

# ADVERTISED PLAN

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ABN 50 195 256 228

## MEADOW CREEK SOLAR FARM

August 2024

### Re: Community and stakeholder engagement

Urbis Engagement was appointed by Meadow Creek Solar Farm Pty Ltd (MCSF) in March 2024 to support the ongoing community and stakeholder engagement for Meadow Creek Solar Farm, located at 1033 Oxley-Meadow Creek Road, Meadow Creek.

This letter supports the Consultation Report (prepared by Nation Partners) and outlines the subsequent engagement approach planned to ensure the community and stakeholders remain informed about this proposal as it progresses through the assessment process and beyond.

#### 1. Engagement objectives

All future engagement for MCSF will be prepared in line with the Victorian Department of Transport and Planning’s Solar Energy Facilities, Design and Development Guidelines and the International Association of Public Participation’s (IAP2) Public Participation Spectrum.

The ongoing engagement for MCSF seeks to:

- Build on early engagement activities, and provide two way communication channels
- Ensure accurate information about the project is easily accessible and available 27/4 through regular website updates.
- Demonstrate how community feedback has been listened to, and informed the final planning report and proposed design.
- Continue to respond to community and stakeholder enquiries through the dedicated project email and 1800 number.

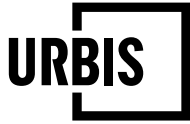
#### 2. Engagement approach

The following approach is a continuation of the engagement undertaken by Nation Partners. It seeks to ensure all stakeholder and community who were consulted through the early planning phase are kept informed of the project at key project milestones.

A record of all consultations to date with stakeholders below has been outlined in **Section 3.7 of Nation Partners’ Consultation Report**.

Table 1 Project stakeholders and engagement methods

Stakeholders	Level of engagement (IAP2)	Methods (for ongoing engagement)
Local politicians <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Local MPs</li> <li>▪ Member for Indi</li> </ul>	<b>Consult:</b> Obtain feedback and input on the proposal by providing information to assist in understanding the proposal’s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Letters</li> <li>▪ Online meetings</li> </ul> <b>Ongoing engagement:</b> Additional meetings are



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Stakeholders	Level of engagement (IAP2)	Methods (for ongoing engagement)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Member for Ovens Valley</li> </ul>	potential impacts and benefits.	planned with local politicians throughout June 2024 to provide an update on the project.
<p>Local Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mayor and Councillors</li> <li>Wangaratta City Council</li> </ul>	<b>Involve:</b> Work with throughout the planning process to ensure concerns and aspirations are understood and considered.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Letters</li> <li>Online meetings</li> <li>Councillor briefings</li> <li>Direct emails</li> </ul> <p><b>Ongoing engagement:</b> MCSF and Urbis Planning have been in ongoing conversations with the Council. The most recent Council meeting was held on 3 May 2024.</p> <p>MCSF and Urbis Planning will continue to consult with relevant agencies post-soft lodgement and through the formal exhibition period.</p>
<p>Relevant agencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Department of Transport and Planning – Hume Region</li> <li>Country Fire Authority</li> <li>North East Catchment Management Authority</li> <li>Department of Transport</li> </ul>	<b>Involve:</b> Work with throughout the planning process to ensure concerns and aspirations are understood and considered.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online meetings</li> <li>Direct emails</li> </ul> <p><b>Ongoing engagement:</b> MCSF and Urbis Planning will continue to consult with relevant agencies post-soft lodgement and through the formal exhibition period.</p>
<p>Landowners and users</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Taungurung Land and Waters Council</li> </ul>	<b>Involve:</b> Work with community throughout the planning process to ensure concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online meetings</li> <li>Direct emails</li> </ul> <p><b>Ongoing engagement:</b> MCSF will continue to consult</p>

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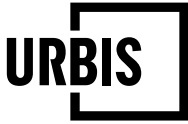
Stakeholders	Level of engagement (IAP2)	Methods (for ongoing engagement)
	and aspirations are understood and considered.	with relevant agencies post-soft lodgement and through the formal exhibition period.
<p>Community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Surrounding neighbours</li> <li>▪ Community Groups: Meadow Creek Agricultural Action Group</li> <li>▪ Community of Moyhu, Milawa, Bobinawarra, Docker</li> </ul>	<p><b>Inform:</b> Provide balanced and objective information to assist stakeholders in understanding all aspects of the project.</p> <p><b>Consult:</b> Obtain feedback and input on the proposal by providing information to assist in understanding the proposal's potential impacts and benefits.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Direct emails</li> <li>▪ Phone calls</li> <li>▪ Project briefings (meetings)</li> <li>▪ Community newsletter</li> <li>▪ E-news updates</li> <li>▪ Project website</li> </ul> <p><b>Ongoing engagement:</b> A project update (including newsletter, email and website update) is scheduled to be issued to all community stakeholders in late June 2024 (in line with additional agency feedback and comments).</p>
<p>Community and recreational groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Carboor - Bobinawarra Landcare Group</li> <li>▪ Moyhu Recreational Reserve</li> </ul>	<p><b>Consult:</b> Obtain feedback and input on the proposal by providing information to assist in understanding the proposal's potential impacts and benefits.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Direct emails</li> <li>▪ Phone calls</li> <li>▪ Project briefings (meetings)</li> <li>▪ Community newsletter</li> <li>▪ Project website.</li> </ul> <p><b>Ongoing engagement:</b> A project update (including newsletter, email and website update) is scheduled to be issued to all community stakeholders late June 2024 (in line with additional agency feedback and comments).</p>

### 3. Engagement timing and next steps

Urbis is in the process of developing a community update to inform all community stakeholders how the final plans have responded to community feedback, ideas and concerns. The focus of the next stage of engagement is to provide accurate information to support the exhibition process.

Table 2 Timing and next steps

Activity	Description	Timing
Update project website	<p>In line with the final plans, Urbis is in the process of updating the project website.</p> <p>The website updates will outline how the project has responded to community feedback and the process for ongoing engagement.</p>	End June 2024 (following agency feedback to ensure that any amendments are incorporated in the next community update).
Issue community newsletter	<p>Urbis is preparing a four-page community newsletter that provides a developed overview of consultation outcomes, including how the project has responded to feedback.</p> <p>The community newsletter will be issued to all relevant community (identified in Table 1), including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Surrounding neighbours (residents and businesses)</li> <li>▪ Community Groups: Meadow Creek Agricultural Action Group</li> <li>▪ Community of Moyhu, Milawa, Bobinawarra, Docker.</li> <li>▪ Carboor - Bobinawarra Landcare Group</li> <li>▪ Moyhu Recreational Reserve.</li> </ul>	End June 2024 (following agency feedback to ensure that any amendments are incorporated in the next community update).
Community webinar	Urbis is hosting an online community webinar to provide the community with an update about the project and ensure access to all the project information to support the public exhibition.	End August (to provide the community with an update ahead of the public exhibition)



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Activity	Description	Timing
Ongoing enquiry management through project email and engagement 1800 numbers	Urbis is continuing to respond to community enquiries through the engagement contact details.  Engagement lines will remain open and available throughout the duration of the project.	Ongoing/ current

## 4. Summary of Consultation Outcomes Report (prepared by Nation Partners)

The approach outlined above recognises the early engagement undertaken by Nation Partners to support MCSF.

Since sharing plans for MCSF with the community in 2022 and throughout 2023, MCSF has been working on important changes that directly respond to community feedback.

Below is a summary of engagement outcomes (including issues raised and how the project has responded).

Table 3 Extract of Nation Partners' Consultation Report (Section 4: Key issues raised during consultation)

Topic	Key issues	Project response
Agricultural Land Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Perceived inappropriate use of productive agricultural land for solar energy development.</li> <li>▪ Impacts on agricultural production in the region because of loss of current site operations and reduced capacity.</li> <li>▪ Agri-solar approach must consider the wet conditions of the area and potential impacts to animal welfare from foot rot in the waterlogged site.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The proposal is considered an 'agrisolar' facility, meaning sheep grazing can coexist with the solar farm. This will also keep vegetation growth low and reduce the need for weed and grass management.</li> <li>▪ MCSF has prepared an Agricultural Land Use Assessment to assess the proposal's impact on agricultural land quality. This identified that flooding through the year and the overall quality of soil, means that this site contributes to only 0.6% of</li> </ul>

Topic	Key issues	Project response
		<p>the Wangaratta Shire’s agricultural land, contributing less than 0.004% of Victoria’s agricultural economic output.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Solar facilities have also been proven to improve overall land quality as a result of the shade from the solar panels and the sheep grazing activities.</li> </ul>
Efficacy of solar farms in high rainfall regions.	Appropriateness of solar production in this high rainfall region.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ MCSF engineers have completed computer modelling of electricity generation from the solar farm using historical weather data and recognised industry standards.</li> <li>▪ The results show that the area is highly productive for solar electricity generation. Solar farms can still produce electricity in low-light conditions and overcast weather.</li> </ul>
Bushfire risks and mitigations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Location of facility in Bushfire Prone Area overlay, and increased fire risk of site.</li> <li>▪ Enquiries about what management and safety arrangements will be in place to reduce fire risks.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Like all electrical equipment, solar farms require careful design and management to ensure fire risk is minimised.</li> <li>▪ All renewable energy projects in Victoria must be developed in line with strict guidelines set by the Country Fire Authority.</li> </ul>

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Topic	Key issues	Project response
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Access arrangements for CFA staff to the site at the time of fire.</li> <li>▪ How many water storage tanks are proposed around the site?</li> <li>▪ How will the site be cleaned up and managed following bushfire events.</li> <li>▪ Increased bushfire risk due to presence of Battery Energy Storage System within the site.</li> </ul>	<p>These guidelines provide considerations and measures for fire safety, risk and emergency management.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The standard measures include:</li> <li>▪ Fire breaks of 10 metres around the site boundary and within fenced areas between existing vegetation and solar panels.</li> <li>▪ 6 x 45,000 litre water tanks at site access points and 1 x 288,000 litre water tank at the main site entrance.</li> <li>▪ A Bushfire Emergency Management Plan will also be prepared in consultation with the CFA before construction starts.</li> </ul>
Ecology and biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Site is considered high value terrestrial and environmental area in nearby planning overlays</li> <li>▪ Impacts to EPBC listed species and other local species</li> <li>▪ Loss of habitat and vegetation corridors within the site</li> <li>▪ Loss of mature trees and legacy of poor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In response to community feedback, MCSF has retained existing trees and added more around the edges and through the centre of the solar farm.</li> <li>▪ The design of the solar farm carefully avoids high-value trees, by setting solar infrastructure away from clusters of trees and other vegetation.</li> <li>▪ Measures have also been taken to ensure there will</li> </ul>

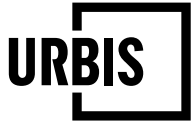
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Topic	Key issues	Project response
	<p>environmental record of nearby solar farms.</p>	<p>be no impact on mature trees during installation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The retention of more trees throughout the centre of the site, also creates a large green corridor for wildlife preservation and protection.</li> </ul>
Visual amenity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Visual impacts to immediate neighbours</li> <li>▪ Location of the Battery Energy Storage System on the site boundary</li> <li>▪ Approach to vegetation screening should not increase bushfire risks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ MCSF’s landscape architects have prepared a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment.</li> <li>▪ This assesses potential impacts on existing landscape character and visual amenities, including how the solar farm would look to the site’s neighbours.</li> </ul>
Waterways and catchments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Impacts to natural watercourses through the site.</li> <li>▪ Location of project in Wangaratta’s water catchment and supply area and flood prone area.</li> <li>▪ Impacts to site access during flood periods.</li> <li>▪ Potential leeching of solar panels into waterways and environments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In response to community feedback, MCSF has commissioned further flood modelling to determine potential impacts on flood-prone waterways and catchments nearby.</li> <li>▪ As a result, no infrastructure is proposed around this waterway and surrounding vegetation.</li> <li>▪ The project has also proposed setbacks around natural watercourses through the site, and areas sensitive to flooding.</li> </ul>



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Topic	Key issues	Project response
Cultural heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Site noted as an area of Cultural Heritage sensitivity in planning overlays.</li> <li>▪ How will potential impacts to Cultural Heritage be managed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The proposed design of the solar farm carefully avoids Cultural Heritage items.</li> <li>▪ Measures have also been taken to ensure there will be no impact on these items during installation.</li> </ul>
Road infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How many trucks will there be on local roads during construction and operations of the site?</li> <li>▪ Existing roads are unsealed and unsuitable for frequent use by large vehicles.</li> <li>▪ Increased dust from vehicle movements could reduce amenity for residents and businesses in the area.</li> <li>▪ How will road upgrades be funded and managed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The number of trucks expected during construction will be determined through the construction management plan.</li> <li>▪ The proposal includes upgrades to the local road network to support access to the site.</li> <li>▪ These will be funded, monitored and maintained by Meadow Creek Solar Farm Pty Ltd. The Planning Application will also include a detailed traffic management plan that will assess existing traffic conditions and propose measures to ensure minimal impact during construction.</li> </ul>
Neighbouring properties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Insurance arrangements and liabilities for project neighbours, in the event of incident or accidental damage caused to solar site.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The project will also have a range of insurance policies in place to cover the site in the event of damage or fire.</li> <li>▪ While base rates for insurance premiums are</li> </ul>



Topic	Key issues	Project response
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="651 544 1018 611">▪ Impacts to neighbouring property values.</li><li data-bbox="651 633 1018 701">▪ Changes to neighbouring properties visual amenity.</li></ul>	<p data-bbox="1098 544 1422 790">rising across the board, the advice provided to MCSF indicates that there is no evidence of these premiums being raised for people living near solar farms.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="1050 824 1390 1115">▪ To further support this, Meadow Creek Solar Farm’s insurance broker has proposed a tailored approach to ensure additional security for neighbours. Neighbours can apply for this option.</li></ul>

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5 June 2024

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**Meadow Creek Solar  
Farm  
Consultation Report**

**We help solve complex problems  
for projects.**

We believe that well-planned and targeted advice can help shape a project that is not only better developed, but is delivered more effectively, with greater acceptance and positive outcomes.

Nation Partners isn't your regular consulting firm. A certified B Corporation, we attract and develop the brightest thinkers and take an active part in shaping the world.

With expertise in projects in the government, transport, water, property and urban development sectors, we provide a suite of services aptly tailored to each client and project at hand.

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work and live, and recognise their continuing connection to land, water, and community. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

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Document title  
Meadow Creek Solar Farm – Consultation Report

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Version  
1.0

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Date  
5 June 2024

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Prepared by  
Erin McPherson

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Approved by  
Sarah Stent

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File name  
Meadow Creek Solar Farm – Consultation Report  
(Nation Partners)

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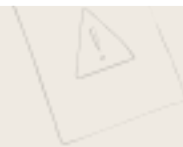
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## About this report

Nation Partners were contracted from March 2022 to March 2024 to support communications and engagement activities for the Meadow Creek Solar Farm. This report describes the activities undertaken by Nation Partners Pty Ltd during this period to support the Meadow Creek Solar Farm delivery stakeholder and community engagement activities in preparation of a Planning Application.

*This Report outlines the approach and outcomes of the initial engagement undertaken to support the Meadow Creek Solar Farm Planning Report. All future community and stakeholder engagement will be undertaken by engagement consultant, Urbis. Please refer to the community and stakeholder engagement cover letter (attached to this document) for a detailed overview of the ongoing engagement planned for Meadow Creek Solar Farm.*

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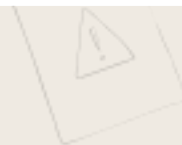
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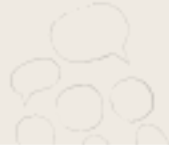




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## Version history

Version	Status	Changes	Date	Authorised
1.0	DRAFT		26 March 2024	
2.0	FINAL	Inclusion of appendices and updates to engagement outcomes	5 June 2024	

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# 1 Introduction

This report describes how Meadow Creek Solar Farm has consulted with stakeholders and local communities about the proposed Meadow Creek Solar Farm (the project). This report has been prepared by Nation Partners Pty Ltd as part of the Planning Application documentation.

A Stakeholder and Community Engagement Plan (SCEP) was prepared in line with the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning's *Solar Energy Facility, Design and Development Guidelines* and International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Public Participation Spectrum.

The SCEP sought to deliver relevant engagement tools and provide opportunities for community and key stakeholders to learn about the proposal, understand the planning process and provide feedback.

Feedback gathered has helped to inform the planning report submission and project design and has been detailed in this document.

## 1.1 About the project

The Meadow Creek Solar Farm is a proposed renewable energy facility located around 25km South-East of Wangaratta, 1033 Oxley-Meadow Creek Road, Meadow Creek. At 552.7hectares the site could host approximately 330MW of solar energy, enough to power around 110,000 homes. The final solar farm capacity output was reduced through design in response to environmental constraints of the site.

The project will also host Battery Energy Storage System to provide energy storage and grid stability services. The solar farm will connect to the nearby Dederang-Glenrowan transmission line, approximately 2km north of the project site.

The property is owned by one landholder and is currently used for agricultural activities, including cattle grazing.

When complete the proposed facility will include:

- Approximately 330 MW of solar photovoltaic (PV)
- 275MW 4-hour Battery Energy Storage System (BESS)
- Approximately 2 km of overhead transmission line connecting the project to the existing Dederang – Glenrowan transmission line.

## 1.2 Community context

The proposed Meadow Creek Solar Farm is located 10km South of Milawa, and 5km North-East of Moyhu. The area comprises of low-density residential properties and agricultural properties, primarily cattle grazing. At the north-west of the property is the Bobinawarra Fire Station and community hall.

The site shares a land boundary with 3 properties, one is occupied by a dwelling, other direct neighbours via land boundary are properties used for grazing and other agricultural activities. There are 10 dwellings within 1km of the project site, separated from the site by roads.

The site is located near the Ovens Murray Renewable Energy Zone (V1), along the 220Kv Dederang to Glenrowan transmission line which connects into the Central North (V6) Renewable Energy Zone. This area has been identified for initial minor network upgrades to improve load capability and existing network capacity, and limit generator curtailments.

While there has been an uplift in solar energy developments in the Benalla region along the Hume Hwy, including the most recently built Glenrowan Solar Farm, there is limited renewable energy development in the Wangaratta region.

## 2 Stakeholder and Community Engagement Plan

A Stakeholder and Community Engagement Plan was prepared to guide engagement activities with key stakeholders and community to inform the development of the proposal. The SCEP sought to:

- Build stakeholder and community awareness of the project ahead of submission of the planning application
- Provide clear information through public channels to assist deepen the understanding of the proposal among community
- Collect feedback from the community and key stakeholders to inform the project design and development.

### 2.1 Solar Energy Facility Design Development Guidelines - Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)

The Solar Energy Facility Design and Development Guidelines (DELPW, DTP) were developed to provide an overview of the policy, legislative and statutory planning arrangements for solar energy facility projects in Victoria.

The guideline should be used to guide the development of Solar Energy Facilities. The guidelines also provide information on best-practice advice relating to each stage of development, including community engagement activities.

These points have been detailed below, including how the project has sought to respond to each point.

Solar Energy Facility Design Development Guideline	Project response
<b>Early engagement</b>	The project began speaking with the community and key stakeholders in September 2022, during early concept planning and feasibility. Engaging early provided an opportunity to clearly understand community views and address concerns early through design where possible.
<b>Engaging Traditional Owners</b>	The project met with the Registered Aboriginal Party Taungurung Land and Waters Council, to provide an overview of the project via an online briefing prior to the commencement of the Cultural Heritage Management plan development process.
<b>Developing well-planned consultation</b>	A Stakeholder and Community Engagement Plan was prepared prior to the start of engagement to identify and guide activities with key stakeholders and community. This included preparation of appropriate communications tools including establishment of a project website and information email.
<b>Benefit Sharing</b>	The project team has proposed to develop and manage a Community Benefit Fund to support local community projects and initiatives. The fund would include an annual contribution of \$100,000. This contribution amount is reflective of the size and scale of the project and is in line with industry best practice. It is the intention of the project to continue to seek advice from community and key stakeholders to inform what this

fund could focus on. This is likely to be further developed throughout construction and into operations.

## 2.2 IAP2 spectrum of engagement

To ensure engagement activities meet expectations of stakeholders, communications and engagement activities were designed to be delivered in accordance with the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) spectrum. This spectrum has been applied to key activities for the proposed Meadow Creek Solar Farm. Different levels of engagement are applied to different stakeholders and at different stages of the project.

Level of engagement	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate
<b>Community engagement objective for MCSF</b>	Provide balanced and objective information to assist stakeholders in understanding all aspects of the project	Obtain feedback and input on the proposal by providing information to assist in understanding the proposal's potential impacts and benefits.	Work with community throughout the planning process to ensure concerns and aspirations are understood and considered.	Partner with stakeholders on elements of planning, developing and decision making where applicable

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## 2.3 Project stakeholders

The below table provides an overview of the stakeholders who were consulted throughout project planning and development, the level of engagement sought, and the tools used.

Stakeholder group	Level of engagement	Engagement tools
Local MPs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Member for Indi</li> <li>Member for Ovens Valley</li> </ul>	<b>Consult:</b> obtain feedback and input on the proposal by providing information to assist in understanding the proposal's potential impacts and benefits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Letter</li> <li>Online meeting</li> </ul>
Local Council: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wangaratta City Council</li> </ul>	<b>Involve:</b> Work with throughout the planning process to ensure concerns and aspirations are understood and considered.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Letter</li> <li>Online meetings</li> <li>Councillor briefings</li> <li>Direct emails</li> </ul>
Relevant agencies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Department of Transport and Planning – Hume Region</li> <li>Country Fire Authority</li> <li>North East Catchment Management Authority</li> </ul>	<b>Involve:</b> Work with throughout the planning process to ensure concerns and aspirations are understood and considered.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online meetings</li> <li>Direct emails</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Department of Transport</li> </ul>		
<p>Landowners and users</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Taungurung Land and Waters Council</li> </ul>	<p><b>Involve:</b> Work with community throughout the planning process to ensure concerns and aspirations are understood and considered.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online meetings</li> <li>Site visits and investigations</li> <li>Direct emails</li> </ul>
<p>Community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Surrounding neighbours</li> <li>Community Groups: Meadow Creek Agricultural Action Group</li> <li>Community of Moyhu, Milawa, Bobinawarra, Docker</li> </ul>	<p><b>Inform:</b> Provide balanced and objective information to assist stakeholders in understanding all aspects of the project.</p> <p><b>Consult:</b> Obtain feedback and input on the proposal by providing information to assist in understanding the proposal's potential impacts and benefits.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Face to face meetings</li> <li>Direct emails</li> <li>Phone calls</li> <li>Community newsletter</li> <li>Community drop-in information session</li> <li>E-news updates</li> <li>Project website</li> </ul>
<p>Community and recreational groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Carboor - Bobinawarra Landcare Group</li> <li>Moyhu Recreational Reserve</li> </ul>	<p><b>Consult:</b> Obtain feedback and input on the proposal by providing information to assist in understanding the proposals potential impacts and benefits .</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Direct emails</li> <li>Phone calls</li> <li>Face to face meetings</li> <li>Community newsletter</li> <li>Community drop-in information session</li> <li>Project website</li> </ul>

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## 3 Engagement methods

Meadow Creek Solar Farm used a range of methods to speak with stakeholders including:

- Website and info@meadowcreeksolarfarm.com.au
- Letters to neighbours
- Drop-in sessions
- Newsletters
- Local advertising
- Communications materials
- Stakeholder meetings

### 3.1 Near neighbour engagement

MCSF first reached out to project neighbours in September via a letter to residential properties where an address could be located. The letter was sent to 22 dwellings (within approximately 3km of the site), where contact with the landholder had not already been made via other means.

The letter sought to introduce the project and offer a briefing or phone call to project neighbours.

During the early stages of project development neighbours and members of the community established the Meadow Creek Agriculture Community Action Group.

The project team met with this group on 2 occasions.

- **28 October 2022** - Attended by Development Manager, Planning Lead Consultant and Community Engagement Lead. Meeting provided an overview of the project and planning process.
- **2 March 2023** - Attended by Development Manager, Planning Lead Consultant and Community Engagement Lead. Meeting provided an overview of the project, early findings of environmental investigations, and steps in the planning process.

Key themes raised by neighbours during these meetings and conversations included:

- Possible impacts to land value in the area as a result of the project and potential future energy development in the region
- Concerns regarding devaluation of neighbouring properties who may be visually impacted
- Impacts to waterways through the site as a result of potential run off from Battery Energy Storage System and solar panel arrays
- Fire safety and potential increased risk of fire from the solar panel infrastructure and Battery Energy Storage System
- Concerns regarding use of productive agricultural land for alternative uses
- Long term site management and how this will be monitored, including pest control, weed management and potential for biosecurity risks.

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## 3.2 Community newsletters

One community newsletter was distributed to homes and businesses located in surrounding postcodes including:

- Bobinawarrah
- Milawa
- Moyhu
- Meadow Creek
- Docker

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Community newsletters were also sent via the project email subscriber list and uploaded on the project website.

### Newsletter #1 (February 2023)

The first newsletter for the project provided an overview of the project, steps in the development process, and the environmental assessment and planning process. The newsletter also answered some common questions. Please see Appendix 1.

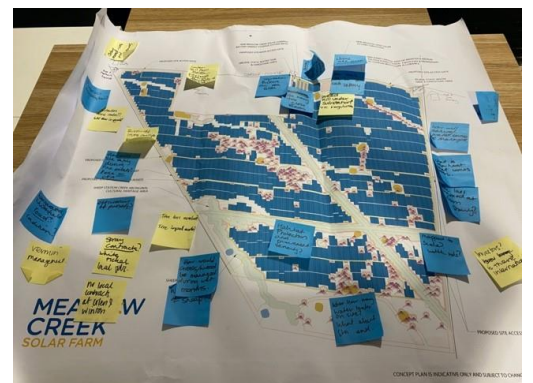
## 3.3 Drop-in information sessions

Two, two-hour drop-in community sessions were at the Milawa Hall, on Thursday 23 March 2023. (12pm – 2pm and 5pm – 7pm).

The sessions were promoted through advertisements in the Wangaratta Chronicle on Friday 17 March, and Wednesday 22 March, as well as through the e-mail subscriber list, shared on the website and sent to community groups for information.

Around 100 people attended the sessions, some community members attended both sessions. The session was attended by the project team including the Development Manager, Planning Lead and Community Engagement Lead.

The sessions offered an opportunity for community to drop-in and speak directly to the project team, see early concept designs, ask questions and provide feedback on the proposal. There was no formal presentation at this session. 115 feedback forms were completed and shared with the project team. Some forms were provided via email following the sessions.



Key themes raised at the sessions included:

- Disagreement of use of productive farmland for non-agricultural purpose
- Concerns around bushfire risk and how this will be managed during operations
- Potential impacts to native vegetation found at the site
- Potential effects on flood-prone waterways and catchments in the area
- How neighbour insurance arrangements will be managed.

A summary of the drop-in sessions and key themes raised was uploaded to the website and shared with community via the subscriber list following the information session. Please see Appendix 2. The concept design was also shared on the website after the event.





### 3.4 Information factsheets

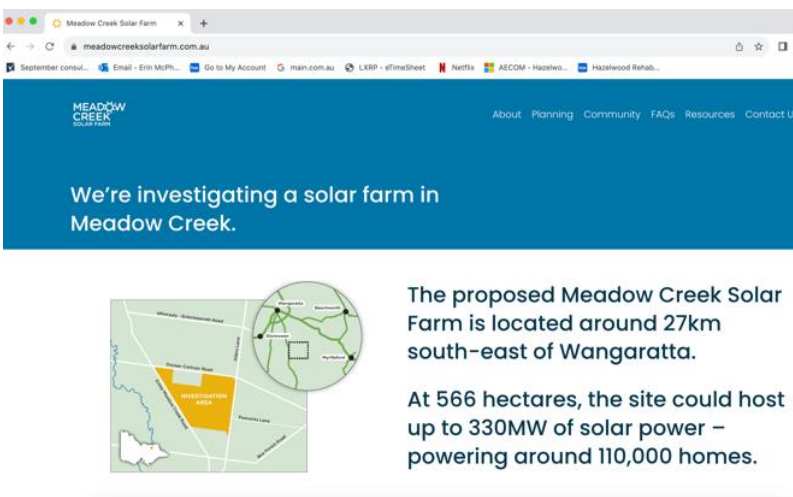
Information factsheets we're prepared for the project to help explain key project information. These factsheets were made available on the 'Resources' page of the project website. These included:

- Project overview factsheet – updated periodically, provides an overview of the project scope, the planning process and frequently asked questions
- Agricultural Land Use factsheet – provides a description of the Agricultural Land Use assessment and how agricultural land is considered through the Planning Application
- Benefit Sharing factsheet – describes the project's approach to benefit sharing.
- Project timeline – detail the key steps in project development

See Appendix 3 for copies of Project Fact Sheets.

### 3.5 Project website

The project website ([www.meadowcreeksolarfarm.com.au](http://www.meadowcreeksolarfarm.com.au)) was made live in September 2022 and provides information on the proposed project, planning process and development timeline. The website also houses factsheets and newsletters, and how to get in contact with the project team.



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### 3.6 Information email

A dedicated project email ([info@meadowcreeksolarfarm.com.au](mailto:info@meadowcreeksolarfarm.com.au)) was established for community and stakeholders to contact the project team and provide an avenue for communication. This email was established in September 2022, and promoted through public communications materials, newsletters and the project website. Over 70 emails were received through this channel and related to a number of topics, including:

- Questions relating to project scope, planning process and timing for operation
- Requests for project meetings
- Media requests
- Job opportunities and subcontractor opportunities

### 3.7 Meeting with project stakeholders

The Meadow Creek Solar Farm project team met with key stakeholders throughout the early planning and development of the project. A summary of meetings is provided below.

Stakeholder	Description	Date
Wangaratta City Council	The project team met with Council Executive to provide an initial briefing prior to consultation activities progressing in <b>August 2022</b> and again in <b>November 2022</b> as the project progressed through consultation and planning. Council noted that removal of native vegetation and impacts to visual amenity were key concerns for their community. The project team provided a briefing to Councillors in <b>March 2023</b> , to provide an overview of the project and potential opportunities for the region, including the proposed Community Benefit Fund. Councillors reiterated some of the concerns of community and provided some insights of how a Community Benefit Fund could be delivered.	28 August 2022 24 November 2022
Taungurung Land and Waters Council	Project team met with TLaWC to discuss the Meadow Creek Solar Farm and approach to cultural heritage assessments, including risks of cultural heritage impacts and approach to preparation of Cultural Heritage Management Plan.	21 November 2022
Members for Parliament	The project team met with State Member for Ovens Murray and Federal Member for Indi in <b>October and November 2022</b> . The Members for Parliament raised points about ensuring local opportunities for communities in the region, they also reiterated concerns from community regarding use of agricultural land and bushfire risk and mitigations.	10 December 2022 15 November 2022 20 March 2023
Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV)	The project team met with a representative from FRV in <b>October 2022</b> . During the meeting FRV discussed the planning process and encouraged the project team to reach out to the CFA to provide advice on key considerations for the project. They reiterated the CFA design requirements and encouraged the project team to respond to these through design.	14 October 2022
Country Fire Authority (CFA)	The project team met with representatives from CFA in <b>June 2023</b> , and <b>October 2023</b> . During these meetings the project team provided an overview of the Meadow Creek Solar Farm and sought to understand key design requirements to manage bushfire risks for solar energy facility and Battery Energy Storage Systems. The CFA reiterated their design requirements and encouraged the project to follow these closely.	13 June 2023 11 October 2023
Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) - Hume	The project team met with DTP – Hume in <b>September 2022, and January 2023</b> . During these meetings DTP – Hume raised the importance of reducing native vegetation removal where possible and limiting the biodiversity impacts of the project.	12 January 2023
North East Catchment Management Authority (NECMA)	The project team met with NECMA in August 2022, during this meeting NECMA provided an overview of their expectations for management of works on waterways, they also encouraged the project to seek further information on the waterways within the site. NECMA noted their expectations to limit infrastructure within waterways and encouraged avoidance of these areas.	16 August 2022
Carboor – Bobinawarrah Landcare	The project team met with representatives of the local Landcare group in October 2023. During the meeting the project team provided an overview of the environmental assessment process and site investigations completed to prepare the assessment. The project team also discussed how they had responded to local concerns around impacts to native vegetation and protection of biodiversity corridors	18 October 2023



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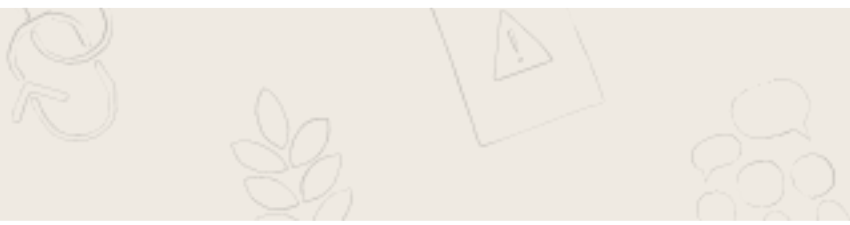
through the site. The Landcare group asked questions about how vegetation removal was managed during construction and how the project will respond to environmental matters and species within the site.

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Meadow Creek Agriculture Community Action Group	During the early stages of project development project neighbours and members of the community established the Meadow Creek Agriculture Community Action Group. The project team engaged with this group on a number of occasions, with regular correspondence. Further details of issues raised are included in this report.	20 October 2022 2 March 2023.
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## 4 Key issues raised during consultation

Throughout the engagement activities a number of issues have been raised. These issues and topics we're shared with the project team for consideration in preparation of the project design and planning application.

Topic	Key issues	Project response
<b>Agricultural Land Use</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perceived inappropriate use of productive agricultural land for solar energy development.</li> <li>Impacts to agricultural production in the region because of loss of current site operations and reduced capacity.</li> <li>Agri-solar approach must consider wet conditions of the area, and potential impacts to animal welfare from foot rot in waterlogged site.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The proposal is considered an 'agrisolar' facility, meaning sheep grazing can coexist with the solar farm. This will also keep vegetation growth low and reduce the need for weed and grass management.</li> <li>MCSF has prepared an Agricultural Land Use Assessment to assess the proposal's impact on agricultural land quality. This identified that flooding through the year and the overall quality of soil, means that this site contributes to only 0.6% of the Wangaratta Shire's agricultural land, contributing less than 0.004% of Victoria's agricultural economic output.</li> <li>Solar facilities have also been proven to improve overall land quality as a result of the shade from the solar panels and the sheep grazing activities.</li> </ul>
<b>Efficacy of solar farms in high rainfall regions.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appropriateness of solar production in high rainfall region.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MCSF engineers have completed computer modelling of electricity generation from the solar farm using historical weather data and recognised industry standards.</li> <li>The results show that the area is highly productive for solar electricity generation. Solar farms can still produce electricity in low-light conditions and overcast weather.</li> </ul>
<b>Bushfire risks and mitigations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Location of facility in Bushfire Prone Area overlay, and increased fire risk of site.</li> <li>What management and safety arrangements will be in place to reduce fire risks.</li> <li>Access arrangements for CFA staff to site if time of fire?</li> <li>How many water storage tanks are proposed around the site?</li> <li>How will the site be cleaned up and managed following bushfire events.</li> <li>Increased bushfire risk due to presence of Battery Energy Storage System within the site.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Like all electrical equipment, solar farms require careful design and management to ensure fire risk is minimised.</li> <li>All renewable energy projects in Victoria must be developed in line with strict guidelines set by the Country Fire Authority. These guidelines provide considerations and measures for fire safety, risk and emergency management.</li> <li>The standard measures include:</li> </ul>

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- Fire breaks of 10 metres around the site boundary and within fenced areas between existing vegetation and solar panels.
- 6 x 45,000 litre water tanks at site access points and 1 x 288,000 litre water tank at the main site entrance.

- A Bushfire Emergency Management Plan will also be prepared in consultation with the CFA before construction starts.

### Ecology and biodiversity

- Site is considered high value terrestrial and environmental area in nearby planning overlays
- Impacts to EPBC listed species and other local species
- Loss of habitat and vegetation corridors within the site
- Loss of mature trees and legacy of poor environmental record of nearby solar farms.
- In response to community feedback, MCSF has retained existing trees and added more around the edges and through the centre of the solar farm.
- The design of the solar farm carefully avoids high-value trees, by setting solar infrastructure away from clusters of trees and other vegetation.
- Measures have also been taken to ensure there will be no impact on mature trees during installation.
- The retention of more trees throughout the centre of the site, also creates a large green corridor for wildlife preservation and protection.

### Visual amenity

- Visual impacts to immediate neighbours
- Location of the Battery Energy Storage System on the site boundary
- Approach to vegetation screening should not increase bushfire risks
- MCSF's landscape architects have prepared a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment.
- This assesses potential impacts on existing landscape character and visual amenities, including how the solar farm would look to the site's neighbours.

### Waterways and catchments

- Impacts to natural watercourses through the site
- How run off from the site, including from BESS will be managed
- Location of project in Wangaratta's water catchment and supply area and flood prone area
- Impacts to site access during flood periods
- Potential leeching of solar panels into waterways and environments
- In response to community feedback, MCSF has commissioned further flood modelling to determine potential impacts on flood-prone waterways and catchments nearby.
- As a result, no infrastructure is proposed around this waterway and surrounding vegetation. The project has also proposed setbacks around natural watercourses through the site, and areas sensitive to flooding.

<b>Cultural heritage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Site noted as an area of Cultural Heritage sensitivity in planning overlays</li> <li>▪ How will potential impacts to Cultural Heritage be managed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The proposed design of the solar farm carefully avoids Cultural Heritage items.</li> <li>▪ Measures have also been taken to ensure there will be no impact on these items during installation.</li> </ul>
<b>Road infrastructure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How many trucks will there be on local roads during construction and operations of the site?</li> <li>▪ Existing roads are unsealed and unsuitable for frequent use by large vehicles</li> <li>▪ Increased dust from vehicle movements could reduce amenity for residents and businesses in the area</li> <li>▪ How will road upgrades be funded and managed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The number of trucks expected during construction will be determined through the construction management plan.</li> <li>▪ The proposal includes upgrades to the local road network to support access to the site.</li> <li>▪ These will be funded, monitored and maintained by Meadow Creek Solar Farm Pty Ltd. The Planning Application will also include a detailed traffic management plan that will assess existing traffic conditions and propose measures to ensure minimal impact during construction.</li> </ul>
<b>Neighbouring properties</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Insurance arrangements and liabilities for project neighbours, in the event of incident or accidental damage caused to solar site</li> <li>▪ Impacts to neighbouring property values</li> <li>▪ Changes to neighbouring properties visual amenity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The project will also have a range of insurance policies in place to cover the site in the event of damage or fire.</li> <li>▪ While base rates for insurance premiums are rising across the board, the advice provided to MCSF indicates that there is no evidence of these premiums being raised for people living near solar farms.</li> <li>▪ To further support this, Meadow Creek Solar Farm's insurance broker has proposed a tailored approach to ensure additional security for neighbours. Neighbours can apply for this option.</li> </ul>

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## 5 Approach to benefit sharing

Meadow Creek Solar Farm is committed to sharing the benefits of the project with the local community.

Benefit sharing is common practice for renewable energy projects in Victoria and around Australia. Meadow Creek Solar Farm has considered benefit sharing programs of other renewable energy developments in the region, to consider the positive contributions Meadow Creek Solar Farm could make locally.

The project is proposing a Community Benefit Fund to be available to local community through grants, sponsorships and partnership programs.

The fund would be available to the community once the project is built and operational. It is envisioned further consultation an input will be sought to determine target areas for funding.

Before the fund comes into effect, a clear framework will be developed for how the community benefit fund will be allocated, including objectives of the fund and target funding areas.

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## 6 Future stakeholder and community engagement

Meadow Creek Solar Farm Pty Ltd will continue to engage with direct neighbours, stakeholder and the community to keep them informed on the project approval process, construction and operation phases by:

- Providing updates via the project website on project development progress and steps in the planning process.
- Enabling the community to seek clarification about the project through established project channels (website and [info@meadowcreeksolarfarm.com.au](mailto:info@meadowcreeksolarfarm.com.au))
- Regular works notifications are uploaded to the website and share information about upcoming works and possible impacts.
- Further feedback and input are sought in developing the Community Benefit Fund.

A detailed record and approach for ongoing engagement has been outlined in the engagement cover letter prepared by Urbis. The focus of the next stage of engagement is to provide accurate information to support the exhibition process.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Community Newsletter



This is the first newsletter for the Meadow Creek Solar Farm, a proposed solar energy facility located around 27 kilometres south-east of Wangaratta and East of Moyhu. New solar projects like this significant project are vital to ensure more of our energy comes from renewable sources to reduce the damaging impacts of climate change.

**PROJECT INTRODUCTION**

The Meadow Creek Solar Farm is currently in the early stages of planning. The project is being developed by a local farming family, and renewable energy specialists DNV.

Feedback from local residents and the community will be used to shape final plans for the solar farm. We've been speaking with project neighbours and key stakeholders and will ramp up consultation in 2023 to give community members opportunity to review concept plans and provide their feedback.



This project investigation area is indicative only and subject to change.

**PROJECT TIMELINE**

**WE ARE HERE**



**HOW TO BE INVOLVED**  
 In the coming months, we'll share more information about the proposal and concept design. To share your feedback on the proposal or speak to someone from the project team you can contact us at [info@meadowcreeksolarfarm.com.au](mailto:info@meadowcreeksolarfarm.com.au) or visit our website for more information about the proposal.

[meadowcreeksolarfarm.com.au](http://meadowcreeksolarfarm.com.au)

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## WHAT IS PROPOSED?

If approved, the solar farm would be built on a 566-hectare site that is currently used for grazing and could produce up to 330 megawatts (MW) of renewable energy – enough to power around 110,000 homes. The project will also include a 250MW, 2-hour AC battery on the site to store excess energy for dispatch to customers when demand for power is high.

The solar farm would connect to the existing high voltage transmission system via a new powerline – expected to be around 2 kilometres long. We're currently exploring options for this transmission line.

The final footprint of the solar farm, its installed capacity and design will be determined following detailed technical and environment assessments.

We're looking at how we could maintain the site as an 'agrissolar' facility – meaning farming activities such as sheep grazing, will be able to continue once solar panels and infrastructure are installed.

We need to do some more work to understand local ground conditions and how this could be managed, and could involve rotating grazing around the site during different seasons and weather conditions.

We're encouraged by existing solar farm operations in the North East that are now successfully hosting both solar and agriculture, and we see this only becoming more common in the industry.

## WHY HERE?

North East Victoria receives abundant sunlight making the region ideal for large scale solar energy. The proposed site is closely located to a nearby high voltage transmission line and would mean less new transmission infrastructure would need to be built.



We've completed significant work to understand available grid capacity and potential network constraints in the region and ensure the project can connect to the grid.

## DELIVERING BENEFITS TO THE REGION



The Meadow Creek Solar Farm is committed to delivering benefits to the region. We're looking at opportunities to share the benefits of the project through a community benefit fund. Let us know what kind of local projects or community initiatives you'd like to see supported.

## PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS

Independent specialists have been engaged to prepare technical and environmental reports to inform the planning and design of the project. These assessments cover a range of topics including potential impacts to:

- Flora and fauna, native vegetation, and waterways
- Agricultural land use
- Surface water
- Landscape and visual amenity of the immediate region
- Traffic and transport impacts on local roads
- Cultural Heritage

We'll also complete an economic impact assessment, to map the regional investment, jobs and community benefits the solar farm will provide. A noise and vibration assessment will be prepared to investigate potential impacts and mitigation measures associated with the construction and operations of the project.

Once the project has completed detailed technical assessments, sought feedback and a design has been finalised, a Planning Application will be prepared and submitted to the Department of Transport and Planning, formerly Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, to assess the planning permit application on behalf of the Minister for Planning.

The Planning Application will be publicly exhibited, and provide community a formal opportunity to have their say on the proposal.

## Appendix 2 – Consultation Report



# Community drop-in sessions

In March this year, we held two community drop-in information sessions at the Milawa Hall to share draft concept designs and hear from the local community.



**2 drop-in sessions**



**Around 100 attendees**



**115 feedback forms**



**31 new registrations to e-news**

Feedback forms were completed at the sessions and shared with project staff. Forms were also submitted to the project email address after the session. Thank you to those who took the time to attend the sessions and complete a feedback form.

Feedback is an important part of project development. From here, we'll work with our planning and design teams to consider feedback received to inform the final concept design and planning application.

### WHAT WE HEARD

The main themes raised during the sessions were:

- Impacts to agricultural land in the region
- Concerns around bushfire risk and how this will be managed
- Potential impacts to native vegetation
- Potential effects on flood-prone waterways and catchments in the area
- How insurance arrangements will be managed

A number of questions about the project scope and planning process were also asked during the sessions. We've provided a response to these below.

### WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE PROJECT?

Over the next few months we'll continue to refine the project design, following community and stakeholder feedback and outcomes of our technical assessments to date. We'll also continue to prepare detailed technical assessments.

These assessments will form part of the project's Planning Application and be submitted to the Minister for Planning for assessment via the Department of Transport and Planning.

We expect to submit the Planning Application to the Department later this year.

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

#### Who is developing the project?

Meadow Creek Solar Farm is being developed by Meadow Creek Solar Farm Pty Ltd, who has engaged renewable energy specialists (DNV) and environmental and planning specialists to assist with the design and planning processes.

#### Where is the project?

The Meadow Creek Solar Farm is located in North East Victoria, around 27km south-east of Wangaratta. The site could host up to 330MW of solar energy, and if developed to its full capacity could power around 110,000 homes. The site is nearby to Meadow Creek, Milawa, Bobinawarra, Oxley, Docker and Moyhu. According to 2021 census data, this area has a population of around 2,050 residents.

#### Why has this location been chosen?

For projects to be successful, they need to be located near areas with available transmission network and capacity. The site is closely located to the Dederang to Glenrowan Transmission line. We've determined through early grid assessments there would be capacity in this transmission line to support the project. Energy projects need to be located all around the network to reduce bottle necks in the grid.

#### How long will the solar farm operate for and what will decommissioning the site involve?

The solar farm would have an operational life of around 30 years. As the project nears its project end life, a decommissioning strategy will be prepared. Decommissioning the site would involve removing all infrastructure from the site, including any in ground structures or footings and rehabilitating the land back to its original use.

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### How will fire risk be managed?

The solar farm and Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) will be designed to the highest standards for fire safety. The CFA has strict design guidelines for proponents to incorporate into design. Some measures include the requirement of cleared vegetation zones, fire breaks between panel arrays, and strict vegetation management plans.

Like all electrical equipment, batteries and solar equipment require careful design and management to ensure fire risk is managed and controlled.

### What battery technology is being used?

BESS are becoming more common on renewable energy projects to help secure energy supply and provide grid stability services. The Meadow Creek Solar Farm proposal includes a 250MW 2-hr BESS. We are currently working with EnergyVault, an energy storage specialist, to progress detailed grid protection studies that are required by the market operator.

### What does the planning process involve?

To obtain a planning permit for a Renewable Energy Facility in Victoria, a proponent must prepare a Planning Application that responds to the relevant requirements of the local Planning Scheme, including the relevant planning controls (zones and overlays). A Planning Application for a Renewable Energy Facility must also address the application requirements listed under Clause 53.13 of the Planning Scheme.

A proponent (Meadow Creek Solar Farm Pty Ltd) will lodge an application with the Minister for Planning who is the responsible authority for Renewable Energy Facility development, via the Department of Transport and Planning.

The Planning Application is then put on public display (notice) for community and stakeholders to have their say on the proposal, by making a submission.

### How will you consider impacts to agricultural land in the region?

A detailed Agricultural Land Use assessment will be prepared as part of the Planning Application. Under the Planning Scheme, a renewable energy facility is an allowable use within the Farming Zone, subjected to a Planning Permit. You can read more about this topic, including how the assessment is prepared in our Agricultural Land Use factsheet.

### What will the ecology assessment include?

We're preparing a detailed ecology assessment. The ecology assessment will map flora and fauna found at the site, including the potential presence of protected species. The assessment will also map native trees and vegetation found at the site, including trees that may need to be removed and propose methods to avoid or minimise impacts on ecology. The final number of trees to be removed is still to be determined as we refine the concept design.

### What roads will be used to access the site during construction and operations?

A detailed Traffic and Transport Assessment will be prepared to identify the best transport routes to be used during construction. This will consider existing road conditions and any modifications or improvement works that might be needed to support increased traffic or large equipment deliveries during construction.

### How will you manage biosecurity on the site?

As part of the Planning Application, we'll prepare a detailed Environmental Management Plan which will include measures to monitor and manage biosecurity. Biosecurity control measures are likely to include, at a minimum:

- Awareness and training for staff
- Regular identification and review of hazards
- Vehicle, boots and equipment inspections and washing before entering and leaving the site.

### What are the benefits for the community?

Introduction of more renewable energy is good for communities in the long term to reduce power prices and ensure a secure energy supply.

In line with industry best practice, Meadow Creek Solar Farm is developing a Benefit Sharing Program to contribute positively to the region. This will include an annual community benefit fund of \$100,000 to support local projects and initiatives. We are keen to hear from the community and other stakeholders on what they would like to see delivered in the region.

During construction there will be a large team working on site. A small team of full-time employees will be needed to operate and manage the site. There will also be opportunities to work with local suppliers and business during construction and operations.

### How are you managing insurance arrangements with project neighbours?

The Meadow Creek Solar Farm will have a range of insurance policies in place to cover the site in the event of damage or fire.



Appendix 3 – Fact Sheets



## Project overview

The proposed Meadow Creek Solar Farm is located around 27km south-east of Wangaratta.

At around 566 hectares, the site could host up to 330MW of solar power - powering around 110,000 homes.

The site will also host at 250MW Battery Energy Storage System at the site.

This proposal is currently in the early stages of Planning.

### ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS AND PLANNING APPROVALS

Before the project can be built, we'll complete extensive technical assessments to understand the potential impact of the project.

Technical assessments will cover a range of topics including visual amenity, traffic and transport impact, hydrology, agriculture, cultural heritage and ecology.

Once the project has completed detailed assessments, a Planning Application will be submitted to the Minister for Planning via Department of Transport and Planning for assessment.



This project investigation area is indicative only and subject to change.

### BATTERY STORAGE AT MEADOW CREEK

Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) work by storing excess energy generated by renewable energy when there is low demand in the network. The energy is then released during high demand periods where it is needed most. The BESS will also deliver Frequency Control Ancillary Services (FCAS) which help to maintain a stable supply of electricity.

These systems will help to shore up renewable energy supply across the National Electricity Market (NEM) and are an essential part of Victoria's renewable energy transition.

### PROJECT TIMELINE



### CONNECTING TO THE GRID

Located to the nearby Dederang to Glenrowan transmission line, the proposed solar farm would make use of existing transmission infrastructure and limit the amount of new above ground transmission line that is needed.

# ADVERTISED PLAN



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### Why has the Project team chosen this site?

The Meadow Creek Solar Farm site was chosen as it is located close to an existing transmission network.

Co-locating projects close to existing transmission infrastructure reduces how much new transmission line is needed to be built to connect the project to the grid.

The site is very level, and has large open pastures which make it ideal for solar development.

### What will the solar farm look like?

The proposed Meadow Creek Solar Farm is being designed to accommodate up to 330MW of solar power and a 250 MW battery on the site.

Visually, the solar panels would be around 2.6m tall and raised off the ground. The site will include a substation and transmission connection.

We're still determining the final concept design of the solar farm, which has been informed by our preliminary desktop environmental and technical assessments. When the design is further developed, we'll start our detailed environmental assessments including a visual assessment to determine what the site will look like from different view points.

### Will the solar farm make noise?

Solar farms make a small amount of noise when operational. Noise will be considered as part of the solar farm design and environmental assessments.

### Who is developing the project?

The proposal is being developed by Meadow Creek Solar Farm Pty Ltd, with support from environmental specialists and established renewable energy business DNV.

## SPEAKING WITH COMMUNITY

Meadow Creek Solar Farm is committed to working with the local community as the project is developed. We'll provide regular opportunities to engage with potential project neighbours and the local community. Stakeholder engagement is a key focus for the team with feedback and input helping to inform the final design.

### What is the expected lifespan of the solar farm and what will decommissioning involve?

The solar farm is being designed to operate for 30 years. Decommissioning the site may involve removing solar panels and relevant infrastructure and reinstating the land. A decommissioning plan will be prepared ahead of any decommissioning and rehabilitation.

### Will you need to remove trees and vegetation?

The Meadow Creek Solar Farm project is committed to supporting sustainable practices at the site.

While some native vegetation removal will be required at the site, every effort will be made to avoid and minimise native vegetation removal as much as possible.

Once the project design footprint is finalised, a detailed flora and fauna assessment will be prepared and will include the native vegetation impacts and offset requirements.

These assessments will help to identify and protect sensitive areas during both the construction and operation of the solar farm.





## Agricultural land use

Meadow Creek Solar Farm is a proposed renewable energy development located around 27km south-east of Wangaratta. At around 566 hectares, the site could host up to 330MW of solar energy – powering around 110,000 homes.

Before the project is built, we'll complete technical assessments to understand the potential impacts of the project. Technical assessments will cover a range of topics including Agricultural land use.

This assessment will consider the potential impacts of the project on Agricultural land use in the region. The report will include a summary of:

- Soil types and uses
- Agricultural productivity of the site
- Cumulative effects of solar facilities
- Assessment of the site in relation to irrigation districts.

### ECONOMIC VALUE TO THE REGION

Agriculture is an important contributor to the economy in Wangaratta and represents over \$168 million in economic value to the region. Agriculture in Wangaratta consists of cattle, sheep, viticulture, crops, berries and some fruit, covering around 127,000 hectares of land.



**The Victorian Renewable Energy Targets plan for 50% of our electricity to come from renewable sources by 2030.**



### EXISTING USE AT THE SITE

The site is currently used for beef production, with a breeding herd of around 450. The site is situated on an Alluvial plain (ALP2), which is known to be flat with poor drainage and predominantly suited to grazing and cropping.

The site is located within the Farming Zone. Under the provisions of the Farming Zone, a renewable energy facility is an allowable use subject to planning approval.

The site is not within a Victorian Irrigation District and has no connection to modernised irrigation infrastructure.



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### STRATEGIC AGRICULTURAL LAND

Agricultural land can be considered high-value and strategically important for a range of features, including presence of high-quality soils, good rainfall, access to water through irrigation, resilience to climate change and infrastructure investment and integration with industry.

The Victorian Government Solar Energy Facilities Design and Development Guidelines (October 2022), note key considerations of assessing impact on strategic agricultural land include:

- 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
- the potential loss of reliable, accessible water, such as irrigated areas
- the impact of fragmentation and a change of land use to non-agriculture activity on local and regional productivity
- the impact of a change of land use on recent and/or current efforts to modernise and reform agricultural activity
- 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.

The Agricultural Land Use assessment will consider the above and form part of the Planning Application. The Agricultural Land Use assessment will be available to view when the Planning Application is on public exhibition later this year.

### PLANNING FOR AGRISOLAR

Meadow Creek Solar Farm is committed to maintaining the site as an 'Agrisolar' facility to manage grass and weed growth on the property and continue agricultural activities on the site. The planning application will include an Agri-solar plan, which will detail how Agrisolar could work on the site.

### WHAT IS AGRISOLAR?

Agrisolar refers to co-developing the same area of land for both solar PV power as well as for agriculture. Several forms of agrisolar have been developed around the world, with a wide range of innovative approaches.

Agrisolar involves continuing grazing activities on the site to maximise the productive use of agricultural land. Grazing also helps to keep growth low and minimises the need for other forms of weed and grass management.

### HOW WOULD AGRISOLAR WORK AT MEADOW CREEK SOLAR FARM?

Sheep grazing is considered the most suitable agricultural enterprise to implement at Meadow Creek Solar Farm as it is an existing agricultural activity in the region, and sheep are less likely to cause damage to solar infrastructure.

We're speaking to locals to understand ground conditions and how grazing could work. We've received feedback that heavy rainfall could limit grazing during wetter months.

It will be important to set up the site to allow a grazing rotation to be implemented, particularly through the wetter months, and further refinement of the most practical grazing blocks will be required.

MEADOW  
CREEK  
SOLAR FARM



## Community Benefit Fund

Meadow Creek Solar Farm is a proposed renewable energy development located around 27km south-east of Wangaratta. At around 566 hectares, the site could host up to 330MW of solar energy – powering around 110,000 homes.

### SHARING THE BENEFITS OF RENEWABLE ENERGY

Meadow Creek Solar Farm is committed to sharing the benefits of the project with the local community.

Renewable energy infrastructure can lead to changes, including visual and amenity impacts. In response proponents should lead initiatives to support communities in which they operate and contribute to a positive legacy for the project.

Benefit Sharing is a common practice for renewable energy projects in Victoria and around Australia.

### BENEFIT SHARING AT MEADOW CREEK

We've looked at benefit sharing programs of other renewable energy developments in the region, and the positive contributions Meadow Creek Solar Farm could make locally.

As one of the larger solar energy facilities in Victoria, we've committed a proportionate amount to supporting local community initiatives.

**We're committing \$100,000 annually to a community benefit fund. The fund could be distributed to the local community through grants, sponsorships and partnerships programs.**

### WHAT KINDS OF PROGRAMS SHOULD WE FUND?

We want to hear from local community on initiatives you would like to see funded.

Before the fund is finalised, we'll develop a clear framework for how the community benefit fund will be allocated. This will include objectives of the fund and how it will be allocated.

### WHEN WILL THE FUND BE AVAILABLE TO COMMUNITY?

The fund would be available to the community once the project is built and operational.

### WHO WILL BE ABLE TO ACCESS THE FUND?

The fund will be available to local community groups, stakeholders and organisations. We want to focus the fund on supporting local initiatives near the project area. It is important to ensure we are directing the benefit to the community who are most impacted.

### HOW WILL YOU BE SUPPORTING IMPACTED PROJECT NEIGHBOURS?

We are looking at developing a Neighbour Benefit Program. There is some work to do to understand the impacts of the project we can progress a neighbour benefit program further and what could be included as part of this.

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