy is key to combat the climate crisis as well as to ensure growth through job creation and investment. The site sits within the Gippsland Renewable Energy Zone (GREZ).

Gippsland is known to be abundant with natural energy resources, especially wind and solar. Already having a major history of energy production, Gippsland already has the infrastructure, skill and expertise to support Victoria in sustaining a reliable renewable energy supply.

There are no current operational Renewable Energy Projects within the Latrobe Valley, although there are a number of other renewable energy projects at various stages of the development process in the wider Gippsland region including:

- Delburn Wind Farm
- Morwell Solar Farm (may not be proceeding)
- Frasers Solar Farm
- Fulham Solar Farm
- Maffra Solar Farm
- Perry Bridge Solar Farm

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¹ ABS, 2021 - <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/20504>



Figure 2 - Energy Projects in Gippsland

2.3 Traditional Owners

The Gunaikurnai nation are the Traditional owners of Latrobe City. The Nation is made up of 5 major clans: the Brabralung clan, Brataulung Clan, Krauatungalung Clan, Tatungalung Clan and the Braiakaulung clan. The traditional owners of the Hazelwood North site are the Braiakaulung people of the Gunaikurnai nation, represented by the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC). GLaWAC provides joint management of 10 parks and reserves within the state and has a membership of more than 600 Traditional Owners, all of whom have proven their ancestral links to one of 25 Apical Ancestors registered in the Native Title Consent Determination.

It is believed that the Gunaikurnai people have lived in the Gippsland area for over 40,000 years. European settlement occurred from the late 1830's with the arrival of pastoralists. Within the Latrobe City Council, 1,659 people identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (ABS, 2021)². This represents approximately 2.1% of the population.

The following are also key Aboriginal community groups within the surrounding municipalities of the Latrobe Valley:

- Ramahyuck District Aboriginal Corporation
- Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Corporation (GEGAC)
- The Gathering Place

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² ABS, 2021 - <https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA23810>

2.4 Snapshot of Surrounding Local Communities

The community surrounding the Proposal is comprised of the residents of Hazelwood North, Morwell, Churchill and Traralgon.

Hazelwood North

3840

Population: 1,552

Median age: 45

Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander: 10 (0.6%)

Median Weekly household income: \$2,261

Total Dwellings: 570

Average Household Size: 2.8

Morwell

3840

Population: 14,432

Median age: 43

Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander: 442 (3.1%)

Median Weekly household income: \$942

Total Dwellings: 7,058

Average Household Size: 2.2

Traralgon

3844

Population: 26,907

Median age: 39

Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander: 424 (1.6%)

Median Weekly household income: \$1,484

Total Dwellings: 12,135

Average Household Size: 2.3

Churchill

3842

Population: 11,912

Median age: 42

Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander: 236 (2.0%)

Median Weekly household income: \$1,409

Total Dwellings: 5,124

Average Household Size: 2.5

This data was obtained from the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021 Census Data.

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3. Engagement Strategy

The Proponent, with the support of Cogency, committed to early, proactive, and meaningful engagement with the local community and stakeholders, starting from the preliminary concept design phase. Preliminary engagement with key stakeholders (the local community, Latrobe Valley Authority, DTP, community groups and neighbouring residents) was undertaken to gain initial feedback, to understand their views on the Proposal and to identify any major issues. The community and stakeholder engagement activities were scheduled to allow ample time for interested parties to be informed and involved well in advance of lodgement of the Planning Application.

At the outset, Cogency prepared a Community and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy containing the objectives, principles, methodology and action plan that guided the engagement program for the Hazelwood North Solar Farm. The engagement strategy was prepared for the Proposal in accordance with the DTP (formerly DELWP) *Community Engagement and Benefit Sharing in Renewable Energy Development: A Guide for Renewable Energy Developers* (updated 2021) and *Solar Energy Facilities Design and Development Guideline* (2022), and the International Association for Public Participation's (IAP2) *Public Participation Spectrum* (2018).

3.1 Engagement Objectives

The design and implementation of the communication and stakeholder engagement program was based on the following key objectives, to:

- Deliver an inclusive and robust engagement process that informs, consults, or involves stakeholders (as appropriate) throughout the project's lifecycle.
- Engage early and proactively during the preliminary planning and concept design stage.
- Develop a thorough understanding of the local aspirations and concerns which relate to the proposal and work with them to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes.
- Develop relationships with targeted stakeholders by raising early awareness and actively engaging with these groups.
- Ensure stakeholders understand how to access information about the project, provide feedback and stay informed.
- Provide a range of mechanisms for the community to ask questions, provide feedback and lodge complaints.
- Promote the project's benefits by establishing clear and consistent messaging to manage misinformation.
- Encourage stakeholder and community input to the key aspects of the proposal and to the community benefit sharing mechanisms.
- Garner support for the project from the local community and other key stakeholders.
- Keep an up-to-date record providing evidence of all engagement activities undertaken throughout the process.
- Establish a comprehensive database of stakeholders for the life of the project.

The objectives were met through the implementation of the engagement principles and action plan.

3.2 Methodology

The Proponent committed to a transparent community and stakeholder engagement process. This included ensuring proactive and early engagement, developing a benefit sharing model tailored to the local community and site context, and seeking to create a positive long-term legacy in the region. Furthermore, the proponent pledged throughout the process to treat members of the local community and other stakeholders fairly, courteously and in a consistent and ethical manner.

The engagement approach for the Hazelwood North Solar Farm proposal has been guided by the IAP2 *Core Values* and the *Public Participation Spectrum*, as contained in DELWP's *Community Engagement and Benefit Sharing in Renewable Energy Development in Victoria: A guide for renewable energy developers* (Figure 3).

The spectrum is founded on the premise that different stakeholders will have varied levels of involvement in decision-making for different types of projects. For the purposes of this Proposal, the relevant stakeholders were ‘informed’, ‘consulted’ and ‘involved’ through an effective engagement process based on the objectives and promises outlined in the spectrum below.

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Community engagement objective	Provide balanced and objective information. Assist the community in understanding all aspects of the project, including possible problems/issues.	Obtain feedback from the community on plans, options and/or decisions.	Work directly with the community throughout all stages of the project. Ensure community concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	Partner with the community in each aspect of planning, development and decision-making, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	Place decision-making in the hands of the community, so the community leads the development of the renewable energy project.
Promise to community	Keep the community informed through all stages of development, including issues and delays.	Keep the community informed, listen and acknowledge suggestions and concerns. Provide feedback on how input influenced the decision.	Work with the community to ensure concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed. Provide feedback on how input influenced the decision.	Look to the community for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions. Incorporate advice and recommendations into decisions to the maximum extent possible.	Implement what the community decides.


Note: Stronger levels of engagement are encouraged and will be assessed favourably.

Figure 3 - Approaches to Community Engagement (IAP2, Public Participation Spectrum, 2014)

3.3 Principles

The following principles have been adopted to guide the preparation of this strategy and the implementation of the community and stakeholder engagement process for the proposed Hazelwood North Solar Farm, based on *the Solar Energy Facilities Design and Development Guideline (DELWP 2019)*, *the Community Engagement and Benefit Sharing in Renewable Energy Development in Victoria: A guide for renewable energy developers (DELWP 2021)*, and *the IAP2 Spectrum for Public Participation (2018)*.

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Principles of Engagement

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Mutual Benefit and Respect

Deliver shared outcomes of mutual benefit in an equitable way for the local host community, landowners, and developer. Provide a space for genuine dialogue for respectful discussions that identify mutually agreeable solutions.



Mutual Benefit and Respect

Deliver shared outcomes of mutual benefit in an equitable way for the local host community, landowners, and developer. Provide a space for genuine dialogue for respectful discussions that identify mutually agreeable solutions.



Authenticity

Have a strong, authentic, and local presence in the community by providing dedicated staff who are reliably and readily available as the community's trusted 'translator' of technical knowledge, to explain information to the community and stakeholders in a simple yet effective way to address any misinformation.



Transparency, Trust, and Accountability

Provide diverse and ongoing opportunities for engagement throughout the Proposal's lifecycle. Monitor and evaluate the community engagement, benefit sharing and social impact management programs to identify areas for improvement and/or modification.



Ongoing Engagement

Listen and respond to community needs and concerns in a comprehensive and timely manner. Maintain a record of the key issues raised and/or complaints received to date and how they were resolved.



Responsiveness

Listen and respond to community needs and concerns in a comprehensive and timely manner. Maintain a record of the key issues raised and/or complaints received to date and how they were resolved.



Social Feasibility

Understand, minimise, and offset the risk of negative social impacts across the Proposal's lifecycle by taking into consideration the many social factors through the use of appropriate social analysis tools and integrating them, alongside the technical and economic factors, into the Proposal.



Fairness

Ensure that consultation is two-way and that opportunities exist for local community members and other stakeholders to participate, with access to balanced information, and having their ideas justly considered, responded to, and incorporated where possible.



Inclusiveness

Identify a wide range of different stakeholders across the local and regional communities and ensure that the channels and methods of engagement are tailored to the needs of each stakeholder group so that they are engaged with appropriately and effectively.

3.4 Action Plan

An action plan was developed for the community and stakeholder engagement program, containing six phases throughout the lifecycle of the Proposal:

- Phase 1: Startup
- Phase 2: Preliminary consultation
- Phase 3: Planning application and public notification
- Phase 4: Post-permit engagement
- Phase 5: Construction
- Phase 6: Operation & decommissioning.

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During all phases of the Proposal, the Proponent committed to inform, consult, and involve the appropriate stakeholders through an effective engagement process based on the objectives and principles of community engagement best practice and guidelines.

Examples of the tools and activities that were utilised to engage the community include:

- Presentations and briefings
- Direct landholder engagement
- Direct Indigenous engagement
- Project website
- Newsletters, fact sheets, posters (see Appendices)
- Direct letter drops to local community
- Door knocks / face to face meetings with residents within a 1km radius of the Proposal site
- Community Information Days (face-to-face drop in sessions at the Hazelwood North Public Hall)
- Complaints and handling process

These tools and activities were used to provide timely and informative progress updates on the Proposal and opportunities for the community and stakeholders to get involved in the planning and design process. In all stages, the Proponent and project team ensured that clear information was made about the Proposal, the potential impacts and the mitigation measures proposed to manage them. By listening to stakeholders and acting to alleviate concerns, the Proponent sought to enhance the benefits and minimise the impacts that the Proposal may have on landowners, the community and local environment. This included design and siting changes to the various elements of the Proposal, and additional technical studies undertaken to identify and resolve any issues raised. The action plan was periodically updated to reflect the progress of Proposal and community input, as well as any emerging engagement needs and issues.

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4. Stakeholder Identification

To engage appropriately and effectively with the local community and stakeholders, an important first step was to identify the full list of community and stakeholder groups who may be affected by and/or have interest in the Proposal. Table 1 below lists the stakeholders most relevant to this Proposal.

Table 1 Stakeholder identification for the Hazelwood North Solar Farm

Stakeholder Identification		
Group	Sub-section	Description
Neighbours	Near (<1km)	Residences up to 1 kilometre from the site boundary. There are 251 dwellings within 1km of the site, with 90 dwellings located within 500 metres of the site.
	Far (1-5km)	Residences between 1 and 5 kilometres from the site boundary.
Local Businesses	Near (<1km)	Businesses up to 1 kilometre from the site boundary.
	Far (1-5 km)	Businesses between 1 and 5 kilometres from the site boundary.
Traditional Owners		The traditional owners of the Hazelwood North site are the Braiakaulung people of the Gunaikurnai nation, represented by the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC).
Wider community		Community beyond 5 kilometres from the project, including Morwell, Traralgon, Hazelwood North, Churchill, Traralgon South, Hazelwood South.
Latrobe Valley and Gippsland community		Community beyond the immediate area, within the Latrobe Valley and wider Gippsland region.
Print Media	Local	Local publications and newsletters, including the Latrobe Valley Express, Latrobe Valley News, and the Traralgon Journal.
	State	Victorian publications such as The Age, Herald Sun.
	National	National publications such as the Australian Financial Review, and The Australian.
Other Media	Local	Local TV and Radio, including ABC Gippsland, Nine News Gippsland, WIN News Gippsland, Gippsland FM, West Gippsland Community Radio, Triple M Gippsland.
	State	State TV and Radio, including ABC Melbourne, 7News Melbourne, 9News Melbourne, Triple M, 3AW, SEN.
	National	National TV and Radio, including ABC National, 7News, 9News, Sky News, SBS.
Social Media		Local community Facebook groups.
Federal government	Relevant Ministers	Minister for Climate Change and Energy, The Hon. Chris Bowen MP. Minster for Environment and Water, The Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP. Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, The Hon. Catherine King MP Minister for Industry and Science, The Hon. Mr. Ed Husic MP Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the Hon. Murray Watt
	Local	Lower House, Member for Gippsland – Hon Darren Chester MP (National) Upper House, Raff Ciccone (Labor), Jane Hume (Liberal), James Paterson (Liberal), Janet Rice (Greens), David Van (Liberal), Jess Walsh (Labor), Sarah Henderson (Liberal), Linda White (Labor), Bridget McKenzie (National), Jane Stewart (Labor), Lidia Thorpe (Independent), Ralph Babet (United Australia)
	Department Officers	Staff in government agencies such as DCC ^{EEW}

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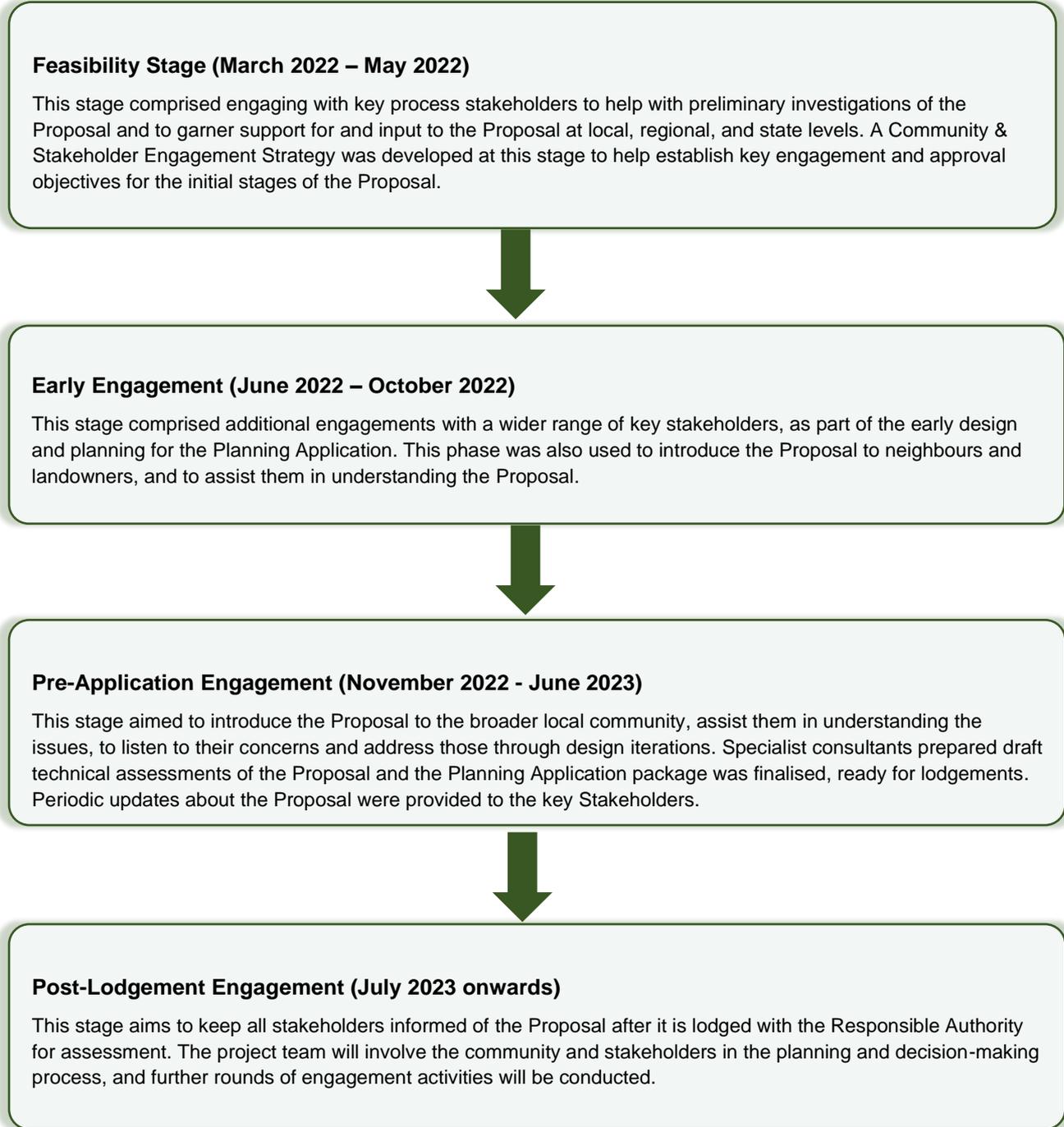
	Federal Agencies	Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA), Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO), WorkCover, National Energy Market (NEM)
State government	Relevant Ministers	Minister for Planning – The Hon Sonya Kilkenny MP Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Energy and Resources – The Hon Lily D'Ambrasio MP Premier – The Hon Daniel Andrews MP Minister for Regional Development – The Hon Harriet Shing MLC Minister for Environment – The Hon Ingrid Stitt MP
	Local	Legislative Assembly (Lower House), Member for Morwell – The Hon. Martin Cameron (The Nationals) Legislative Council (Upper House) – Eastern Victoria Region, Renee Heath (Liberal), Tom McIntosh (Labor), Melina Bath (National), Harriet Shing (Labor), Jeff Bourman (Shooters Fishers & Farmers)
	State Agencies	Latrobe Valley Authority
Local government	Relevant Councillors	Mayor – Cr Kellie O'Callaghan Deputy Mayor – Cr Dan Clancey
	Local	East Ward – Cr Kellie O'Callaghan, Cr Dan Clancey, Cr Dale Harriman, Cr Darren Howe Central Ward – Cr Graeme Middlemiss, Cr Tracie Lund
Emergency Services		Country Fire Authority (CFA) District 27 (Morwell) – Hazelwood North Brigade, Traralgon West Brigade, Morwell Brigade, Traralgon Brigade. State Emergency Services (SES) – Traralgon Latrobe Regional Hospital - Traralgon
Water Authority		Gippsland Water
Non-government Organisations		Gippsland Climate Change Network
Community Groups		Hazelwood Jeeralang Community Association Voices of the Valley Friends of the Earth Unions – Construction, Forestry, Maritime, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU), Electrical Trades Union (ETU)
Transport Agencies		Victorian Department of Transport - Regional Roads Victoria, Latrobe Regional Airport
Transmission Line Operator		AUSNET, VicGrid

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5. Overview of Engagement Stages

This section provides an overview of the community engagement activities conducted as part of this Proposal, in the lead up to the lodgement of the Planning Application. The activities have been divided into four key stages and are summarised below:



Each stage has been designed to ensure the Proponent and the project team deliver early, proactive, and meaningful engagement with the local community and stakeholders. The engagement program was scheduled to allow ample time for interested parties to be informed and involved, well in advance of the Planning Application being lodged. The key engagement activities that were involved at each stage are summarised in the following chapters.

6. Feasibility Stage

The engagement stage with key process stakeholders took place from March to May 2022. The key objectives of this stage were to engage with local and State authorities to help garner support in the Proposal's early stages and to seek initial feedback. The meetings provided insights into the requirements and approval process of an application for a large-scale solar farm. Part of the feasibility engagement stage involved the preparation of the Community Engagement and Stakeholder Strategy. The strategy was tailored to the Proposal's regional context. The local stakeholders and community groups were identified, along with the appropriate engagement activities to be utilised within the engagement program.

The following stakeholders were engaged during the feasibility stage:

- Latrobe Valley Authority
- Gippsland Climate Change Network (GCCN)
- GLaWAC
- Latrobe City Council
- DTP (formerly DELWP)

The main engagement activities that occurred at this stage included:

- Face-to-face meetings
- Briefings/ presentations
- Phone Calls
- Preparation of the Community & Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

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Table 2 Summary of Feasibility Stage Activities

Date	Stakeholder	Details	Key Issues
February 2022	Latrobe Valley Authority (LVA), and Gippsland Climate Change Network	Face to Face meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposal benefits for the region • Identification of key issues to be explored. • Planning controls, relevant zones, and codes • Key stakeholders, potential referral authorities and relevant State agencies • Current activities/ programmes in the region • Community benefit sharing, workforce and community engagement tools
February 2022	Latrobe City Council	Face to Face Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Morwell-Traralgon Employment Corridor Strategy • Other relevant State government agencies and follow up meetings • Recommended reviews of relevant planning permit applications
March 2022	DTP (DELWP)	Face to Face Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessing impact, in the context of the Proposal viability assessment • Feasibility of existing infrastructure

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessing potential impacts from surrounding coal mines • Other relevant State government agencies and follow up meetings • Battery storage component and grid connection
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6.1 Proposal Briefings

Preliminary discussions consisting of phone calls, face-to-face meetings, briefings, and presentations were held with key process stakeholders including the Latrobe Valley Authority, Gippsland Climate Change Network, the Latrobe City Council, and the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP, formerly DELWP). The first round of briefings included introducing the preliminary concept of the large-scale solar farm and providing opportunities for initial feedback.

The initial meetings and discussions found all the stakeholders to be supportive of the Proposal and they provided insights into the potential planning and approvals pathways for renewable energy projects. These initial meetings provided insights that helped to understand the key opportunities and issues that could arise for the Proposal and how to mitigate these. Council, the LVA and DTP all provided contacts to assist the Proponent navigate the issues discussed.

6.2 Summary

The feasibility engagement phase enabled the Proponent and Proposal team to gain initial feedback from key process stakeholders. The stakeholders were supportive in-principle of the Proposal and provided valuable insights into the relevant policy setting and approvals pathway process and the key technical assessments required for the Planning Application.

The key issues raised during this period of engagement were mainly concerned with the stakeholder identification and understanding which government agencies would play a role in the approvals process for this large-scale solar farm. Gaining this knowledge at a stage of the Proposal allowed the Proponent to adjust the engagement strategy and commence the engagement program accordingly. The outcomes of the engagement activities undertaken during the feasibility engagement stage showcased that the key process stakeholders were generally supportive of the Proposal and helped to formulate the engagement program for the next period of preliminary and early engagement.

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7. Preliminary & Early Engagement

The early engagement phase commenced in June 2022 and was completed in October 2022. During this stage, the specialist consultants began drafting their preliminary technical assessments, and the preliminary concept design of the Proposal was established. The key objectives were to update and inform previously engaged stakeholders, as well as to introduce the Proposal to neighbouring residents.

The key stakeholders in the early engagement stages included:

- Neighbouring residents
- Latrobe City Council
- Latrobe Valley Authority
- GCCN
- Victorian State Ministers
- Unions (ETU, CFMEU)
- Airport Board
- Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC)
- Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC)

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The main engagement activities that occurred during this phase included:

- Face to face meetings
- Online meetings
- Briefings/ presentations
- Phone Calls
- Communication Materials

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The following table outlines the key engagement activities that occurred during the early engagement phase:

Table 3 Summary of Early Engagement Stage Activities

Date	Stakeholder	Details	Key Issues
June 2022	GLaWAC	Meetings, emails, site visits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial discussions and introduction to the Proposal • Site tour for identification of possible areas of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Sensitivity
July 2022	Victorian State Ministers		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site context and site suitability • Potential Grid connection options • Benefits of a Solar farm to the Latrobe Valley's transition to renewable energy • Potential impacts and key consultants involved. • Key stakeholder identification and project timelines

July 2022	Latrobe City Council	Proposal Briefing (in person)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Masterplan and Proposal progress update to Council • Findings of Preliminary Impact Assessments • Presentation of communication materials used. • Community and stakeholder engagement strategy and action plan
August 2022	Airport Board	Proposal Briefing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site context and site suitability • Proposal justification and benefits • Potential impact and key consultants engaged to mitigate impacts • Key stakeholders and project timelines • Next steps to be commenced
September 2022	Latrobe Valley Authority	Proposal Briefing (in person)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site context and site suitability • Potential Grid connection options • Benefits of a Solar farm to the Latrobe Valley's transition to renewable energy • Potential impacts and key consultants involved. • Key stakeholder identification and project timelines
October 2022	Latrobe City Council	Proposal Briefing (online)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History of site and use. • Site suitability, buffers and discussions surrounding associated BESS. • Presentation and update of consultation undertaken. • Informing Council that community engagement was about to begin. Timelines for door knock and community information session established. • Highlighting importance of clarity and application of local context of construction jobs from permanent jobs.
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November 2022	Unions – ETU, CFMEU,	Proposal Briefing (in person)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposal briefings and input on Proposal/masterplan • Opportunities for job creation • Opportunities for local manufacturing of goods related to the solar farm. • Construction requirements
November 2022	Latrobe City Council	Proposal Briefing (online)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposal introduction and briefing • Site context and suitability, socio economic impact assessment results • Discussions surrounding grid connection, local resourcing, and job opportunities for the Morwell-Traralgon Employment corridor. • Councillors provided feedback supporting the Proposal while highlighting community concerns.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Industrial zoning to be further investigated.
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7.1 Discussions with Unions

Discussions with the Electrical Trades Union (ETU) and the Construction, Forestry, Maritime, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) were held between September and November 2022. The unions were asked for additional input into the Proposal and subsequent masterplan alongside their view on operational requirements. Opportunities for job creation and job safety, possibilities of local manufacturing for components of the solar farm and Community Benefit Sharing scheme options were discussed. The input provided from the unions assisted to further inform the Community Benefit Sharing scheme and options for job creation.

7.2 Proposal Update Briefings

Presentation briefings were held with the with Latrobe City Council and Latrobe Valley Authority to provide an update on the progress of the Proposal since the feasibility stage and the initial engagement in June 2022. These included updates regarding:

- The Proposal details, including draft maps, masterplans, and proposal timelines.
- The development process and timeline.
- The potential benefits of the Proposal, including its efficiency, effects on the price of electricity, jobs creation, community development funding, and its contribution to combatting climate change.
- The benefits of solar generation and the potential mitigation measures proposed to manage any issues.

7.3 Discussions with Neighbours

Initial discussions were held with neighbouring landowners about the preliminary concept and design of the Proposal. These discussions took the form of informal discussions between the Proponent and the neighbouring residents at their properties. This provided an opportunity for the Proponent to introduce the Proposal and gauge the key concerns at the initial design stage. These discussions with neighbouring residents will continue to be pivotal as the Proposal progresses.

7.4 Engagement with Registered Aboriginal Party

This stage involved initial engagement with the Registered Aboriginal Party, the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC), by the Proposal team’s Cultural Heritage consultant, Tardis Archaeology. This included Site tours and identification of possible areas of cultural heritage sensitivity. Emails were exchanged to discuss the potential impact of the Proposal on areas that had been marked as possibly having cultural heritage significance. A complete Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Management Plan is due to be carried out in late September.

Please refer to the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment report submitted as part of the Planning Application for this proposal, for further information.

7.5 Summary

The preliminary and early engagement activities were important in maintaining the relationships built with key process stakeholders. An important part of this stage was also informing neighbouring residents about the Proposal. At this stage a preliminary concept design and technical assessments were drafted, meaning information about the Proposal could be more readily shared and any concerns more meaningfully expressed.

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The feedback received during the preliminary and early engagement activities were helpful in establishing the next steps in the engagement program.

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8. Pre-Application Engagement

The pre-application engagement commenced in November 2022 and was completed in June 2023. The pre-application engagement phase aimed at introducing the Proposal to the broader local community, provide periodic Proposal updates to the key process stakeholders and continue discussions with neighbouring properties. This stage was also designed to provide the wider Hazelwood North community with opportunities to have their say on the Proposal, and to listen to and address their concerns. This stage was designed to ensure that these concerns could be considered in ample time before the lodgement of the planning application.

The key stakeholders in the pre-application engagement stages included:

- Neighbouring residents
- Local community
- DCCEEW
- Federal Ministers
- Energy Minister
- VicGrid
- Invest Victoria
- Latrobe Regional Hospital Board

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The main engagement activities that occurred during this phase included:

- Project Proposal
- Door Knocks
- Face to face meetings
- Online meetings
- Phone calls
- Briefings/presentations
- Community info day
- Letters
- Newspaper adverts
- Facts sheets
- Proposal Website
- Making technical consultant reports publicly available on website

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The following section outlines some of the key engagement activities which occurred during the pre-application stage:

Table 4 Summary of Pre-Application Engagement Activities

Date	Stakeholder	Details	Key Issues
December 2022	Latrobe Regional Hospital	Proposal Briefing (Online)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site suitability, context and proposal justification • Zone and overlay plans. • Opportunities and benefits of the proposal • Community and stakeholder engagement summary to date and timeframes • Potential impact assessments and technical consultant lists • Hospital board highlighting the importance of their 165,000 people strong service region, largest of any hospital in Australia. Hospital has their own 1.4MW solar array on their roof. • Hospital plans to relocate their helipad to the rear of the building on a raised platform for more direct building connection.
December 2022	Community, Project Neighbours	Door Knocking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposal Fact sheets left with community members. • Information about the Community Day was shared
December 2022	Local Community and Interested Parties	Community Information Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential amenity, noise, and environmental impacts of the Proposal • Land value impacts • Opportunities and benefits of the Proposal
January 2023	DCCEEW	Pre-referral meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grid connection options • Opportunities and benefits of the solar farm • Potential Impacts of the solar farm and technical consultants engaged. • Presentation of findings from the Flora and Fauna Impact Assessment Report • Project timelines and community engagement timeframes. • Confirmation that EPBC Referral not required
February 2023	Minister for Climate Action, Energy and Resources, SEC	Proposal Briefing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project introduction and justification • Grid connection studies and areas explored • Community engagement timeframes and project timelines
April 2023	Latrobe Council	Pre-Application Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning process and timeframes • Plans to be submitted with the Planning Application
March 2023	Federal Ministers	Proposal Briefing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposal introduction and justification • Discussions around existing transmission infrastructure

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Options for grid connection and study areas Community engagement timeframes and project timelines Informing that EPBC Referral not required
May 2023	VicGrid	Proposal Briefing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposal introduction and context Grid connection studies Opportunities and benefits of the Proposal Community and stakeholder engagement updates Project timelines

8.1 Discussion with Neighbouring Properties

Ongoing discussions were held with neighbouring residents to provide timely updates of the Proposal. As the technical assessments progressed, more information about what the Proposal would entail and what it would mean for the neighbouring residents was able to be delivered. This once again took the form of informal meetings between the Proponent and the neighbours and with the provision of technical assessments what the Proposal will mean for their property.

8.2 Engagement with Registered Aboriginal Party

This stage involved continuing engagement with the Registered Aboriginal Party, the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC), by the Proposal team’s Cultural Heritage consultant. This included thorough site inspection which included archaeological digs to confirm areas of cultural heritage sensitivity. Further meetings were held online to discuss the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment.

Please refer to the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment report submitted as part of the Planning Application for this proposal, for further information.

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8.3 Communication Materials

Communication materials were prepared to provide information and raise awareness about the Proposal. A website was established containing information about the Proponent, project team, and the Proposal. As progress was made with the Proposal, information was added to the modes of communication to ensure the community was kept informed, along with key information regarding the process, the design and development of the Proposal, and announcements surrounding key Proposal milestones. Factsheets were created based on relevant themes and concerns that had been raised during briefings and meetings in earlier stages of engagement. This included fact sheets outlining technical aspects, planning approvals pathway and general Proposal information. These were distributed during the doorknocks and at the community information day. Letters in advance were distributed prior to the doorknock, as well as thank you letters after the engagement activity took place. Newspaper ads were published in local newspapers to provide a further reach to inform people of the upcoming community information day.

The following table outlines the key communication materials developed during the early engagement phase:

Table 5 Summary of Communication Materials

Activity	Engagement Objective	Engagement Method
Website	To provide up-to-date information about the proposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update website

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upload technical information and facts sheets to make publicly available
Letter in advance	To inform the community of the Proposal team's presence in the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents within 1km of the site boundary were sent this letter via post
Factsheets	To provide Proposal information and encourage community input and engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Included in landowner information packs • Distributed to residents during door knocks • Provided to attendees of HNSF Community Information Day
Ads and Posters	To raise awareness, promote the Proposal and encourage community information day attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distributed to local newspaper and Council. • Council posted via social media and up at Council offices.
Newspaper articles	To raise awareness, promote the Proposal and encourage community information day attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distributed to State/regional newspapers.
Website, media, and email monitoring	To listen to the community and key stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily monitoring of website media and emails.

8.4 Door Knocks

Properties within 1km of the Proposal were door knocked on December 1st, 2022. Prior to the doorknocking, a letter in advance was posted to the residents to inform them of the visit. These letters were sent out in November 2022. The purpose of the door knock was to provide a direct point of contact to the community, to hear the community's concern, provide Proposal information and encourage engagement and attendance at the community information day. In total, there were approximately 57 houses door knocked, of these 23 residents were home. For residents that weren't home, an introduction letter, a handwritten apology note and proposal fact sheet was left with a note with details of the community information session on December 17th, 2022. The community information day was also mentioned to the residents that were home, and written details were left as well as the specifics.

8.5 Community Information Day

The community information day was held on Saturday, December 17th, 2022, at the Hazelwood North Public Hall in the Hazelwood North Church from 10am until 2pm. In total, 36 members of the community attended along with 11 members of the project team. The project team were present to greet the community and to provide technical insight into the Proposal.

The purpose of the community information day was to provide Proposal information, an opportunity for community members to ask questions and have their say, encourage engagement in the planning process, as well as to establish a point of contact for the Proposal.

Generally, the attendees of the Hazelwood North Solar Farm community information day were positive about the proposal and were interested in a further education component being implemented in local schools and community groups regarding large scale solar farms and renewable energy. There were groups of local

businesses and people that were curious about the job opportunities that would be created as a result of construction, as well as farmers expressing concerns surrounding agricultural land uses and the potential impacts on farming activities. Further concerns were raised surrounding land value depreciation. The community expressed their ideas for community benefit sharing as well as providing input to the proposed landscape planning.

Contact details of the attendees were recorded and will be used to provide further information about the Proposal as it continues to progress. All community feedback was recorded, with topical issues addressed by the project team. Feedback was generally positive and apart from a few concerns raised, the information day revealed widespread support for the Proposal.

The following table outlines some of the topics and concerns that were brought to the Proposal team's attention:

Table 6 Summary of Issues Raised at the HNSF Community Information Day

Topic	Details
Depreciation of land values	Concerns about the depreciation of land values for project neighbours closest to the project.
Recycling of solar materials	Interest into the lifecycle of solar panels and concerns about going into landfill as opposed to being recycled.
Bushfire management	Concerns about bushfires due to weeds and possible fire from the Battery Storage unit.
Removal of farming/grazing land with the solar farm	Concerns were raised that the Morwell Solar Farm operation would not allow for cattle to continue to graze the land. The community was concerned that the HNSF would affect grazing activity in a similar way.
Grid connection	Questions were raised surrounding grid connection.
Community benefits and shared benefits	Community member expressed their preference for how community benefits could be distributed. It was suggested that an energy subsidy payment and requests for discounts on energy costs.
Upgrading local roads	Comments were made regarding the pot holes along Davey Jones Road. Residents indicated they were previously going to pay out of their own pockets for upgrades.
Landscape screening	Community expressed interest into the input into landscaping plan. Suggestions were put forward by the community and the Latrobe Valley Sustainable Group to rewild the area and allow public access to the solar farm.
Construction	Comments were made regarding construction impacts, job creation and construction timelines. Concerns from neighbours that construction sites would not be kept clean. Neighbours had prior experience of construction workers not tidying up after themselves.

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Location of the bypass	Comments were made regarding the location of the bypass as there have been a few project proposals relating to this.
Kangaroo Management	People were interested about how kangaroos would be managed. Some people liked the kangaroos while others saw them as pests.
Visual Amenity	Some people in attendance stated that they were not in favour of the Delburn Wind Farm due to the visual impact.
Solar panel reflection	Comments were made about the potential for glint and glare impact for the public travelling along the Princes Highway.
Landowner	While some people in attendance knew the landowner, other community members living further away from the site, were curious as to who they were.
Photomontage of the Proposal	Neighbours that would be surrounded by the Proposal, expressed a desire for photomontages of the Proposal.
Development Costs	Comments were made regarding how long development costs would take to be offset.
Education	Teachers from local schools were interested in an education component for schools regarding solar farms and renewable energy.

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8.6 Summary

The pre-application engagement phase aimed at introducing the Proposal to the wider local community, providing timely updates about the Proposal and continuing discussions with neighbouring properties. The engagement activities employed during this period were deemed successful in implementing the key objectives of this engagement period.

While there were some concerns raised by local community members about the potential loss of agricultural activities on the site, amenity impacts, and bushfire management, there were other groups of local residents and business owners curious about the job opportunities and ongoing employment prospects. Immediate agricultural land use concerns and potential amenity impacts (particularly visual) were discussed between community members and the project team at the Community Information Day, highlighting the proposed 'Agrisolar' method as well as the impact mitigation measures such as screening and Firmans Lane road upgrades. Questions surround grid connection possibilities were also raised; however, the community was informed that this would be explored in due course as part of a separate planning application and that the community would be informed and involved in that application process once the information is available.

A small number of community members were concerned with amenity and environmental impacts of the Proposal. There was feedback about the landscaping design options along with suggestions regarding Community Benefit Sharing. These issues raised at the community information day, along with briefings and presentations were taken into consideration in the final design and layout of the Proposal. Aside from some queries raised about potential amenity impacts, the responses received during this stage were largely positive.

The issues raised by the Community provided insight into the concerns and needs of businesses and individuals that will be affected by the Proposal. The project team has used these issues as a guide to informing the masterplan, as well as ongoing engagement with the community and in consideration of developing the Community Benefit Sharing Scheme options.

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9. Post-Lodgement Engagement

This phase of engagement will commence in July 2023, following the lodgement of the Planning Application. While the Proposal is undergoing assessment for statutory approval, the Proponent and the project team will continue to engage the local community, neighbouring residents and other key stakeholders. This is to ensure the community understands the opportunities for formal public input on the Proposal as it is assessed, as well as to provide key updates related to the Proposal.

The key stakeholders to be engaged during the post-lodgement period will include the following:

- Hazelwood North local community
- Latrobe Valley Authority
- Latrobe City Council
- Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC)
- Victorian Premier
- Gippsland Climate Change Network
- DCCEEW
- DTP

The Post-lodgement engagement stage will likely include the following activities:

- A second Community Information Day
- Provision of updated fact sheets
- Website responses and updates
- Newspaper advertisements and articles
- Meetings as requested to inform, consult, or involve the interested or concerned local community and stakeholder groups.

As a key member of the community, the Proponent, with the support of Cogency, remains committed to proactive, and meaningful engagement with the local community and stakeholders, which has started from the preliminary concept design phase.

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10. Conclusion

The Hazelwood North Solar Farm represents the next generation of renewable energy development in the Latrobe Valley. The Proponent, Manthos Investments, has committed to the development of this long-term solar energy asset that would bring about positive impacts for the local community, generate more affordable and secure electricity and stimulate the local economy.

In the planning and development process for the Proposal, the Proponent has sought to develop and maintain respectful and meaningful relationships with key process stakeholders, neighbouring residents, traditional landowners, and the wider local community. The development of the Proposal has been defined by two-way communication that has been free flowing, with issues raised by stakeholders and community members addressed in a timely manner by the Proposal team. The community information day and responses received from the key stakeholders thus far have indicated widespread support for the Proposal.

The four stages of community and stakeholder engagement, based on a robust Community & Stakeholder Engagement Strategy, has enabled early, proactive, and meaningful engagement at each pivotal stage of the Proposal to occur. Supported by the findings of community engagement activities undertaken to date, interaction between the Proposal team and the community has resulted in open and honest feedback. By listening to stakeholder's voices and being proactive in alleviating concerns, the potential impacts the Proposal may have on landowners, the community and local environment are able to be minimised and mitigated.

Moving forward, The Proponent, with the support of Cogency, remains committed to proactive, and meaningful engagement with the local community and stakeholders, which has started from the preliminary concept design phase. This has been made evident through the Proponent's commitment to preliminary and ongoing engagement with key stakeholders (such as the local community, DTP, GLaWAC, Latrobe City Council, Latrobe Valley Authority, GCCN, and DCCEE).

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Appendix A Fact Sheets

Hazelwood North Solar Farm The Project

What is it?
The Hazelwood North Solar Farm is a 450-500 MW solar energy and battery storage facility, proposed to be built on farmland between Traralgon and Morwell, between the Princes Highway, Firmins Lane and Hazelwood Road. Below is a locality map, illustrating where the proposal is in relation to the surrounding area.

The site is currently used for agricultural activities (mostly grazing) which are proposed to continue once the solar farm is operational. The proposal includes PV panels, substations and a battery storage facility. The battery is an essential element of this proposal as it allows for consistent electricity supply to the grid while the solar panels are not producing power. It is proposed to be located well-away from the neighbouring dwellings.

In addition, options for grid connection for the project are being explored. Information regarding grid connection will be made available in 2023.

Benefits

- Job creation, training, and development of renewable industry in the Latrobe Valley.
- Reduced electricity price for surrounding areas, with opportunities for behind the meter agreements.
- Transitioning the energy grid from coal power to clean solar power.
- Re-growth of native vegetation in creek valleys, improving wildlife corridors.

Why Build Here?
Developing solar power generation in the Latrobe Valley is an important step to transitioning to renewable energy. It will also assist the transition of the Latrobe Valley to a cleaner economy. The site is one of the largest remaining undeveloped landholdings in single ownership, representing a significant opportunity for a cohesively planned and developed solar farm.

Project Timeline:

Hazelwood North Solar Farm

Site Suitability

- ✓ Large landholding within single ownership
- ✓ Relatively flat topographical conditions
- ✓ Located outside the urban settlement areas of Morwell and Traralgon.
- ✓ Close to the electricity grid with five existing transmission lines through the site
- ✓ Access to main roads and transport
- ✓ Not located within a declared irrigation district or State significant watercourse
- ✓ Not characterised as having State significant landscape values or State significant agricultural land
- ✓ Land has already experienced significant ground disturbance and clearing, with majority of native vegetation found along the creeks and site boundaries
- ✓ Existing grazing activities can continue and coexist with the operation of the solar farm
- ✓ Existing industrial precinct to the south-west is a non-sensitive receptor, with potential to be powered by the solar farm

Design Considerations

The proposed solar farm has been designed and planned to mitigate, minimise and offset any negative impacts. The solar farm will implement the following strategies to mitigate potential impacts:

- The solar farm plans will be accompanied by technical impact assessments for a range of issues such as biodiversity, noise, visual, traffic and cultural heritage.
- The design and layout has considered the sensitivity of nearby dwellings.
- The solar farm is proposed to be built to allow for the continued use of the land for grazing sheep, preserving the value of the farmland.
- Protective screening vegetation is proposed on all boundaries of the site.

An indicative example of the type of solar panels proposed to be installed. The panels will utilise active tracking technology that will follow the path of the sun.

For more information, please visit our website or contact Cogency:
hazelwoodnorthsolarfarm.mysocialpinpoint.com.au/home
 0452 593 428
consultation@cogencyaustralia.com.au

Fact Sheet 1 – Project Information

Hazelwood North Solar Farm The Details

Location
The proposed solar farm is located on a 1,100 ha property between Morwell and Traralgon, in the heart of the Latrobe Valley. The site is adjacent to the Princes Highway, Firmins Lane, and Hazelwood Road.

The Proposal
The Hazelwood North Solar Farm will be a 450-500 MW photovoltaic solar energy facility with battery storage and ancillary infrastructure.

Solar Panels and Associated Infrastructure
The proposed solar energy facility and associated infrastructure would be developed across the site within 'blocks' ranging from 20 ha to 140 ha. The design responds to the conditions of the site, considering the topography, creeks, existing infrastructure and access roads.

The panels themselves will sit approximately 0.5 metres above ground at the maximum tilt. Their installation will require minimal ground disturbance, allowing for continued agricultural activity ('agrisolar').

Access tracks are planned throughout the site to allow for convenient access by site vehicles and emergency services. The construction compound is located internally, with access via Firmins Lane, and screening will be provided around the perimeter of the site.

Two sub-stations are proposed to be built on the site to connect to the grid.

The site will be bounded by native vegetation landscaping to visually screen the facility from surrounding land.

Battery Storage Facility
The proposal includes provision for a large battery storage facility, for which approximately 15 hectares has been set aside within the site.

The battery storage facility is an essential element of this proposal as it allows for consistent electricity supply to the grid while the solar panels are not producing power. The capacity of the battery has been carefully considered to match the energy production capabilities of the solar panels.

Like proposed sub-stations, the battery facility is proposed to be located well-away from the neighbouring dwellings.

'Agrisolar'
The type of solar panels that are proposed to be built will allow for the existing agricultural grazing to continue. As the panels will not significantly disturb the land, sheep grazing is proposed to continue on the site. The panels will not present a risk to the livestock, and farming operations will not affect the efficiency of the solar facilities. Allowing agricultural activities to continue on the site represents best practice within the renewable energy industry and maximises the utility of the site.

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Fact Sheet 2 – Project Details

Rationale & Benefits

The proposed Hazelwood North Solar farm will play an important role in transitioning to renewable energy. At 450-500 MW, the solar farm will be one of the largest in the state, with significant benefits to the local community and environment.

Solar Potential
Solar photovoltaic technology is continually improving, with large scale solar facilities becoming more economically viable across Australia. In addition, solar energy is fast becoming the cheapest form of electricity generation with capital costs of large-scale solar farms dropping by 25% from 2015 to 2020. Given this, Victoria is uniquely positioned to harness our abundant solar energy potential.

Emissions Reduction
The solar farm would produce approximately 590,000 MWh of clean electricity annually to the national grid. Compared to existing Victorian electricity emissions, this project would save approximately 580,000 tonnes of CO₂ emissions per year. Replacing this amount of GHG emissions is equivalent to taking around 132,000 petrol cars off the road, or planting over 6 million trees.

Energy Transition in the Latrobe Valley
The Latrobe Valley has a long history as the centre of power generation in Victoria. As a result, the region features significant electricity transmission infrastructure and skilled labour force. Currently three brown coal power stations are operational in the Latrobe Valley, Yallourn, Loy Yang A and Loy Yang B, providing over half of Victoria's electricity demand.

Rationale & Benefits

Recently, efforts to reduce Victoria's carbon emissions have resulted in the closure of the Morwell and Hazelwood power stations. In addition, the closure dates for Yallourn and Loy Yang power stations have been announced. There is an opportunity and a need to replace the capacity of the coal power facilities with renewable energy. This is particularly needed in the Latrobe Valley with the existing transmission infrastructure and skilled workforce.

Gippsland Renewable Energy Zone (GREZ)
The site is located within the Gippsland Renewable Energy Zone, as designated by the State Government. GREZ is one of six identified Renewable Energy Zones (REZs) across Victoria. REZs are areas within the state that have the greatest potential for renewable energy. Within the REZs, coordination between renewable energy developments is encouraged to reduce the cumulative impact of generation and transmission infrastructure.

Existing Transmission Infrastructure
The site is uniquely positioned to make use of the significant transmission and energy infrastructure of the Latrobe Valley. Unlike other areas of Victoria, where long distance new transmission lines are needed to unlock new energy generation, the site has access to a range of existing transmission lines and terminal stations in close proximity.

Air Quality

The Hazelwood North Solar Farm would reduce the reliance on brown coal in the region, contributing to improving air quality, and health outcomes for the community.

Powering Victoria
The solar farm would provide enough clean electricity to power approximately 130,000 Victorian homes. This is equivalent to 56,000 average commercial and residential rooftop solar installations.

Employment Transition
A solar farm of this size and in this location is estimated to generate approximately 400 - 500 direct jobs in construction, and approximately 111 direct jobs during operation, with local job training and procurement prioritised. The renewable industry will be important to assist in the economic transition in the Latrobe Valley.

Vegetation Regeneration
The solar farm and associated infrastructure would avoid the creeks that run through the site. This would allow for the re-vegetation of the three creek corridors, representing approximately 178 ha of new habitat in the area. In addition, native trees and shrubs are also proposed to be used to screen along the boundaries of the site. This is to ensure that sightlines from nearby dwellings and public spaces are not unreasonably affected by the solar panels.

*Calculated from similar sized solar farm developments

*Compared to Victorian Electricity Emissions as of 2021
*Compared to Loy Yang coal usage

For more information, please visit our website or contact Cogency:

hazelwoodnorthsolarfarm.mysocialpoint.com.au/home
0452 593 428
consultation@cogencyaustralia.com.au

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Fact Sheet 3 – Rationale and Benefits

Planning Approval Pathway

Permit approval will come from the Minister for Planning, on the advice of Department of Transport and Planning (DTP).

The Proposal will be assessed against a number of criteria before a permit is granted.

Cogency welcomes community input. See the end of the document for our contact details.

The planning approvals process for large scale solar farms is unique from a lot of other development. The approval will ultimately come from the State Government (who is the decision-maker for large-scale solar farms) not the Latrobe City Council.

The Planning Policy
The Victorian Planning Provisions (VPPs) are the overarching planning rules that affect all new development in the State. The proposal is recognised as a solar energy facility in the VPPs. Clause 73.03, Land Use Terms, defines 'solar energy facilities' as:
"Land used to generate electrical energy using ground mounted photovoltaic and thermal technology structures, where the primary role is to export power to the electricity network."

Clause 19.01 of the VPPs, Energy, lists the regulations that affect solar energy facilities. The policy goals for this clause are to:

- Support the development of solar energy facilities in appropriate locations
- Support the transition to a low-carbon economy
- Facilitate local energy generation
- Consider the economic and environmental benefits of renewable energy generation to the community
- Minimising the possible negative effects of a solar energy facility for the local community and environment.

Who Approves It?
Clause 72.01 of the VPPs determines that approval for the solar farm will need to come from the Minister for Planning, on advice of the State Government's Department Transport and Planning (DTP).

*Formerly known as DELWP

Other Approval Requirements

In some instances, further approvals are required. These occur at the State and Commonwealth levels.

State Requirements
At the State level, the Minister for Planning may, in accordance with the Environmental Effects Act 1978 (Vic.), decide that the Proposal's environmental impact requires the preparation of an Environmental Effects Statement (EES). The EES is a highly detailed and technical appraisal of a development's ecological impacts.

A self-assessment against the EES requirements has determined that the proposed Hazelwood North Solar Farm does not trigger the need for an EES.

Commonwealth Requirements
At the Commonwealth level, the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW), in accordance with the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth.), require additional information, where it is determined that it will impact Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES).

Based on the Preliminary Impact Assessment reports prepared by the technical consultants to date, a referral under the EPBC Act to DCCEEW is not required (i.e. the proposal is not expected to impact MNES). A meeting with DCCEEW has been scheduled to confirm this.

Before the Proposal is Approved, Authorities Check to Make Sure It...

- Complies with all State laws
- Aligns with State and local policies
- Meets zone and overlay provisions
- Will not affect water quality
- Protects native vegetation
- Minimises bushfire hazard
- Does not impact traffic levels
- Does not limit agriculture
- Considers feedback from the community and other stakeholders

Planning Pathway:

We are here

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0452 593 428
consultation@cogencyaustralia.com.au

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Fact Sheet 4 – Planning Approval Pathway

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Progress update

The design, development and engagement for the Hazelwood North Solar Farm project is well underway and the project team aims to lodge the Planning Application with the responsible authority (the Department of Transport and Planning) by mid-2023.

The purpose of this fact sheet is to provide an update to the community on the status of the project, in response to the feedback we received at the Community Information Day in December 2022.

The masterplan for the Solar Farm has been drawn up alongside valuable input from our stakeholders and the specialist technical consultants. The reports that have been prepared by these consultants will be lodged as part of the Planning Application and will be publicly available at that time. Grid connection options are still being explored and will be made available to the community once the plans are ready.

A second Community Information Day will be held during the public notice period for the Planning Application, in mid-2023. Please refer below for the project website for more details, and for our contact information should you have further questions.

Project benefits



Job creation, training, and development of renewable industry in the Latrobe Valley.



Reduced electricity price for surrounding areas, with opportunities for behind the meter agreements.



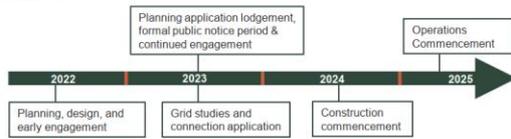
Transitioning the energy grid from coal power to clean solar power.



Re-growth of native vegetation in creek valleys, improving wildlife corridors.

Project

Timeline:



For more information, please visit our website or contact Cogency

hazelwoodnorthsolarfarm.mysocialpinpoint.com.au/home

0452 593 428
 consultation@cocencyaustralia.com.au

April 2023

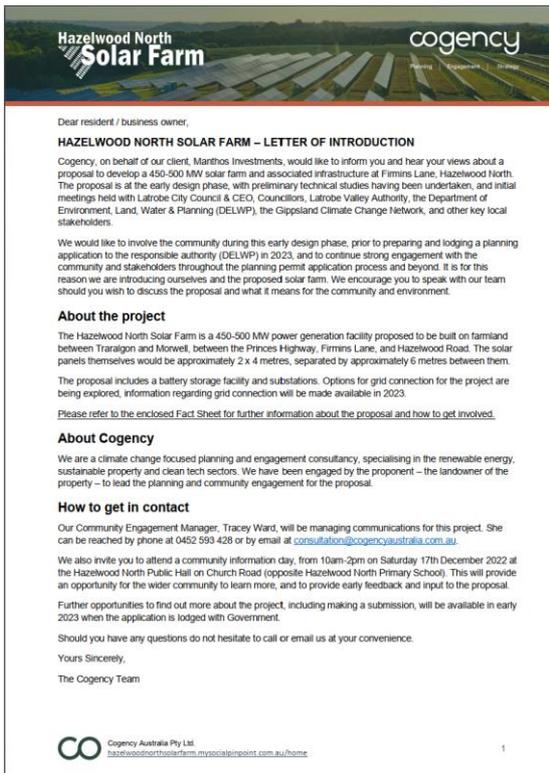
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Fact Sheet 5 – Project Status Updates

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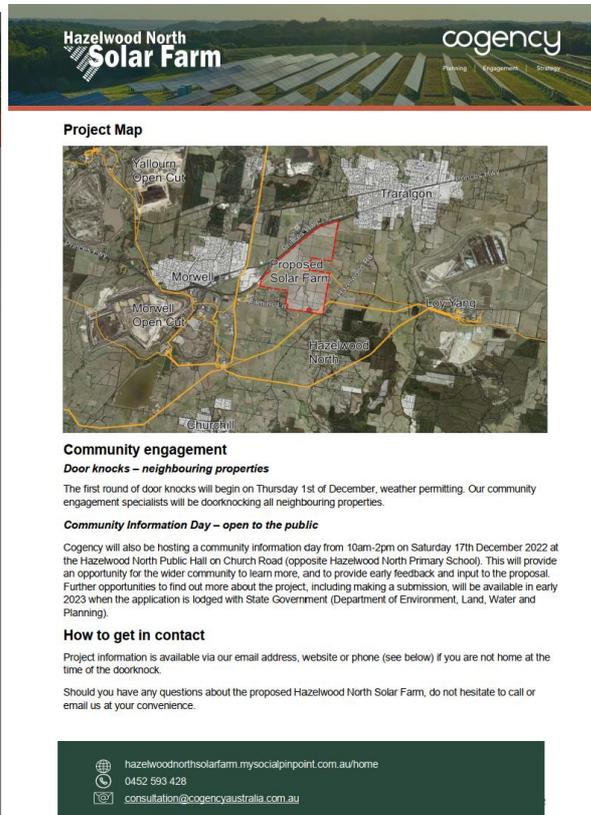
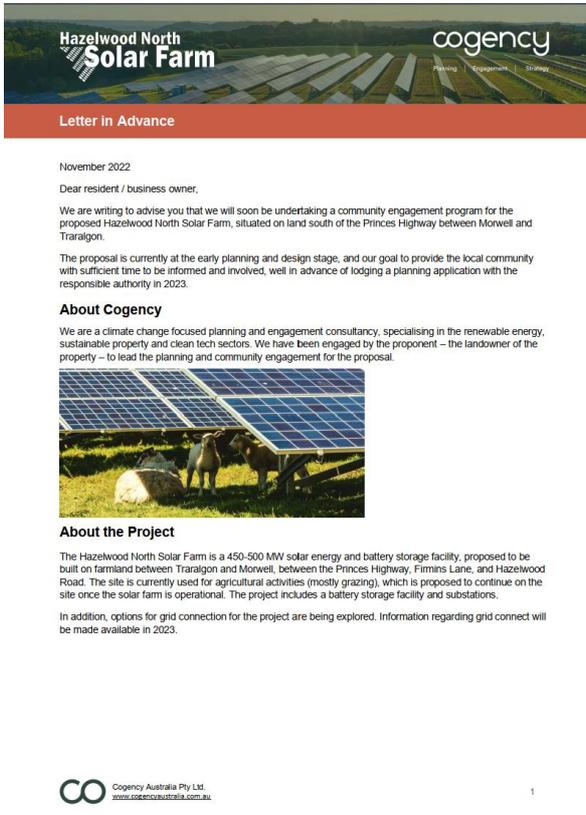
Appendix B Letters



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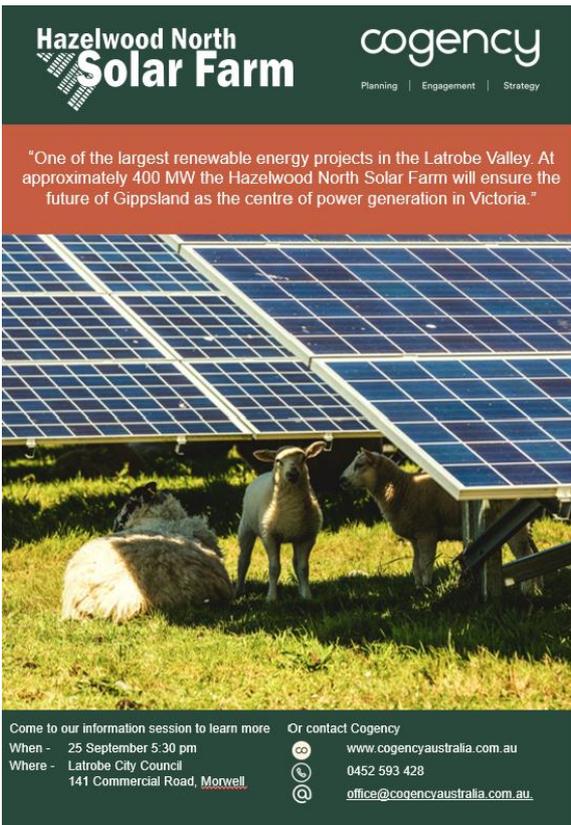
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Letter 1 – Letter of Introduction



Letter 2 – Letter in Advance

Appendix C Media



Community Information Day – Poster 1



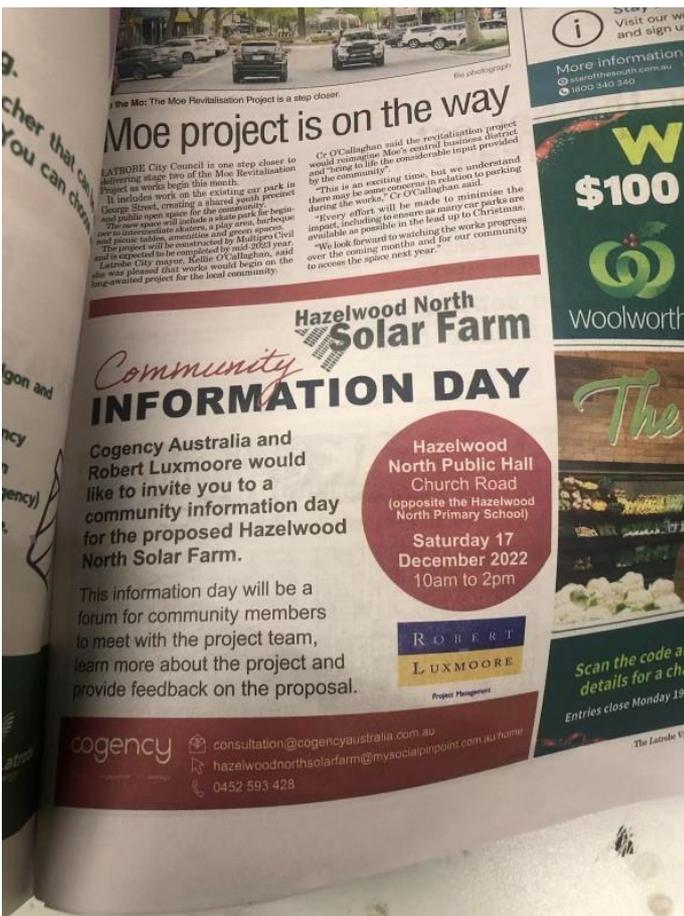
Community Information Day – Poster 2

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Door Knock – “Sorry we missed you” postcard



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Advertisement in The Latrobe Valley Express for the Community Information Day



Media Release – Latrobe Valley Express

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