URBIS

MEADOW CREEK SOLAR FARM

Town Planning Report

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Prepared for

MEADOW CREEK SOLAR FARM PTY LTD

August 2024

URBIS STAFF RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS REPORT

Director	Jon Mills
Associate Director	Stephan Diesel
Senior Consultant	Richard Main & Callum Goldby
Project Code	P0050228
Report Number	02 Lodgement

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SUBMISSION DOCUMENTS

This report is to be read in conjunction with:

- Acoustic Report
- Agricultural Report
- Bushfire Risk Assessment
- Certificates of Title
- Community Consultation Outcomes Report
- Cultural Heritage Management Plan
- Ecology Report
- Environmental Management Plan
- Hydrology & Flooding Report
- Landscape Visual Impact Assessment
- Landscape Plan
- Site Layout Plan & Specifications
- Traffic Impact Assessment
- Visual Impact Assessment
- Social Impact Assessment (including Economic Impact Assessment)

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CONTENTS

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Please find enclosed a planning permit application prepared by Urbis Ltd on behalf of Meadow Creek Solar Farm Pty Ltd (the permit applicant) in support of a planning permit application to use and develop land for a solar installation (renewable energy facility) and utility installation, on land to the north of Meadow Creek, about 25 Kilometres south-east of Wangaratta.

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

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

1.1. PROJECT SUMMARY

SITE PARTICULARS

Location | 1033 Oxley-Meadow Creek Road, Meadow Creek.

Nearest township: Moyhu (8km), Whitfield (14km). See site context.

Size | 566ha + 156ha easement for transmission line.

Energy Contribution | Approximately 332MW solar array + 1000MWh BESS battery. See Proposal section.

Land use | A combination of solar farming and sheep grazing retains agricultural use. The site is suitable for seasonal grazing during dryer months. See Proposal and Agricultural Assessment.

Victoria's emissions reductions target

The proposal will contribute to Victoria's emissions reductions target by providing 332MW of clean energy to the grid.

1.2. AGENCY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

REFERRALS AND NOTICES

Native Vegetation Removal (Clause 52.17 and 66.02-2)

Referral to DEECA

→ See Statuary Assessment 6.5, Biodiversity and Vegetation Removal, page 41

→ See Appendix K: Biodiversity Assessment

Transport

Notice to Head, Transport for Victoria

→ See Statuary Assessment 6.9, Traffic and Access, page 48

→ Appendix J: Transport Impact Assessment

Bushfire

Notice to the Country Fire Authority

→ See Statuary Assessment 6.6, Bushfire, page 44

→ See Appendix H: Preliminary Bushfire Assessment

Local Government

Notice to Wangaratta Council

1.3. WANGARATTA PLANNING SCHEME

The site is affected by the following planning controls and permissions

PLANNING CONTROL	CONSIDERATION
Farming Zone (FZ)	35.07-1: To use land for a Renewable Energy Facility and a Utility Installation. 35.07-4: To construct a building and carry out works for a use in Section 2.
Clause 52.17 'Native Vegetation'	52.17-1: To remove, destroy or lop native vegetation.
Clause 44.03 'Floodway Overlay'	44.03-2: To construct a building or to construct or carry out works
Clause 44.04 'Land Subject to Inundation Overlay'	44.04-2. To construct a building or to construct or carry out works
Clause 42.02 'Vegetation Protection Overlay -Schedule 2'	42.02-2. To remove, destroy or lop any vegetation
Bushfire Prone Area	The entire property impacted by bushfire prone land.

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1.4. PLANNING PATHWAY

Clause 53.22 'Significant Economic Development'

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

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

As the proposal is for a renewable energy facility and for a utility installation with capacity of approximately 332 MW respectively, the proposal qualifies for assessment under this Clause.

We further note that:

- No referral is required to be submitted to the Impact Assessment team within the Victorian Department of Transport and Planning to determine if an Environmental Effects Statement is required for the proposal.
- No referral is required under the *EPBC Act* to the Commonwealth DCCEEW.

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

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

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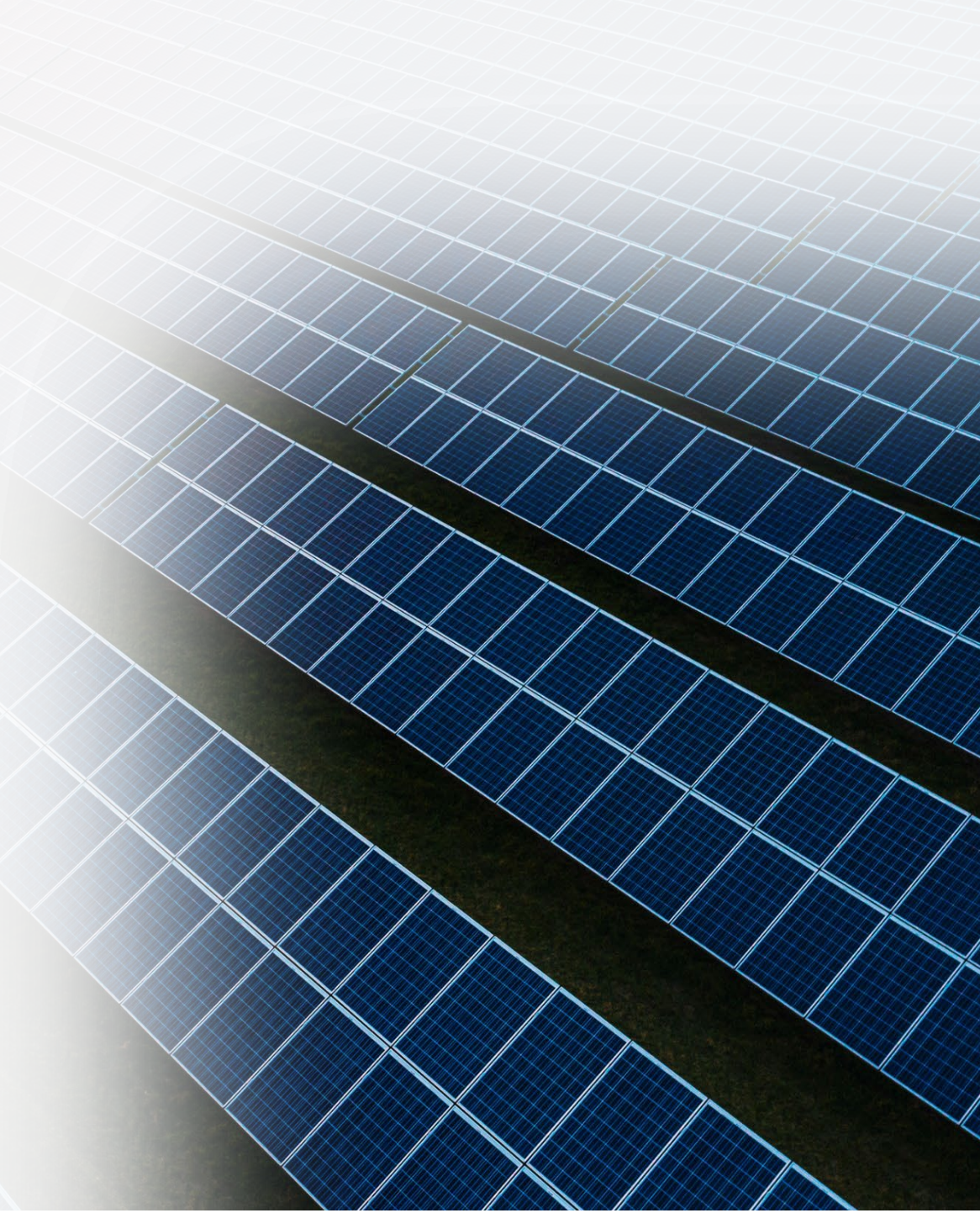
1.5. ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

The proposed solar farm is an appropriate response to its physical and policy context, and is deserving of a planning permit:

- The proposal is suitable for assessment under the Development Facilitation Program pursuant to Clause 53.22.
- Based on the Ecological Assessment undertaken by Biosis, no Environment Effects Statement referral, nor EPBC referral is required.
- The proposal is consistent with the statutory and strategic frameworks of the Wangaratta Planning Scheme.
- The proposal will contribute approximately 332MW generation capacity, with 1000MWh MW storage capacity in the BESS. Based on these figures, the proposal will contribute significantly to Victoria's emissions reduction and renewable energy targets, as outlined within this report.
- The proposal triggers the requirement for a Mandatory Cultural Heritage Management Plan. The proponent has prepared a Cultural Heritage Management Plan which has been approved by the Taungurung Land and Waters Council (TLaWC) on 23 July 2024.
- The proposed installation has sought to minimise impacts on native vegetation, with large areas of the site avoided, and only minimal removal required where it cannot be avoided. Where removal is required, this will be appropriately offset.
- The proposal has been sited and designed in response to the conditions on the site, seeking to preserve waterways from impacts and responding to the topography. The proposal also appropriately manages its bushfire impacts. It has also been designed in accordance with all relevant legislation and guidelines.
- The proposal allows for the ongoing agricultural use of the land as sheep will continue to graze beneath the panels. Following the decommissioning of the facility, the site can be restored to its existing conditions. Therefore, no agricultural land is deemed lost.
- The proposal will not unreasonably impact the amenity of surrounding properties, with respect to visual impact and noise.



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1.6. SUMMARY OF DOCUMENTATION

The application demonstrates that the proposed renewable energy installation (solar farm) and utility installation (BESS) is an appropriate use and form of development for the site when assessed against the Wangaratta Planning Scheme and all relevant State and Commonwealth legislation, policies and guidelines. In support of the application, we enclose the following documents.

- Certificates of Title (Appendix A)
- Site Plan (Urbis) (Appendix B)
- Elevations and Specifications (Urbis) (Appendix C)
- Landscape Strategy (Horizon Studio) (Appendix D)
- Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (Horizon Studio) (Appendix E)
- Agricultural Assessment (RM Consulting Group) (Appendix F)
- Hydrology and Flood Risk Assessment (Alluvium) (Appendix G)
- Bushfire & Fire Risk Assessment (Ecology & Heritage Partners) (Appendix H)
- Noise Assessment (Marshall Day Acoustics) (Appendix I)
- Traffic Impact Assessment (Salt) (Appendix J)
- Biodiversity Impact Assessment (Biosis) (Appendix K)
- Engagement Outcomes Report (Nation Partners) (Appendix L)
- Urbis Engagement Cover Letter (Urbis) (Appendix M)
- Environnemental Management Plan Framework (Urbis) (Appendix N)
- Clause 53.13 Assessment (Urbis) (Appendix O)
- Farming Zone Assessment (Urbis) (Appendix P)
- Solar Energy Facility Design and Development Guidelines Assessment (Urbis) (Appendix Q)
- Social Impact Assessment (Urbis) (Appendix R)

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2. SOCIAL IMPACT SITE CONTEXT

2.1. SUBJECT SITE

Key details of the site are as follows:

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
Existing Conditions	The site is primarily used for agricultural uses with a single dwelling located on the site. The site is located 25 kilometres south-east of Wangaratta forming part of a broader space used for rural and lifestyle farming, characterised by large-sized pastoral holdings. The site is cleared and defined by a flat topography. It is understood that the site is primarily used for livestock and other non-intensive agricultural practices.
Location	The site is located 25 kilometres south-east of Wangaratta and 28 kilometres east of Glenrowan.
Council	Wangaratta Shire Council
Area	Approx. 566 hectares
Frontages	The site is bordered by Docker-Carboor Road to the north, Allan's Lane to the east, and Oxley-Meadow Creek Road to the west. A neighbouring farming lot borders the property to the south.
Title	Refer to Appendix A for full title details and encumbrances.
Vegetation	Areas of native vegetation located across the site, detailed in the vegetation section of this report.

Table 2 – Details of Subject Site

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2.2. IMMEDIATE SURROUNDS

B Immediately north of the site is bordered by Docker-Carboor Road, a declared highway providing a single lane of vehicle traffic in each direction (east to west). Beyond this thoroughfare is an extensive agricultural area, consisting primarily of grazing and cropping land, with several dwellings scattered throughout. Beyond this grazing land is Hurdle Creek, which offshoots from the King River in the west.

B To the east of the site is Allan's Lane, a single lane running north-to south. Adjoining the property to the north-east of the site is a property 686 Docker-Carboor Road, Bobinawarrah.

B To the south is an agricultural area used for grazing, whereby Sheep Station Creek intersects the site. In the south-east of the site, on the intersection of Allans Lane and Melville Forest-Vasey Road, a dwelling is situated on an individual lot.

B To the west is Oxley-Meadow Creek Road, a major thoroughfare running north to south connecting the Alpine National Park and Wangaratta more broadly.

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2.3. SURROUNDING CONTEXT

The proposed solar farm site is neighboured by 15 residential properties within 2 kilometres of the site. Seven properties are located adjacent to the solar farm (within 50 metres).

1 Township of Docker

2 Bobinawarrah Fire Station

3 Township of Meadow Creek

4 Hurdle Creek West State School

5 Milawa Airport

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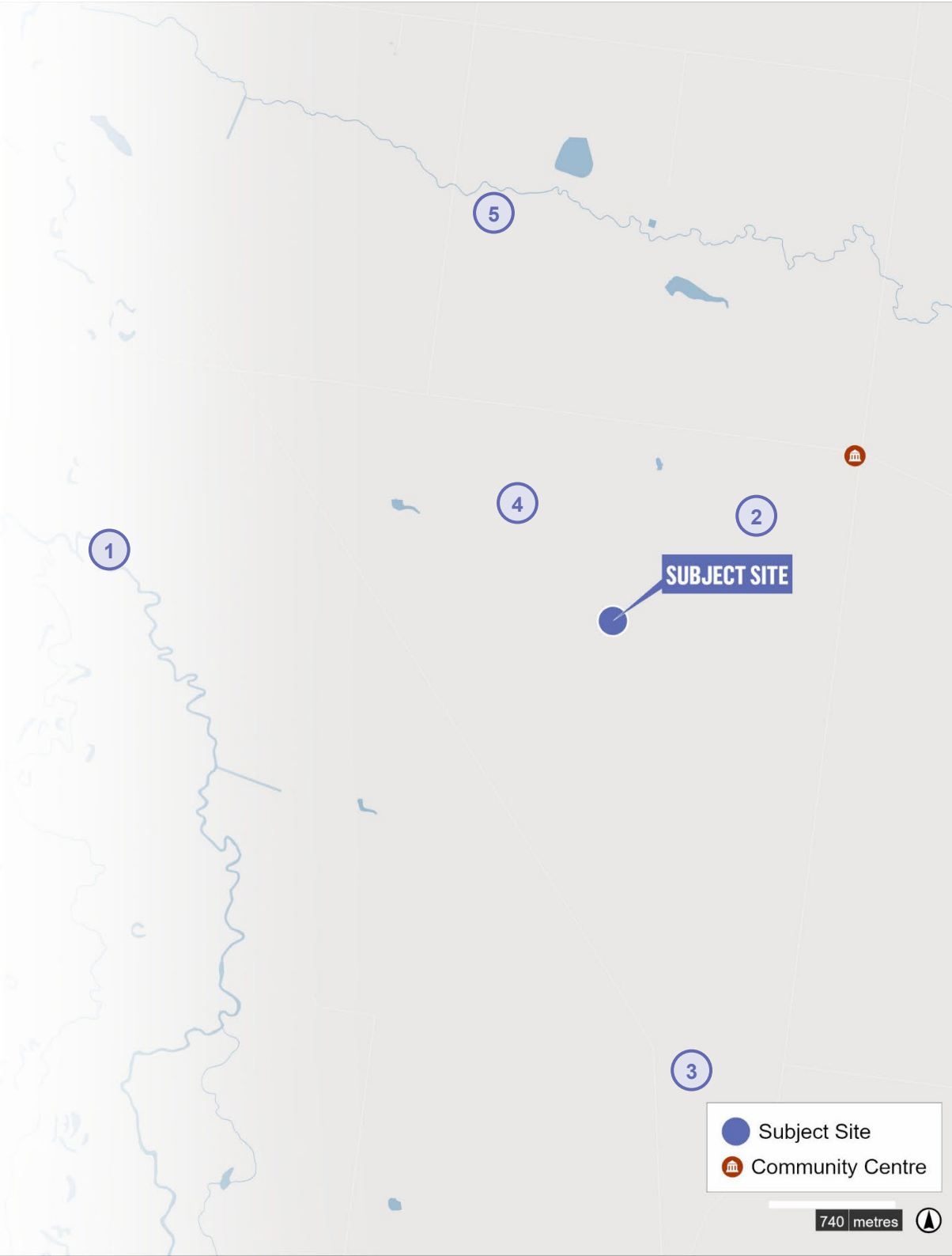

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3. PROPOSAL

3.1. OVERVIEW OF PROPOSAL

The Meadow Creek Solar Farm is located approximately 25km south-east of Wangaratta. At approximately 566 hectares the site will generate approximately 332MWp of solar energy.

The Project incorporates a solar farm, battery energy storage system (BESS), substation and terminal station, including a transmission line that passes through a separate property before connecting to the Dederang to Glenrowan transmission line.

The property is owned by one landholder and is currently used for agricultural activities, including cattle grazing. Key details of the proposal are as follows.

ELEMENT	PROPOSAL
Generation capacity	Approx. 332MW
Grid connection	Connection to existing 250 MWac line traversing the site. Approximately 2 km of overhead transmission line connecting the project to the existing Dederang to Glenrowan transmission line.
Storage capacity	1000MWh BESS
Panel area	240 hectares (44.16% of site area)
Number of transformers	98
Number of inverters	98
Number of batteries	196

3.2. BUILT FORM AND LAYOUT

The facility consists of the following key elements:

Battery Energy Storage System (BESS)

- 1000MWh battery energy storage system, including:
  - 98 x inverters.
  - 98 x transformers.
  - Battery Management Systems to UL1973.
  - Surge protection devices and DC-fuses.
  - Warning and alarm systems for faults, status, smoke, off-gassing and fire.
  - Fire alarm control panel
  - Fire and smoke detection (2 x smoke and 2 x thermal detectors in battery compartments).
  - Hydrogen gas detector in the BESS container.
  - Automatic mechanical gas exhaust.
  - Dry-pipe water suppression system in the battery compartment.
  - OVEC1230 automatic fire suppression system in battery pack.
  - 120 minutes FRL fire wall
  - Thermal runaway protection to UL9540 or UL1973.

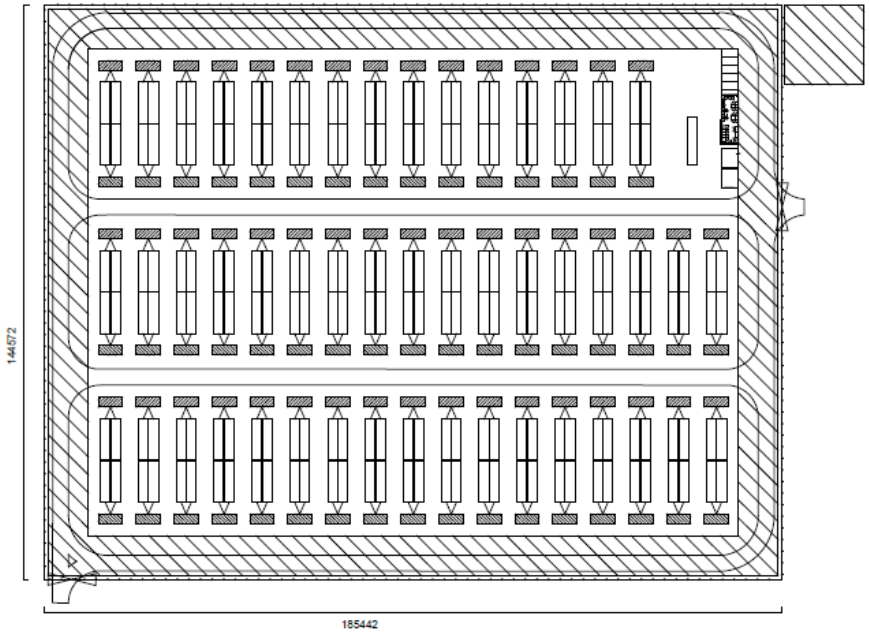

Figure 1: Indicative BESS

Source: Urbis

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Solar Panels

The proposal includes the installation of 592,752 photovoltaic solar modules, with a combined energy capacity of approximately 332MW. The glass surfaced panels are coated to maximise daylight absorption, and therefore to minimise glare potential. The panels consist of an encapsulant, the silicon solar cells themselves, a backing sheet and an aluminium frame.

The panels will be attached to a horizontal 'tracker' which allows the panels to track the sun by pivoting in the east/west plane, to maximise solar exposure (Figure 2).

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

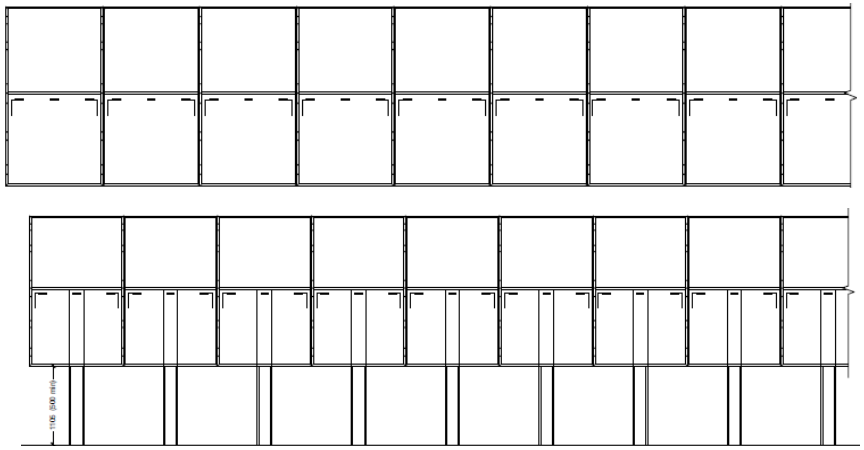

Figure 2 Front Elevation and Plan View

Source: Urbis

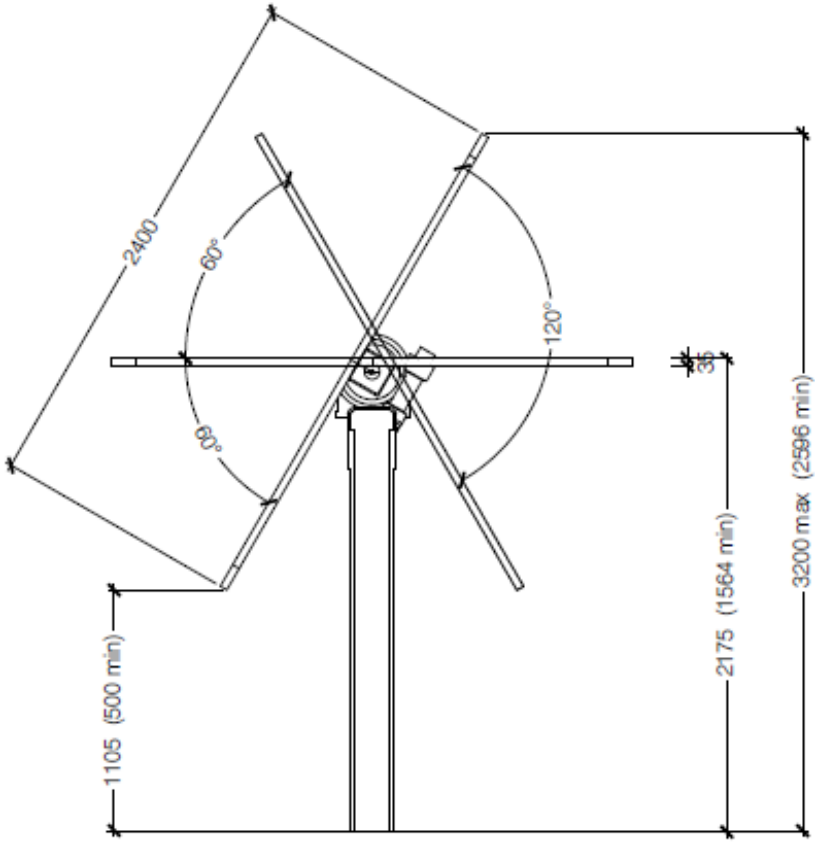

Figure 3: Side Elevation

Source: Urbis

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Transformers

Transformers change the voltage of the electricity generated, allowing for generated energy to be fed into the local grid.

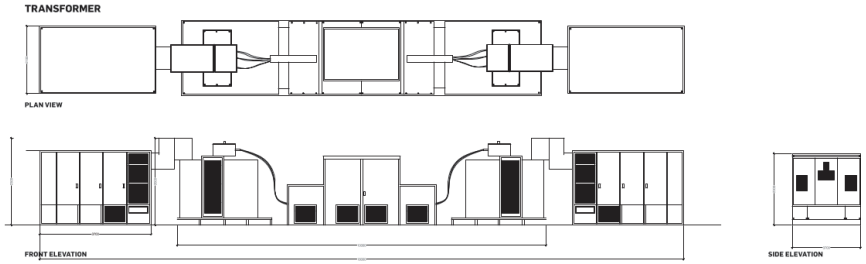

Figure 4 Transformer plan view and elevations.

Substation

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

The substation is located adjacent to the BESS site.

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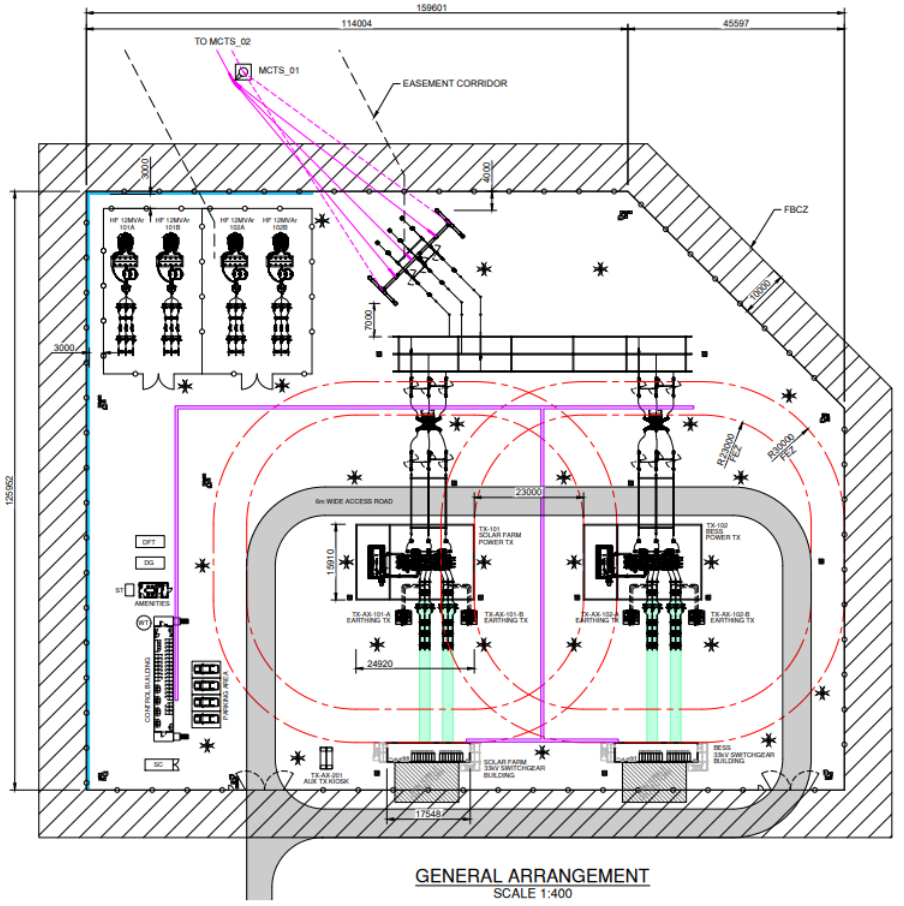

Figure 5 Indicative substation site plan.

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Grid Connection

A new overhead 220kV line will connect the Meadow Creek Solar Farm to the proposed Docker Terminal Station. The Terminal Station will then connect to the existing 220KV Dederang to Glenrowan overhead Transmission line running at Whorouly-Bobinawarrah Road.

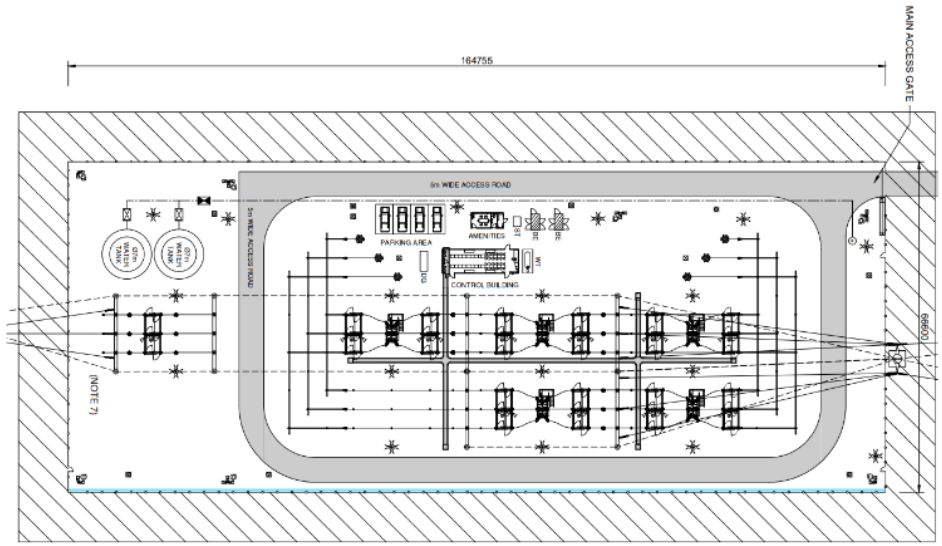


Figure 6 Indicative terminal station site plan.

Signage

The proposal incorporates business identification signage to be located at the main site access. Dimensions are to be 2.4m width and 1.2m height, for a total area of 2.88 square metres.

An indicative design for the signage is reproduced below.

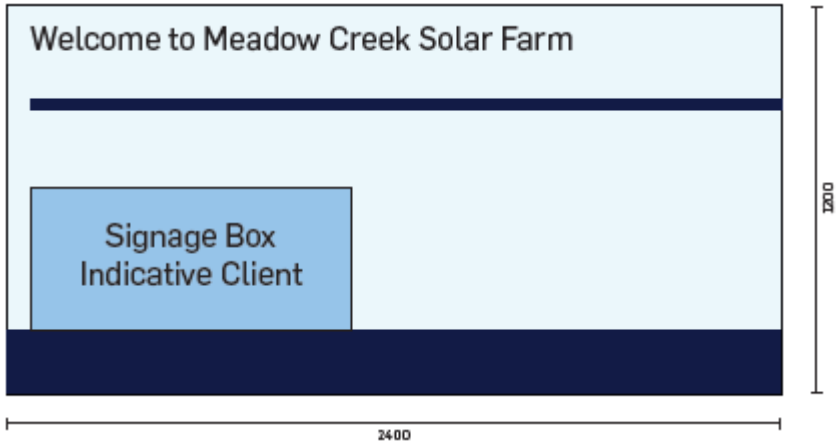


Figure 8 Indicative business signage.

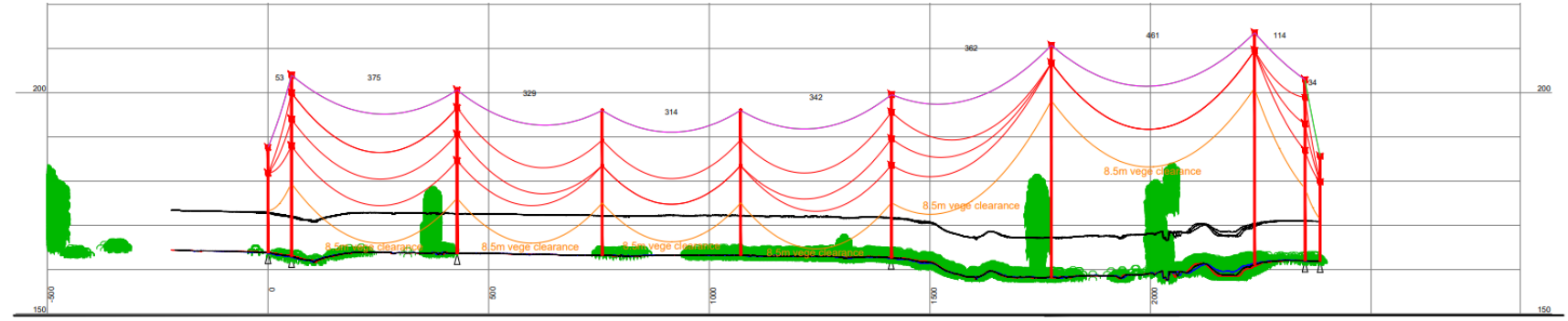
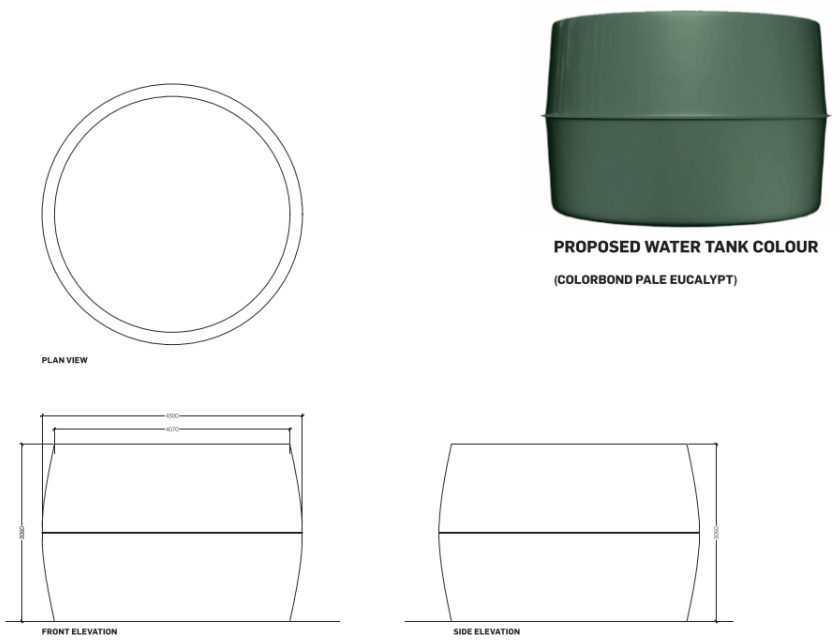


Figure 7 Cross section of overhead line.

Ancillary Infrastructure

6 x 45,000L water tanks are proposed for the solar installation site and will measure approximately 4.5m (diameter) x 3.05m (height). The proposed colour is ‘Colorbond Pale Eucalypt’ as pictured below.

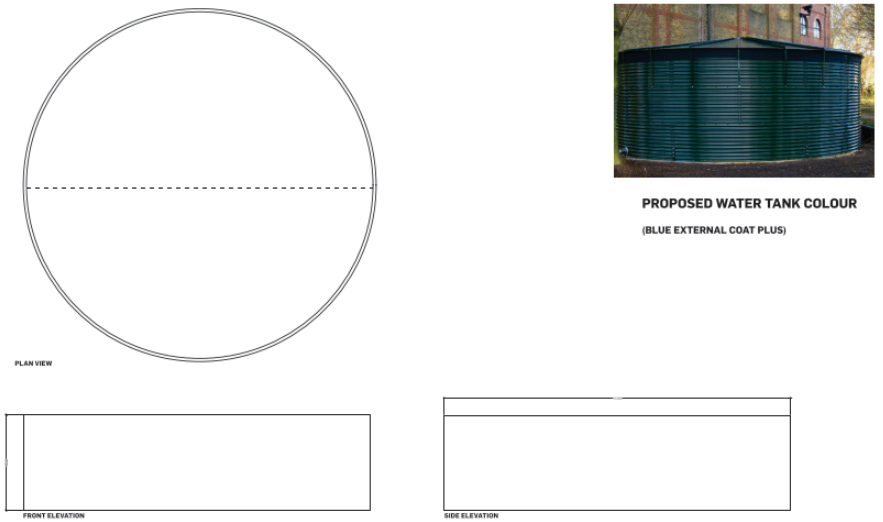
Figure 9 Proposed small water tank detail



Source: Urbis

An additional 576,000L water tank is proposed for the BESS site, measuring approximately 15m (diameter) x 3m (height). It is proposed to be finished with a blue external coat.

Figure 10 Proposed large water tank detail.



Source: Urbis

Composting toilets are also to be provided on site for operators and maintenance staff. The toilets are waterless, chemical free and self-compositing, resulting in an odour free compost collected annually for processing off-site.

A monitoring building is also to be included within the BESS site.

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3.3. DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Native Vegetation Removal

The project requires limited removal of native vegetation within the site. The project has been designed in accordance with the 'avoid, minimise, and offset' framework outlined within the *Guidelines for the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation, DELWP 2017*, with most high value vegetation being retained.

The total of 2.181 hectares native vegetation removal is required or demed lost, including patch vegetation, large trees (33) in patches and scattered trees. An Impact assessment of the proposed native vegetation removal is detailed in Section 5 of this report (Biodiversity and Vegetation Removal). A biodiversity assessment has been prepared by Biosis Australia and includes a native vegetation removal report prepared by DEECA at **Appendix K**.

To ensure a gain to Victoria's biodiversity that is equivalent to the loss resulting from the proposed removal of native vegetation, compensatory offsets are required. The total offset required is **0.549 general habitat units**. This must be located within the North East Catchment Management Authority (CMA) or Wangaratta Rural City Council area, and have a minimum biodiversity score of 0.411, including 33 large trees.

Setbacks and Landscaping

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

Taking into consideration the findings of the Landscape Visual Impact Assessment, Flora and Fauna report and Bushfires mitigation measures the following landscape treatments are proposed:

PV array site

- Implementation of 5 metre wide vegetative screening around the perimeter of the site to mitigate the risk of visual impact from the solar farm.
- 10 metre-wide firebreaks and permitter access roads between the array and screening buffers.
- Screening vegetation will be primarily a mix of medium to large shrubs with a small percentage of medium to large trees reflecting the existing landscape character.
- The screening vegetation to be positioned in front, (outward facing), of the proposed 2.2-metre-tall wire mesh security fence.
- No screening in front (outward facing) of Sheep Station Creek area or the stand of trees on the banks of the dam at the end of the unnamed waterway in the north-west corner.

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  - Implement a partial vegetative screen along the west boundary using stands of scattered trees to reflect the existing landscape character and views.

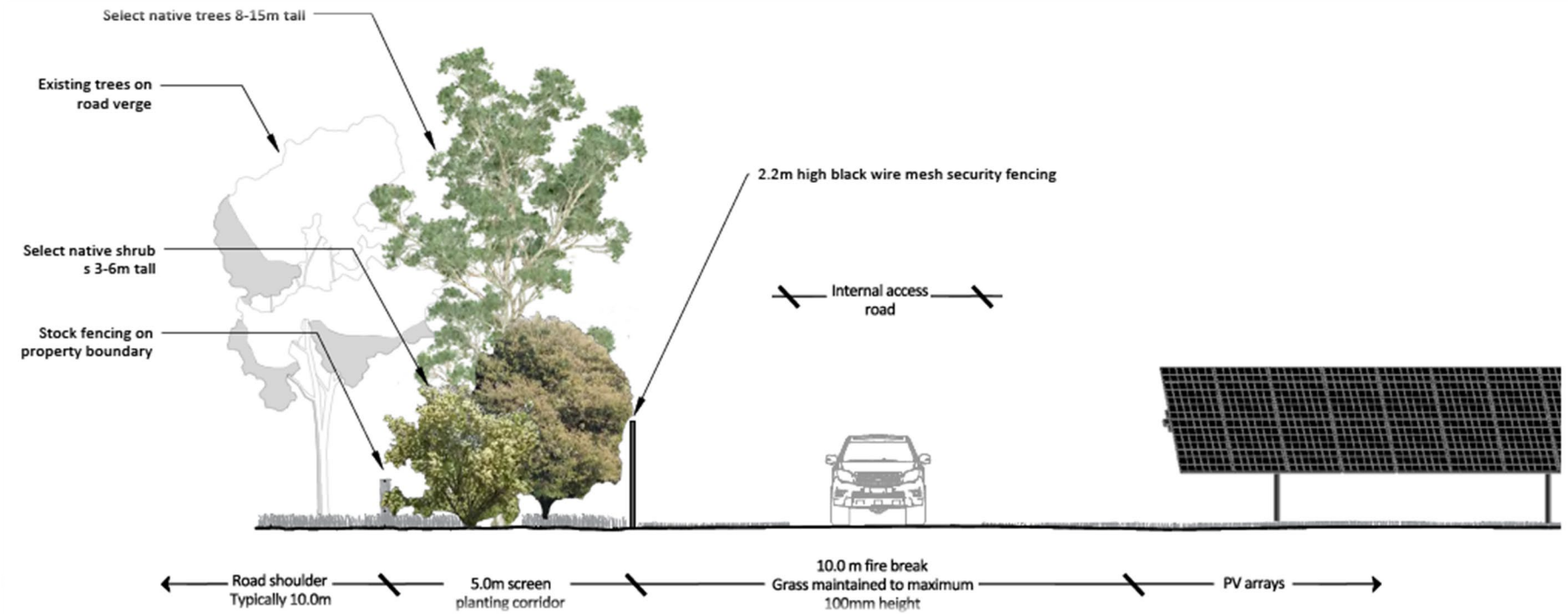

Figure 11: Proposed Landscape Buffer

Source: Horizon Studio

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- **Terminal Substation site**
  - Screening will consist of a 5-metre-wide vegetative screen along the eastern property boundary using a mix of medium to large shrubs with a small percentage of medium to large trees reflecting the existing landscape character.
  - Further, a vegetative screen will be included along the north property boundary and within the transmission line easement using only small to medium shrubs with a maximum height of 3 metres.

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4. WANGARATTA PLANNING SCHEME

A summary of the key controls and policies is provided below.

4.1. ZONE

4.1.1. Farming Zone

- The site is located in the Farming Zone (Clause 35.07), the relevant purposes of which are:
- To provide for the use of land for agriculture.
- To encourage the retention of productive agricultural land.
- To ensure that non-agricultural uses, including dwellings, do not adversely affect the use of land for agriculture.
- To encourage the retention of employment and population to support rural communities.
- To encourage use and development of land based on comprehensive and sustainable land management practices and infrastructure provision.
- To provide for the use and development of land for the specific purposes identified in a schedule to this zone.

CONTROLS/PROVISIONS	PERMISSIONS
Farming Zone	– 35.07-1: To use land for a Renewable Energy Facility and a Utility Installation. – 35.07-4: To construct a building and carry out works for a use in Section 2. – A permit is also required for earthworks which change the rate of flow of water across a property boundary

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4.2. OVERLAYS

4.2.1. Floodway Overlay

The transmission line will traverse the Floodway Overlay (FO).

The floodway overlay highlights areas in the floodplain which are important for the conveyance of flood flows. Development which significantly impacts areas within this overlay are likely to re-distribute flows and create changes in flood level and extent and create potential flood impacts to adjacent landholders.

Pursuant to Clause 44.03-2 permit is required to construct a building or to construct or carry out works under the FO.

4.2.2. Land Subject to Inundation Overlay

The transmission line will cross the Land Subject to Inundation Overlay (LSIO).

The LSIO overlay highlights areas in the floodplain which are within the floodplain but characterised as flood storage areas which are less critical for flood conveyance. Infrastructure located in these areas should aim to minimise changes in the landform to ensure food storage is not impacted. Development in this area is less likely to impact peak flood levels and extent unless the changes to the landform are significant.

Pursuant to Clause 44.04-2 permit is required to construct a building or to construct or carry out works under the LSIO

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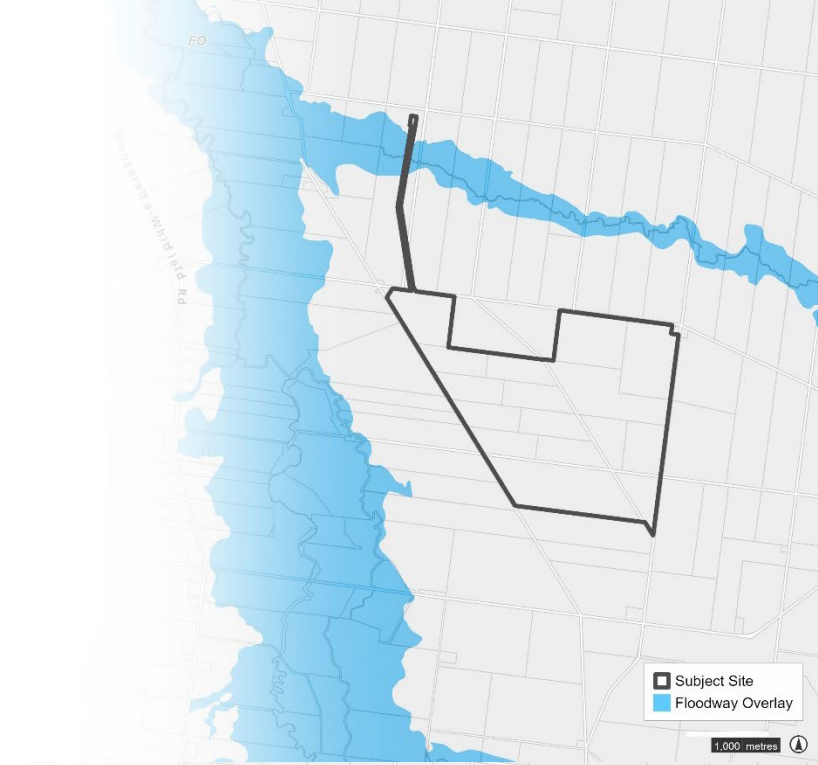

4.2.3. Vegetation Protection Overlay (Schedule 2)

Much of the vegetation on the roadsides surrounding the solar farm is covered by a Vegetation Protection Overlay – Schedule 2 (VPO).

Vegetation removal within areas protected by the VPO2 is restricted to access roads crossing from the solar farm site into the surrounding roads, and for the transmission line easement

Pursuant to the VP02, a permit is required to remove, destroy or lop native vegetation within land designated in this overlay.

4.2.4. Bushfire prone land

The subject site is partly located within the Bushfire Management Overlay, the relevant purposes of which are:

- To ensure that the development of land prioritises the protection of human life and strengthens community resilience to bushfire.
- To identify areas where the bushfire hazard warrants bushfire protection measures to be implemented.
- To ensure development is only permitted where the risk to life and property from bushfire can be reduced to an acceptable level.

We note the proposed works are sited outside the BMO. If the BMO only applies to part of a lot, a development that is sited outside the BMO does not require planning permission (Planning Permit Applications Bushfire Management Overlay Technical Guide, 2017. Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning).

Furthermore, pursuant to Clause 44.06-1, the proposed buildings would not require a permit under the BMO.

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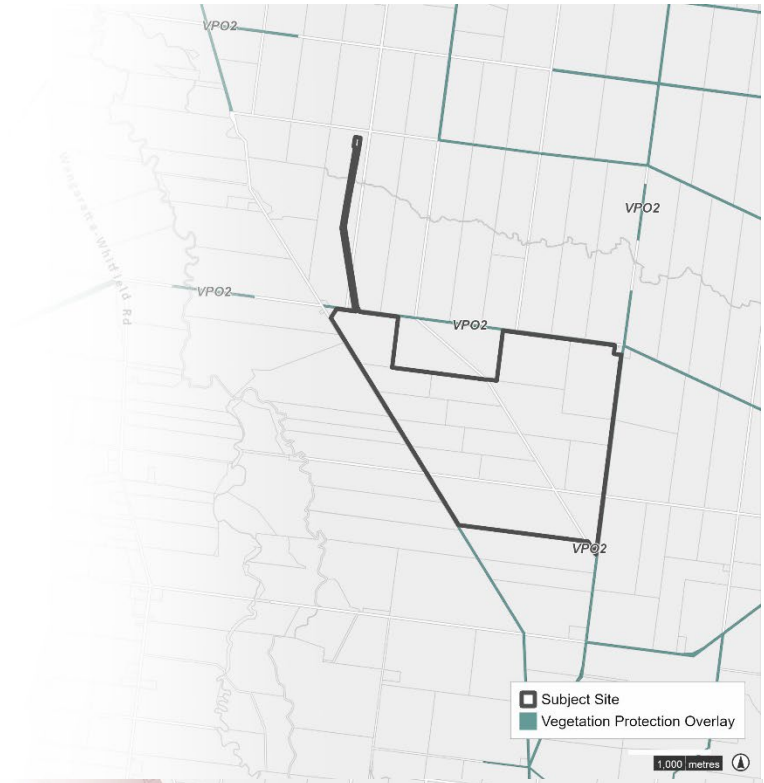

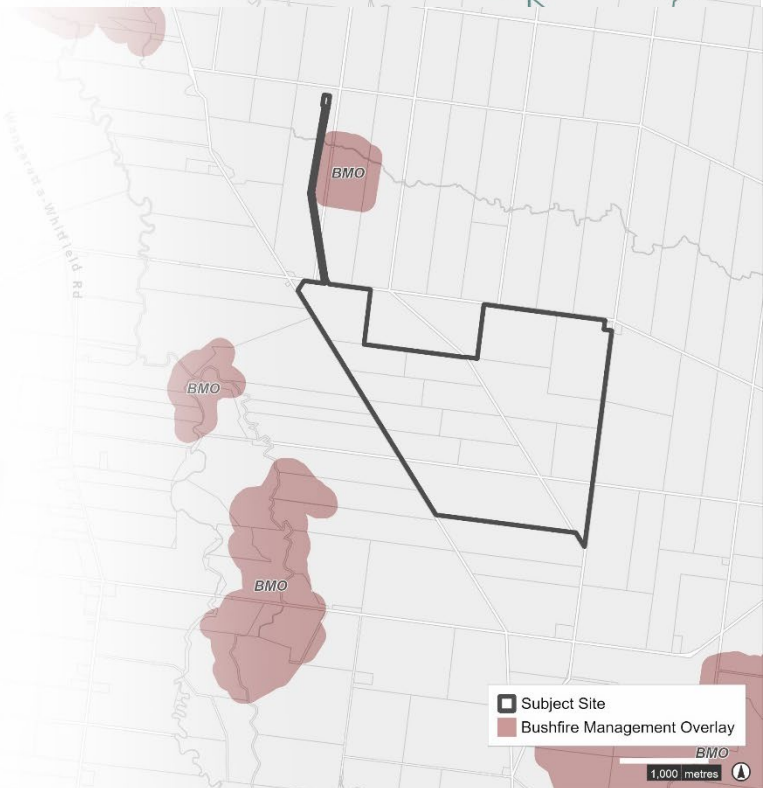

4.3. LAND MANAGEMENT

4.3.1. Bushfire Prone Area

The site is located in a designated bushfire prone area. Special bushfire construction requirements apply to the part of the property mapped as a designated bushfire prone area (BPA). Planning provisions may apply.

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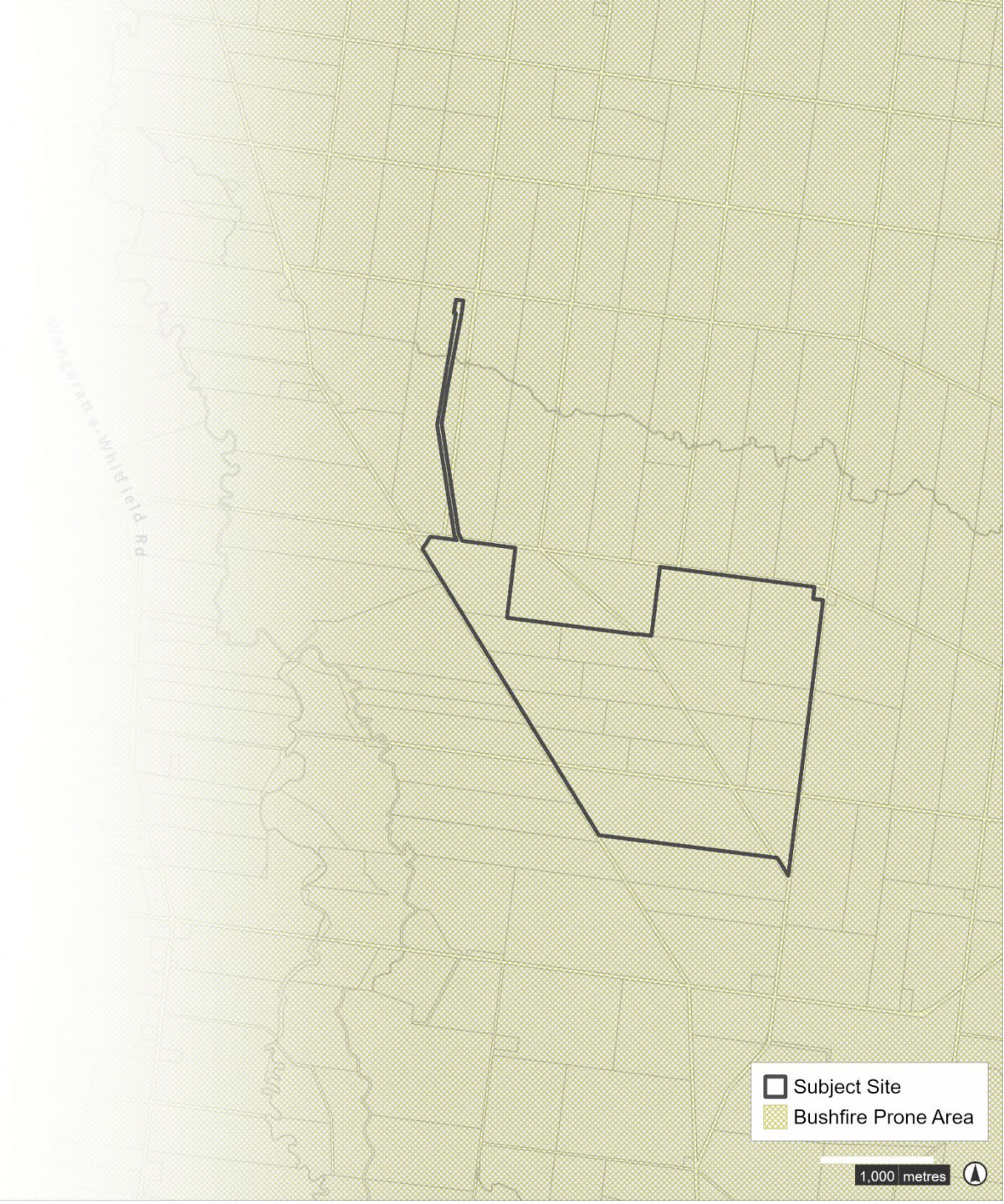

4.3.2. Area of Cultural Heritage Sensitivity

The site includes areas of Cultural Heritage Sensitivity in the southwestern corner.

Areas of cultural heritage sensitivity' are defined under the Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2018, and include registered Aboriginal cultural heritage places and landform types that are generally regarded as more likely to contain Aboriginal cultural heritage.

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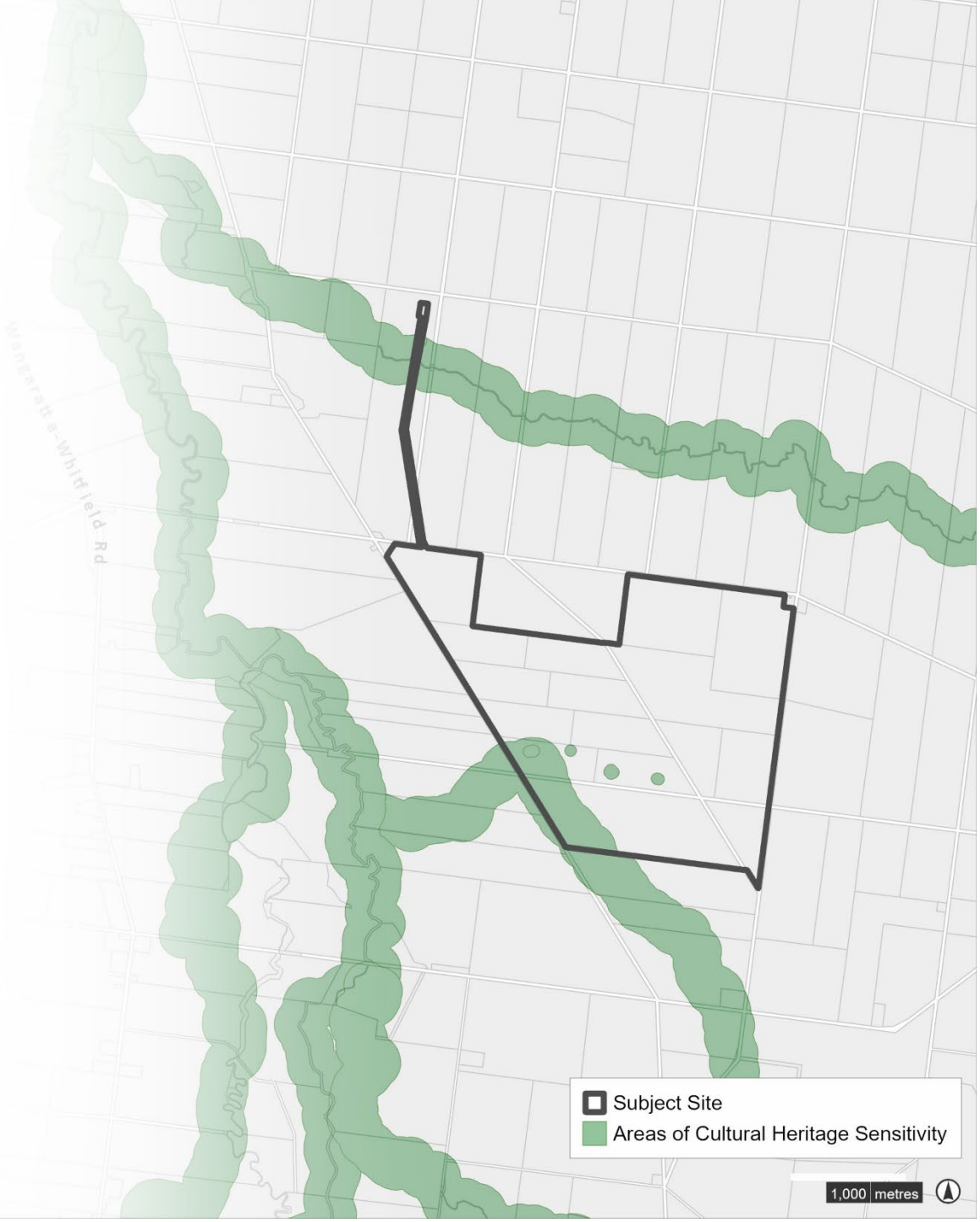

4.4. GENERAL AND PARTICULAR PROVISIONS

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

- Clause 52.17 – Native vegetation
- Clause 53.22 – Significant Economic Development

4.5. MUNICIPAL PLANNING STRATEGY

- **Clause 02.03-2 – Environmental and landscape values** set out strategic directions, in particular relating to the protection of native vegetation.
- **Clause 02.03-3 – Environmental risks and amenity** recognise risks to development from natural hazards, including bushfire.
- **Clause 02.03-4 – Natural resource management** seeks to protect Wangaratta's agricultural productivity, as well as the resources upon which agricultural industries rely.
- **Clause 02.03-5 – Built form and Heritage** acknowledges natural and built heritage of the municipality has scientific, aesthetic, architectural, cultural, historical and social significance. Heritage places include buildings, sites, trees and aboriginal cultural sites.
- **Clause 02.03-7 – Economic development** recognises agriculture as the Wangaratta's primary industry, and to protect agricultural land from non-productive use and development. Use and development should not prejudice agricultural industries or the productive capacity of the land.
- **Clause 02.04 – Strategic framework plan** incorporates a framework plan to be read in conjunction with strategic directions at Clause 02.03 (refer Figure 8).

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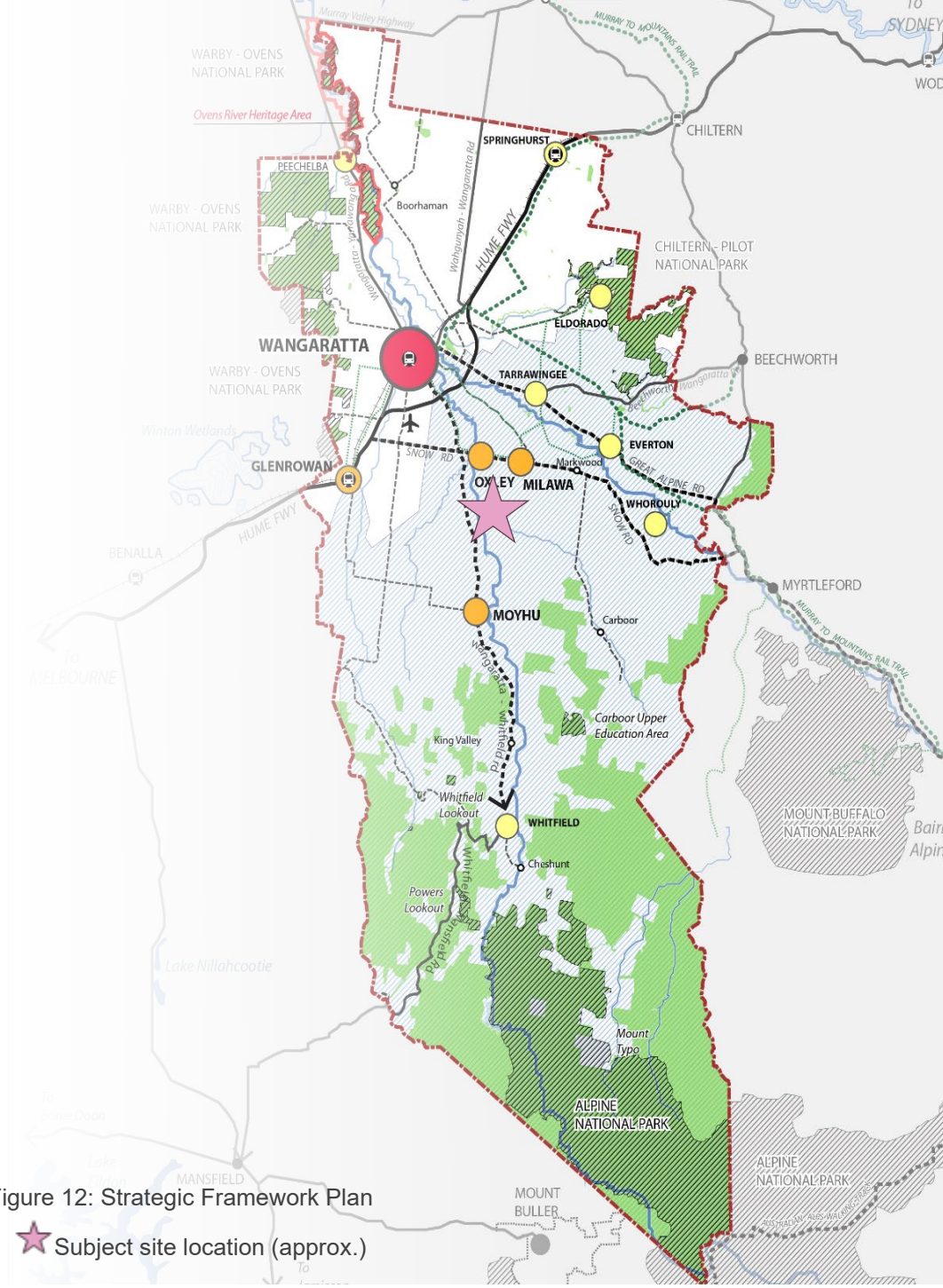

Figure 12: Strategic Framework Plan

★ Subject site location (approx.)

4.6. PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK (PPF)

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

- Clause 11.02-1S – Supply of urban land
- Clause 11.02-2S – Structure planning
- Clause 12.01-1S – Protection of biodiversity
- Clause 12.01-2S – Native vegetation management
- Clause 12.05-2S – Landscapes
- Clause 13.01-1S – Natural hazards and climate change
- Clause 13.02-1S – Bushfire planning
- Clause 13.05-1S – Noise management
- Clause 13.07-1S – Land Use Compatibility
- Clause 14.01-1S – Protection of agricultural land
- Clause 14.01-2S – Sustainable agricultural land use
- Clause 15.03-2S – Aboriginal cultural heritage
- Clause 17.01-1S – Diversified economy
- Clause 19.01-1S – Energy supply
- Clause 19.01-2S – Renewable energy

4.7. LOCAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

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

- Clause 12.01-1L – Protection of biodiversity
- Clause 12.01-2L – Native Vegetation Management
- Clause 12.03-1L – River Corridors, Waterways, Lakes and Wetlands
- Clause 12.05-2L - Landscapes
- Clause 13.02-1L – Bushfire Planning
- Clause 13.03-1L – Floodplain Management
- Clause 14.01-2L – Sustainable Agricultural Land Use
- Clause 14.02-2L – Water Quality
- Clause 15.01-1L-02 – Wangaratta Gateways
- Clause 17.01-1L – Diversified economy
- Clause 19.01-2L – Renewable Energy

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4.8. POLICY INTENT

Broadly speaking, these Clauses aim to:

- Ensure that adequate land is available for energy generation, infrastructure and industry and that renewable energy is encouraged within new development (**Clause 11.02-1S, 11.02-2S**).
- Protect biodiversity, and to avoid the removal of native vegetation (**Clause 12.01-1S, 12.01-2S, 12.01-1L**). Development should not detract from the natural qualities of the landscape (**Clause 12.01-1L Clause 12.05-2S & Clause 12.01-2L**).
- Ensure that development responds to climate change (**Clause 13.01-1S**), including the increased risk of natural hazards, and in particular bushfire (**Clause 13.02-1S & Clause 13.02-1L**). The protection of human life is to be prioritised above all other considerations.
- Protect productive agricultural land for agricultural uses (**Clause 14.01-1S, 14.01-1L**), recognising agriculture as Wangaratta's key industry.
- Protect places of aboriginal cultural heritage significance (**Clause 15.03-2S**).
- Ensure the appropriate management and design regarding floodplains as per (**Clause 14.02-2L**)
- Support development in a range of sectors, including the diversification of rural economies (**Clause 17.01-1S, 17.01-1R, Clause 17.01-1L**).
- Encourage the development of energy generation and supply infrastructure that meets community needs, and demand for energy services, while transitioning to a low carbon economy. Energy infrastructure projects should take advantage of existing resources and infrastructure networks and contribute to the diversity of local economies (**Clause 19.01-1S & Clause 19.01-2L**).

  Renewable energy should be developed in appropriate locations, and consider the broader benefits of such development, while minimising its impact on the local environment (**Clause 19.01-2S**). Within the Goulburn Valley region, the planning scheme should plan for and sustainably manage the cumulative impacts of alternative energy development (**Clause 19.01-2R & Clause 19.01-2L**).

4.9. SUMMARY OF PLANNING CONTROLS

CONTROLS/PROVISIONS	PERMISSIONS
Farming Zone (FZ)	– 35.07-1: To use land for a Renewable Energy Facility and a Utility Installation. – 35.07-4: To construct a building and carry out works for a use in Section 2. – A permit is also required for earthworks which change the rate of flow of water across a property boundary.
Clause 44.03 Floodway Overlay	– To construct a building or to construct or carry out works
Clause 44.04 Land Subject to Inundation Overlay	– To construct a building or to construct or carry out works
Clause 42.02-2 Vegetation Protection Overlay – Schedule 2.	– To remove, destroy or lop native vegetation
Clause 52.17 'Native Vegetation'	– 52.17-1: To remove, destroy or lop native vegetation.
Bushfire Prone Area	– The entire property impacted by bushfire prone land.
Area of Cultural Heritage	– Part of this property is an 'area of cultural heritage sensitivity'.

4.9.1. Clause 53.22 'Significant Economic Development'

On 4 April 2024 amendment VC261 was gazetted into the Wangaratta Planning Scheme. This amended Clause 53.22 to introduce additional land uses to Table 2 of Clause 53.22-1, being:

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

As the proposal is for a renewable energy facility and for a utility installation with an installed capacity of greater than1 megawatt respectively, the proposal qualifies for assessment under this Clause.

We further note that:

- No referral is required to be submitted to the Impact Assessment team within the Victorian Department of Transport and Planning to determine if an Environmental Effects Statement is required for the proposal.
- No referral is required under the EPBC Act to the Commonwealth DCCEEW.

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

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

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4.10. RELEVANT LEGISLATION

The following legislation, guidelines and policies are applicable to the proposed Meadow Creek Solar Farm:

Commonwealth Legislation

- Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999

- **State Legislation**
  - Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 and Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2018
  - *Climate Change Act 2017*
  - *Environmental Effects Act 1978*
  - *Environmental Protection Act 2017 – Environmental Reference Standards*
  - *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*
  - *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and *Wangaratta Planning Scheme*
- **Guidelines and Policies**
  - Victoria's Guidelines for the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation (DELWP, 2017)
  - Solar Energy Facilities – Design and Development Guidelines (DTP, 2022)
  - Design Guidelines and Model Requirements – Renewable Energy Facilities v4 (CFA, August 2023)
  - Renewable Energy Amendment Bill 2019 (Vic) – VRET 2030 Target: Renewable Energy Targets for generation of 40 per cent by 2025 and 50 per cent by 2030.
  - Victorian Climate Change Strategy – Reduce state's emissions from 2005 emission levels by 28-33% by 2025.

- **Other Relevant Strategies & Policies:**
  - Energy Reduction Plan 2016 ▪ RCOW Climate Change & Peak Oil Risk Assessment & Adaptation Planning 2013
  - Hume Regional Climate Change Adaptation Plan ▪ The Local Power Plan 2020

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5. COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

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

Nation Partners were engaged to prepare an engagement strategy in line with DTP's *Solar Energy Facilities, Design and Development Guidelines* and to conduct a comprehensive engagement programme based on this strategy. The approach also aligns with the framework set out in the *Community Engagement and Benefit Sharing in Renewable Energy Development in Victoria Guidelines*.

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

An Engagement Outcomes Report has been prepared by Nation Partners and is included within **Appendix L** of this report**.** Accompanying the outcomes report is a Covering Letter prepared by Urbis, attached at **Appendix M**

5.1. TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT

This below engagement strategy has been undertaken by Nation Partners to identify the key stakeholder feedback for the proposed Meadow Creek Solar Farm. Different methods of engagement are applied to different stakeholders and at different stages of the project.

LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT	STEPS INVOLVED
Inform	Provide balanced and objective information to assist stakeholders in understanding all aspects of the project
Consult	Obtain feedback and input on the proposal by providing information to assist in understanding the proposal's potential impacts and benefits.
Involve	Work with community groups throughout the planning process to ensure concerns and aspirations are understood and considered.
Collaborate	Partner with stakeholders on elements of planning, developing and decision making where applicable

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5.2. STAKEHOLDERS

The table below outlines the key stakeholders involved during the engagement process and summarises the purpose of engagement activities.

STAKEHOLDER GROUP	LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT	ENGAGEMENT TOOLS
Local MPs ▪ Member for Indi ▪ Member for Ovens Valley	**Consult:** obtain feedback and input on the proposal by providing information to assist in understanding the proposal's potential impacts and benefits.	▪ Letter ▪ Online meeting
Local Council: ▪ Wangaratta City Council	**Involve:** Work with throughout the planning process to ensure concerns and aspirations are understood and considered.	▪ Letter ▪ Online meetings ▪ Councillor briefings ▪ Direct emails
Relevant agencies: ▪ Department of Transport and Planning – Hume Region ▪ Country Fire Authority ▪ North East Catchment Management Authority ▪ Department of Transport	**Involve:** Work with throughout the planning process to ensure concerns and aspirations are understood and considered.	▪ Online meetings ▪ Direct emails ▪
Landowners and users	**Involve:** Work with community throughout the planning process to	▪ Online meetings ▪ Site visits and investigations
▪ Taungurung Land and Waters Council	ensure concerns and aspirations are understood and considered.	▪ Direct emails
Community ▪ Surrounding neighbours ▪ Community Groups: Meadow Creek Agricultural Action Group ▪ Community of Moyhu, Milawa, Bobinawarrah, Docker	**Inform:** Provide balanced and objective information to assist stakeholders in understanding all aspects of the project. **Consult:** Obtain feedback and input on the proposal by providing information to assist in understanding the proposal's potential impacts and benefits.	▪ Face to face meetings ▪ Direct emails ▪ Phone calls ▪ Community newsletter ▪ Community drop-in information session ▪ E-news updates ▪ Project website
Community and recreational groups ▪ Carboor - Bobinawarrah Landcare Group ▪ Moyhu Recreational Reserve	**Consult**: Obtain feedback and input on the proposal by providing information to assist in understanding the proposals potential impacts and benefits.	▪ Direct emails ▪ Phone calls ▪ Face to face meetings ▪ Community newsletter ▪ Community drop-in information session ▪ Project website

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5.3. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Meadow Creek Solar Farm (MCSF) continues to be committed to comprehensive and meaningful engagement with stakeholders. Engagement has been undertaken prior to lodgement of the planning permit application to provide transparency and to act upon community feedback. Meadow Creek Solar Farm aims to address all community concerns in a timely manner.

Engagement has been underpinned by Nation Partners in the following principle areas:

1. Engage early and often
2. Genuine engagement
3. Local focus

The key engagement tools employed by the project team included the following:

- **Project webpage,** found at www.meadowcreeksolarfarm.com.au was continuously updated to inform the community. The engagement team was also made available via email at info@meadowcreeksolarfarm.com.au.
- **Letters to neighbours** MCSF first reached out to residential neighbours in September 2022 via posted mail. The letter was sent to 22 dwellings (within approximately 3km of the site). It is noted that during the early stages of project development neighbours (within proximity of the site) and members of the community established the Meadow Creek Agriculture Community Action Group (MCACAG)

The project team met with the MCACAG 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.

Drop-in 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.

Webinar Additional to in-person drop-in sessions, an online presentation and Q&A provided an update to the local community on the final set of plans. The session was held on Thursday 22 August 2024.

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

- Bobinawarrah
- Milawa
- Moyhu
- Meadow Creek
- Docker

The engagement activities undertaken to date are only the beginning of the engagement process. Meadow Creek Solar Farm, in collaboration with Premier Strategy and the project team, are committed to an ongoing engagement process as the project progresses. These are detailed within the Community Engagement Outcomes Report included at **Appendix L**.

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6. STATUTORY ASSESSMENT

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

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

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

1 Renewable energy and climate response

2 Economic Impact Assessment

3 Social Impact Assessment

4 Agricultural Impacts

5 Biodiversity and vegetation removal

6 Bushfire

7 Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Sensitivity

8 Siting and Design

9 Traffic and Access

10 Visual Amenity Impacts

11 Noise Impacts

12 Geology, Soil, Water Quality and Hydrology

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THEME	APPLICABLE STATUTORY FRAMEWORK	STATUTORY REFERRAL / NOTICE	TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT
Renewable energy and climate response	▪ *Climate Change Act 2017* and associated strategies ▪ Wangaratta Shire Planning Scheme: 11.02, 13.01, 14.01, 17.01, 19.01, 19.01-2L	Not applicable	Not applicable
Biodiversity and vegetation removal	▪ *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC Act – Cth) 1999* ▪ *Environment Effects Act 1978* ▪ *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* ▪ *Victoria's Guidelines for the Removal, Destruction or Lopping of Native Vegetation, DELWP 2017* ▪ Wangaratta Shire Planning Scheme: Clause 12.01-2L	Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action (DEECA) – pursuant to Clause 52.17	Appendix K – Biodiversity Assessment, Biosis, including Sloane's Froglet Assessment
Bushfire	▪ *CFA Design Guidelines and Model Requirements for Renewable Energy Facilities v4* ▪ Bushfire Prone Area ▪ Wangaratta Shire Planning Scheme: ▪ Clause 02.03-3, Clause 13.02-2L, Clause 53.02	Notice to the Country Fire Authority	Appendix H & H1– Bushfire Risk Assessment,
Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Sensitivity	▪ *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* ▪ *Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2018* ▪ Wangaratta Shire Planning Scheme: Clause 02.03-5, 15.03-2S	CHMP to be provided in Consultation with Taungurung Land and Waters Council (Aboriginal Corporation) (TLaWC).	We note that the CHMP prepared by Biosis, in consultation with the TLaWC was approved 23 July 2024.
Siting and Design	▪ *Solar Energy Facilities Design and Development Guidelines, DELWP 2022* ▪ Wangaratta Shire Planning Scheme: Clause 53.13	Not applicable	Appendix B – Site Plan Appendix C – Elevations and Specifications Appendix D – Landscape Strategy

Traffic and Access	▪ Wangaratta Shire Planning Scheme: Clause 19	Not applicable	Appendix J – Transport Impact Assessment
Visual Amenity Impacts	▪ *Solar Energy Facilities Design and Development Guidelines, DELWP 2022* ▪ Wangaratta Shire Planning Scheme: Clause 12.05-2S, Clause 53.13	Not applicable.	Appendix D – Landscape Strategy, Appendix E – Visual Impact Assessment and Glare and Glint Assessment,
Agricultural Impacts	▪ Wangaratta Shire Planning Scheme: Farming Zone, Clause 02.03-4, 14.01	Not applicable.	Appendix F– Agricultural Assessment Appendix P – Farming Zone assessment
Acoustic Impacts	▪ *Solar Energy Facilities Design and Development Guidelines, DELWP 2022* ▪ Wangaratta Shire Planning Scheme: Clause 13.05	Not applicable	Appendix I – Acoustic Assessment
Geology, Soil, Water Quality and Hydrology	▪ Wangaratta Shire Planning Scheme: Clause 12.03-1L, 13.03-1S, 14.02-1S	Informal notice to the CMA	Appendix G – Hydrology Assessment
Environmental Management Plan Framework	▪ Wangaratta Planning Scheme Clause 53.13	Not applicable	Appendix – R – Site Environmental Management Framework

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6.1. RENEWABLE ENERGY AND CLIMATE RESPONSE

***Climate Change Act 2017* and climate response targets**

The *Climate Change Act 2017* (the *CC Act*) establishes a clear target of net zero carbon emissions by 2050, as well as a policy framework for Victoria to achieve this transition. The framework is consistent with the Paris Agreement to keep global temperature rise well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. It provides a platform for action by Government, community and businesses, and the long-term stability needed to support innovation and investment.

The Meadow Creek Solar Farm would play a significant role towards achieving the Victorian Renewable Energy Target (VRET) 2030 target of 95% of renewable energy electricity generation by 2035, the Victorian energy storage targets of 2.6GW by 2030, and the Victorian emissions reductions targets of 45-50% by 2030.

Outlining the project's capacity to assist in the clean energy transition and to combat global warming, Urbis' Net Zero team have prepared a brief overview of the positive impact the solar farm will have in relation to operational emissions reductions and renewable energy generation and storage.

- Reduction in stress on the electricity grid by up to 265,000 MWh
- Emissions reduction (in comparison to Victorian Grid equivalent of ca. 244,000 tCO2e p.a.
- The proposal will also make a significant contribution to achieving Victoria's renewable energy targets, as outlined in the table below:

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EMISSIONS	
Victoria	▪ Up to ca. 0.35% operational emissions reduction (based on 80,064,500 tCO2e 2021 electricity source emissions [1] ▪ Up to ca. 1% operational emissions reduction from electricity as energy source (based on 41,400,000 tCO2e 2021 electricity source emissions)
Renewable Energy Storage Targets	
Victoria	▪ up to ca. 11% of 2030 target of 2.6GW ▪ up to ca. 5% of 2035 target of 6.3GW

Assumptions

The above targets have been calculated utilising the below assumptions:

- 0.85 kg CO2e/kWh (Scope 2) & 0.06 kg CO2e/kWh (Scope 3)
  - Source: Australian National Greenhouse Accounts Factors, February 2023
  - Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, Australian Government
- 14% estimated system losses
  - Source: Photovoltaic Geographical Information System,
  - European Commission, https://re.jrc.ec.europa.eu/pvg_tools/en/tools.html
- Optimised slope (35° and azimuth 0°)
  - Source: Photovoltaic Geographical Information System,
  - European Commission, https://re.jrc.ec.europa.eu/pvg_tools/en/tools.html

Municipal Planning Strategy and Planning Policy Framework

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

Significant renewable energy development has already taken place within Wangaratta Shire and in surrounding regions due to the area's excellent access to wind and solar resources. This has been recognised through the declaration of the Renewable Energy Zones, providing clear direction for further growth in renewable energy within this region.

The Victorian Government continues to amend the Victoria Planning Provisions to ensure they provide up-to-date policy guidance for development of renewable energy facilities. However, the Wangaratta Planning Scheme provides minimal direction for solar energy facilities. The proposal has been designed in response to the broader directions and targets of policy reform for climate change response in Victoria, that may not yet be entirely reflected within the Victoria Planning Provisions.

Policy at Clause 11.02-1S seeks to ensure sufficient urban land is available for a wide range of uses to respond to the needs of existing and future communities. This includes the provision of *'an adequate supply of well-located land for energy generation, infrastructure and industry'*. As discussed previously, the site within proximity to the Ovens Murray & Central North Renewable Energy Zone, and therefore has excellent access to the appropriate enabling infrastructure, such as the high-voltage Glenrowan transmission line. The proposal clearly demonstrates the suitability of the location for such a development. Development of the site for a solar energy facility will contribute towards climate change adaptation and mitigation (Clause 11).

The development responds appropriately to State policy at Clause 19.01-1S and 19.01-2S which seeks '*development of energy generation, storage, transmission and distribution infrastructure'* which facilitates the *'transition to a low-carbon economy.'* This includes renewable energy facilities. Development of renewable energy facilities is encouraged in appropriate locations and where design and siting issues are appropriately resolved. Ultimately, the decision rests on consideration of *'the economic, social and environmental benefits to the broader community'* (Clause 19.01-2S) against potential adverse impacts.

At a local level, the proposal accords with Clause 19.01-2L – Renewable Energy which simply supports local energy production such as solar power and wind turbines. It is noted that at a Council level Wangaratta City Council forms part of the of the Goulburn Murray Climate Alliance (GMCA), Cities Power Partnership (CPP) and recently signed a CPP joint statement committing to economic recovery solutions that create jobs while tackling climate change.

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6.2. ECONOMIC IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Economic Positioning

A detailed discussion of the siting and design considerations for the proposal, the potential for adverse impacts, and the cumulative effects of renewable energy development within the Goulbourn Murray region (Clause 19.01-2R), is included within a later section of this report. The environmental benefits from the proposal have been clearly outlined in this section. Development of the site for solar generation will have significant economic benefits for the region. The facility is expected to create 1,017 jobs during the two year construction period, with 258 ongoing employees (direct and indirect), facilitating growth in a range of employment sectors and supporting the diversity of the rural economy of Greater Wangaratta (Clause 17.01-1S).

Urbis was engaged by the proponent to prepare a Social and Economic Impact Assessment to further inform potential positive and negative economic impacts associated with the proposed development. Crucially the report evaluates impacts on net employment, net value adds and key changes to social elements of value such as way of life, community, accessibility, culture, health and wellbeing, surroundings, livelihoods and decision-making systems.

Development Phase

During the development phase of the project, the following economic benefits are forecasted.

- Direct Jobs on site equating to **413 jobs** over the two-year construction phase.
- Indirect Jobs associated with fabrication, transportation and administrative roles equating to **604 jobs** over the two-year construction phase.
- The total Jobs created on site are expected to reach **1,017 jobs** over two years.

The below values represent the economic growth for the region and state. These are measured as direct and indirect value-added benefits and are shown below:

- Direct Value Added (generated from the direct expenditure incurred on the proposed development) **$106.4 million.**
- Indirect Value Added **$148.1 million.**
- Total Value Added = **$254.5 million**.

Operational Phase

indirect employment benefits are shown below:

- Direct Jobs = 63 jobs per annum
- Indirect Jobs = 195 jobs per annum
- Total Jobs = 258 per annum.

Once complete, the proposed development will generate ongoing additional value added via annual contributions to Gross State Product. This represents economic activity which would otherwise not have occurred.

- Direct Value Added = $27.6 million per annum
- Indirect Value Added = $55.0 million per annum
- Total Value Added = $82.6 million per annum.

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6.3. SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

A Social and Economic Impact Assessment (SEIA) is an independent and objective study which identifies and analyses the potential positive and negative social and economic impacts associated with a proposed development. The two components of a SEIA are a Social Impact Assessment (SIA) and an Economic Impact Assessment (EIA).

A consolidated list of measures to enhance positive social impacts and mitigate negative social impacts are identified throughout the SEIA and summarised in the table of Section 9 of the SEIA. Additional recommendations to further enhance positive impacts and mitigate negative impacts are also provided in Section 9 of the report.

The Report prepared by Urbis make the following recommendations

Communication

- Liaise with Rural City of Wangaratta to communicate proposal accommodation needs prior to construction so that local accommodation businesses can be notified in advance to allow capacity building.
- Communicate the Bushfire Emergency Management Plan and mitigation measures integrated into the proposal design during ongoing engagement with the local community to contribute to alleviating bushfire concerns.
- Communicate the outcomes of the LVIA and Landscape Strategy to the community and provide likely viewpoints to residents to demonstrate the anticipated visual impact and mitigation measures.
- Communicate the findings of the EIA and AA and mitigation measures integrated into the proposal's design during ongoing engagement with the local community to contribute to alleviating concerns about the potential loss of productive agricultural land.
- Review additional engagement activities occurring post-lodgement to inform any additional recommendations as needed.
- Design
- Explore permanently sealing Allans Lane in consultation with Rural City of Wangaratta. Council has observed that it already carries a significant amount of heavy traffic.

Construction management

- Develop and implement a construction workforce accommodation strategy prior to construction that assesses the housing and accommodation environment, identifies potential accommodation and rental market pressures in the local and regional area, and details plans to effectively accommodate the proposed workforce.
- Establish a local employment policy for construction which specifies a preferential hiring approach to prioritise employing workers with relevant skills from the local area, then the regional area, followed by hiring outside of these areas (where feasible and practical).
- In partnership with Rural City of Wangaratta, consider exploring the opportunity to utilise existing Council-owned land in the local area to construct housing to accommodate the proposal's construction workforce if additional workforce accommodation is required beyond the capacity of local rentals and visitor accommodation. This may include options such as provision of high-quality modular housing to accommodate the workforce during construction, or leveraging available housing funding (e.g. the Regional Housing Fund and the Housing Australia Future Fund) to provide housing which can then be retained for social, affordable housing or key worker housing for the community.
- Consider liaising with other significant concurrent projects in the area to understand their peak workforce requirements, and consider programming construction works for the proposal to align with reductions in workforce requirements for concurrent projects. For example, the ARTC Inland Rail works, which currently has a significant workforce in Wangaratta.
- Consider developing a local procurement plan during construction which includes measures to encourage the procurement of local construction companies.

- Explore programming constructions works to align with reductions in workforce requirements for concurrent projects to enhance potential availability of local workers which can support the proposal.
- Develop and implement an operational workforce accommodation strategy prior to construction that assesses the housing and accommodation environment, identifies potential accommodation and rental market pressures in the local and regional area, and details plans to effectively accommodate the proposal workforce.
- Establish a local employment policy for operation which specifies a preferential hiring approach to prioritise employing workers with relevant skills from the local area, then the regional area, followed by hiring outside of these areas (where feasible and practical).
- Following further consultation with the community, including First Nations Groups and Council, develop a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between relevant parties to detail the terms of agreement of the Community Benefits Fund.

Timing of Recommendations

We note that recommendations relating to communication with relevant stakeholders are to be implemented during the planning and building approval process. The recommendations above seek to ensure that engagement is carried out effectively throughout the approval process to maximise local social and economic outputs and ensure maximum engagement during the most sensitive points of the solar farm lifecycle.

All recommendations relating to construction and operation of the solar farm will be explored to be undertaken post approval once construction program is being mapped out.

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6.4. AGRICULTURAL LAND

Response to the Farming Zone

The Farming Zone seeks, among other matters, to ensure that non-agricultural uses do not adversely affect the continued use of land for agriculture. The Zone also seeks to preserve productive agricultural land for that purpose. A comprehensive assessment of the proposal against the requirements of the Farming Zone is included within **Appendix P** of this report.

An Agricultural Assessment has been prepared by RMCG which assesses several factors considered during the site selection and design process to ensure agricultural production is not unduly detrimentally affected. The report includes a detailed context analysis including a description of the site and surrounding area and examines the impact of the proposal on strategically important agricultural land.

As stated in RMCG's analysis, the subject land is neither highly productive nor highly versatile. It is not considered to be significant land or strategically important land from an agricultural perspective.

Agricultural Land Classification

Pursuant to the Solar Energy Facilities Design and Development Guideline (October 2022), Agricultural land may be high value and strategically important due to a combination of features such as high-quality soils, good rainfall, access to water, resilience to climate change, infrastructure investment and integration with industry. The agricultural assessment concludes that the site does not meet the above criteria. In particular, the soils are not high quality or niche soils, the rainfall is moderate and adequate to support a growing season of around 6 months, and there is no specific farm or public infrastructure within the project site which makes the land inherently productive or special from an agricultural perspective. Furthermore, the proposed use of the land will not have a detrimental effect to government or other agricultural activities in the area.

Moreover, the North East Catchment Management Authority categorises the subject region as 'low agricultural capability'. The present economic agricultural output from the site is considered to be economically insignificant at a regional and state level (less than 0.5% for regional and 0.003% for state level).

Nevertheless, the project proposes to continue farming practises via an Agri-solar component, which will allow for seasonal sheep grazing under the solar panel areas once construction is completed, therefore ensuring a continued and sustained agricultural practise on site.

At the end of the project's lifetime, the site will be decommissioned. Panels can be removed without any meaningful impact to the soil quality and the land can be returned to its original state. The use of the land for a solar energy facility will have no impact on the ongoing operation of neighbouring properties or the wider area for agricultural purposes. As such, it is considered that the proposed solar energy facility will not adversely affect the use of the land for agriculture, and that the impacts to productive agricultural land are not unreasonable.

Agri-solar Use / Solar Farm Grazing Approach

Sheep grazing on solar farms is the highest utilisation of agri-solar across Australia with 13 large-scale solar farms grazing sheep. The integration of sheep grazing, and solar energy allows the opportunity to maximise the productivity of rural land and has been beneficial to both the farmers and the renewable energy operators.

Benefits for farmers include:

- Diversity of income
- Higher quality pasture due to water running off solar panels
- Protection from predators
- Protection for sheep from weather events, like heat, hail, rain, wind
- High quality wool from less dust and higher quality feed

Benefits for solar farm operators include:

- Less weed and grass control required due to grazing
- Reduction in damage to solar panels from mowing equipment
- Avoiding the loss of agricultural land

- Reduction in fire risks
- Increased solar intake (cooler panels due to surrounding vegetation)

The adoption of the Agri-solar operation will mean the site will continue to contribute to the regional and state agricultural production.

Municipal Planning Strategy and Planning Policy Framework

The Municipal Planning Strategy and Planning Policy Framework of the Wangaratta Planning Scheme recognise the importance of agricultural activity to the Shire. The proposed development aligns with the directions included within the MPS and PPF as follows:

- The Wangaratta Planning Scheme identifies the site location as being within an area of Strategic agricultural land as outlined in the Hume Regional Growth Plan. But it is noted that the classifications are at a broad scale and do not consider specific characteristics down to a farm and paddock scale. As outlined in RMCG's report, the site has areas that are prone to waterlogging and require careful management during the wetter months. This reduces the sites versatility and lowers its suitability for cropping. These characteristics of the site would not make it strategic agricultural land.
- The planning scheme outlines that the strategic agricultural land should be protected and as there is an intention to introduce sheep grazing, the site will continue to be used for agriculture. The scheme also indicates support for compatible land uses in rural areas to help develop a more diverse regional economy which would be delivered with this project.
- The integration of sheep grazing and solar energy allows the continuation of farming practises on site, the maximisation of the productivity of rural land and has proved benefits to both farmers and renewable energy operators. The loss of total agricultural output of the site is considered insignificant at a regional and state level (0.12% regional and 0.0013 % of state agricultural production).
- The proposed development does not unreasonably impact the use of the site for agricultural purposes. The use of the site for a solar energy facility will not preclude the ongoing agricultural use of the site and is appropriate given the attributes outlined in previous sections of this report and having regard to the principles of integrated decision making (Clause 71.02-3, Clause 02.03-4, Clause 02.04).
- The proposal does not adversely impact the state's agricultural base as the farmland is not of particular significance and will not be permanently removed from productive use – both due to the ability to reinstate the agricultural use once the site is decommissioned, and for sheep grazing to continue site during operation (Clauses 14.01-12, 14.01-1S, 14.01-2L). The proposed use and development of the land for a solar energy facility will not unreasonably impact the ongoing productive use of neighbouring properties.
- The proposal incorporates an innovative agricultural model whereby sheep will continue to graze on the land beneath the solar panels, complementing the solar energy facility with ongoing agricultural productivity, and contributing to the safe management of vegetation on the site. The proposed use also assists in adaptation of the agricultural sector to the risks of climate change (Clause 14.01-2S & 14.01-2L).

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

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6.5. BIODIVERSITY AND VEGETATION REMOVAL

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

The *EPBC Act* protects Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES). Actions which have, will have or are likely to have a significant impact on an MNES must be referred to the Commonwealth DCCEEW. The referral determines if an action is a controlled action, or if no further assessment is required.

A comprehensive assessment of biodiversity values on the subject site has been undertaken by Biosis, who have concluded that significant impacts are considered unlikely, and therefore does not require approval under the EPBC Act. Notwithstanding, the proponent has referred the proposed action to the Australian Government Minister for the Environment (AGMftE) to gain legal certainty on whether the action will require further assessment and approval under the EPBC Act.

Individual and combined self-assessments against the Significant Impact Criteria detailed in the *Matters of National Environmental Significance: Significant Impact Guidelines* have been undertaken by Biosis for relevant threatened species where there is some risk of impact from the project. Please refer to the provided Flora and fauna assessment prepared by Biosis at Appendix K.

The *Environmental Effects Act 1978* requires that an Environment Effects Statement (EES) be prepared for activities which have or can have a significant effect on the environment, as determined by assessment against specified triggers. An EES is not required for the proposal for the following reasons:

- The project does not impact 10 hectares or more of native vegetation (2.181ha are impacted).
- The project does not propose clearing of an area of 'critical habitat' as declared under the *FFG Act*.
- No threatened flora was recorded or is considered likely to occur in the study area. For threatened fauna identified in the area, the potential for loss of a significant proportion of known remaining habitat or population of a threatened species within Victoria is unlikely.
- The project has no impacts on Ramsar Wetlands.
- The project will not impact the habitat of the Sloane's Froglet as the design does not directly impact on any major aquatic habitat areas. The proposal incorporates buffers to reduce risk of indirect impacts to key waterways and watercourses.

Please refer to the Biodiversity Assessment prepared by Biosis at Appendix K for further details.

Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988, Wildlife Act 1975* & *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994

The study area is on private land, does not contain any declared 'critical habitat' for the purposes of the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee (FFG) Act 1988* and the flora species are not being taken for the purpose of commercial sale. A protected flora permit is therefore not required for any works on private land.

No FFG Act listed threatened flora species were recorded within the study area. A small number of FFG Act listed fauna species (Sloane's Froglets) were recorded within the study area during targeted surveys. The population is unlikely to constitute a significant proportion of the known remaining population or habitat for the species. Impacts on other FFG listed fauna are considered low to negligible as higher quality and connected habitats likely to be occupied by these species will be retained, including large woodland patches, creek lines, riparian zones and groups of mature hollow-bearing trees.

Municipal Planning Strategy and Planning Policy Framework

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

- In accordance with Clause 02.03-2, the proposal leaves large areas of the site undeveloped, ensuring that most remnant native vegetation on site is protected in recognition of its ecological value. The proposal has been specifically designed to avoid sensitive areas on site that support ecological communities hosting native flora and fauna.
- The proposal responds to the important areas of biodiversity on site, providing significant buffers between these and the development area. The proposal will protect important areas of biodiversity for the long

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term by leaving these undeveloped. As much as possible, avoiding all linear corridors of remnant patch vegetation. Impacts to these areas are limited to crossing points where roads are required to connect the eastern and western areas of the site and for access to the site from surrounding public roads. (Clause 12.01-1S).

- As discussed below, the proposal ensures that there is no net loss to biodiversity through impacts to native vegetation, in accordance with the three-step approach (Clause 12.01-2S).

Vegetation Protection Overlay – Schedule 2

Much of the vegetation on the roadsides surrounding the solar farm is covered by a Vegetation Protection Overlay – Schedule 2 (VPO).

Vegetation removal within areas protected by the VPO2 is restricted to access roads crossing from the solar farm site into the surrounding roads, and for the transmission line easement (Figure 4 of the Biosis report). As much as possible, these areas have been placed within existing areas of disturbance (e.g. existing farm access gates) so that vegetation removal from within the road reserve has been minimised.

Roadside vegetation removal is required principally for emergency site access for in accordance with CFA Design Guidelines and Model Requirements for Renewable Energy Facilities. Specifically fire-fighting access tracks that do not exceed a combined width of 6 metres, which is exempt from requiring a permit under Clause 42.02-3 - Table of Exemptions. The only exception being where minimal removal is required for vegetation located within the transmission line easement.

Clause 52.17 and Guidelines for the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation (DELWP 2017)

Clause 52.17 of the Wangaratta Planning Scheme specifies that a planning permit is required to remove, destroy or lop native vegetation. Native vegetation removal is to be assessed in accordance with the *Guidelines* (DELWP 2017), which require proposals to follow the 'three-step approach' to designing proposals which impact native vegetation:

1. Avoid
2. Minimise
3. Offset

In accordance with the DEECA Assessor's Handbook (DELWP 2018), the following impact avoidance and minimisation steps taken in the design and development of the proposed layout include:

- As much as possible, locating infrastructure and services in previously disturbed vegetation and farmland with scattered trees. The non-treed areas of the site are grazed and have been subject to long term drainage and pasture improvement activities resulting in them supporting predominantly introduced vegetation with limited ecological values.
- Avoiding areas containing high densities of scattered paddock trees and woodland patch vegetation in the centre of the solar farm site.
- As much as possible, avoiding all linear corridors of remnant patch vegetation. Impacts to these areas are limited to crossing points where roads are required to connect the eastern and western areas of the site and for access to the site from surrounding public roads.
- Avoiding established revegetation along Sheep Station Creek and within shelter belts which appears to have been planted for waterway protection and habitat creation.
- Minimising tree removal in areas covered by the VPO2 on surrounding public roadsides through using existing farm access gates and openings in roadside vegetation.
- Providing buffers to Sheep Station Creek and other areas of higher quality potential Sloane's Froglet habitat.
- Establishing buffers around retained habitat zones, and tree protection zone buffers around retained scattered trees.
- Aligning the proposed transmission line to use gaps in roadside vegetation and openings along Hurdle Creek to minimise the need for extensive tree or riparian vegetation removal.
- Completing waterway/watercourse mapping, obtaining an official Waterway Determination and using flood modelling to assist in

designing the solar panel array to minimise impacts on wetland habitats and waterways.

- Incorporation of wildlife friendly fencing adjacent to woodland patches to minimise fauna entanglement and allow for fauna movement.

To ensure a gain to Victoria's biodiversity that is equivalent to the loss resulting from the proposed removal of native vegetation, compensatory offsets are required. The total offset required is 0.549 general habitat units. This must be located within the North East Catchment Management Authority (CMA) or Wangaratta Rural City Council area, and have a minimum biodiversity score of 0.411, including 33 large trees. Please refer to the Biodiversity Assessment prepared by Biosis at Appendix K for further details.

Throughout the project design, specific measures were taken to avoid and minimise biodiversity impacts on the site. The biodiversity values and constraints of the site were mapped and assessed early in the project design phase. This information was then used to guide project layout and design iterations from 2022 to 2024. The majority of infrastructure and services have been strategically located in previously disturbed areas, such as farmland with scattered trees, where non-treed areas have been subject to long-term drainage and pasture improvement activities, resulting in predominantly introduced vegetation with limited ecological value. Efforts were made to avoid areas with high densities of scattered paddock trees and woodland patch vegetation in the centre of the solar farm site, as well as linear corridors of remnant patch vegetation.

Furthermore, the project has avoided disturbing established revegetation along Sheep Station Creek and within shelter belts, which were likely planted for waterway protection and habitat creation. Tree removal has been minimised in areas covered by the VPO2 on surrounding public roadsides by utilising existing farm access gates and openings in roadside vegetation as much as possible. Out of the eight external access points, only four require minor native vegetation removal or lopping, while the others have been positioned to avoid native vegetation disturbance. Waterway and watercourse mapping was completed, an official Waterway Determination was obtained, and flood modelling was used to assist in designing the solar panel array to minimise impacts on wetland habitats and waterways. Wildlife-friendly fencing will be incorporated adjacent to woodland patches to prevent fauna entanglement and allow for fauna movement.

Buffers are provided around Sheep Station Creek and other high-quality potential Sloane's Froglet habitats within the solar array. Habitat improvement efforts for Sloane's Froglet are proposed as part of ongoing site management. Buffers and tree protection zones were also established around retained habitat zones and scattered trees.

In addition, the proposed transmission line was carefully aligned to minimise riparian vegetation removal, particularly by using gaps in roadside vegetation and openings along Hurdle Creek. Multiple transmission line options were explored since 2022, with the final preferred option designed to reduce impacts on the Hurdle Creek riparian corridor and roadside vegetation along Docker-Carboor Road.

Other Consideration

The **re-vegetation** of areas not covered by solar farm equipment was considered in the South-West and South-East of the site. A re-vegetation strategy for these areas were abandoned for the following reasons:

- Protection and preservation of Sloane's Froglet habitat character
- Continued sheep grazing practise in these areas
- Bushfire risk reduction. Following consultation with CFA it was advised that full loads on site should not be increased given close proximity to sensitive technical equipment.

Proposed **visual screening plant species** have been selected from a mix of local Ecological Vegetation Classes, taking into account the specific site conditions and suitability for planting and establishment. Non-invasive native species suited to soil type and local climatic conditions have been selected to provide a healthy mix of plant with effective screening character, that are suited to low-flammability requirements.

For more detail regarding biodiversity, please refer to the Biodiversity Assessment prepared by Biosis, included at **Appendix K**.

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6.6. BUSHFIRE

Planning Policy Framework, Bushfire Prone Area and Bushfire Management Overlay

While the proposal site is located partially within the Bushfire Management Overlay no works are sited within the overlay. Further, no planning permit is required under this overlay as the proposal is not for a use listed at Clause 44.06-2.

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

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

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

- The overall design is based on CFA Design Guidelines and Model Requirements for Renewable Energy Facilities
- The internal road network has been designed to accommodate a standard CFA fire truck. Passing bays are located at least every 200 metres. Roads provide extensive access to the BESS, substation, and panel areas.
- Water storage tanks are located at all site access points (including one (1) large 576,000L in close proximity to the BESS site and six (6) 45,000L tanks) for ease of access for firefighting water supply.
- A 5-metre-wide landscape buffer is proposed around the boundary of the site to screen the solar energy facility from view. This planting is not considered to be a fire risk due to its narrow width and location at least 20 metres from solar panels and other infrastructure.
- Preserved wild-life corridors will be appropriately managed for bushfire risk as recommended in the provided bushfire risk assessment.
- 10 metre perimeter fire breaks have been incorporated around the entire project site, wildlife corridors, the BESS site, the substation and terminal station to ensure appropriate separations from the solar panel extent.

CFA Design Guidelines and Model Requirements for Renewable Energy Facilities

The Bushfire Risk Assessment (**Appendix H**) and Fire Impact Assessment **(Appendix H1)** prepared by Ecology & Partners includes a comprehensive assessment against the requirements of the CFA Design Guidelines. This report confirms that the proposal will comply with the requirements, subject to implementation of appropriate risk management measures.

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6.7. ABORIGINAL CULTURAL HERITAGE

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

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

The Regulations require a mandatory CHMP if:

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

The proposed activity is a high impact activity under the following regulations:

- Regulation 46(1)(b)(xxx) - land used to generate electricity, including a wind energy facility.
- Regulation 46(1)(b)(xxvii)(A) – the works are a linear project that is the construction of an overhead power line with a length exceeding one kilometre or for which more than 10 power poles are erected.
- Regulation 46(1)(b)(xxvii)(D) – the works affect an area exceeding 25 square metres.

The Activity Area is in an area of cultural heritage sensitivity under the following regulations:

- Regulation 26 – a waterway or land within 200 metres of a waterway (Sheep Station Creek and Hurdle Creek).

Desktop, Standard and Complex Assessments were conducted by Biosis in preparation of a Mandatory Cultural Heritage Management Plan (Plan 19167)

The Desktop Assessment found that the area was low-lying with abundant water sources prone to periodic flooding. Disturbance from farming practices was deemed likely. The Desktop Assessment predicted artefact scatters and scarred trees would be present within the Activity Are, likely in the vicinity of Hurdle Creek, Sheep Station Creek and tributary waterways.

No Aboriginal material culture was located during the Standard Assessment; however, seven areas of moderate archaeological potential were recorded. Most notably of these was a 1.7 kilometre ridgeline running east to west, commencing at its western extent to the north of a bend in Sheep Station Creek.

The Complex Assessment consisted of 69 testing locations, including the original program and extent testing. Fifteen of the test trenches yielded a total of 100 Aboriginal lithic artefacts. 86 of which were recovered from the ridgeline north of Sheep Station Creek, demonstrating the usage of this area.

Areas with confirmed Aboriginal Cultural artefacts have been excised from the development footprint, in order to protect these sites from project related impacts.

Consultation with Taungurung Land and Waters Council (Aboriginal Corporation) (TLaWC) representatives have occurred. The **Taungurung Land and Waters Council has formally approved the Cultural Heritage Management Plan on 23 July 2024**.

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6.8. SITING AND DESIGN

The solar farm site has been chosen due to its proximity to electrical transmission infrastructure to maximise the efficiencies of energy transfer between the farm and the transmission lines. The farm is located approximately 2 km south of the proposed Docker 220kv Terminal Substation which will feed the energy produced into the Glenrowan Transmission Line. The proximity of the solar farm to the transmission lines ensures a more reliable and stable connection to the grid, reducing the likelihood of disruptions in energy supply.

The proposal has mitigated the impact of the site on the existing environment and public realm, by reducing the need for extensive new transmission infrastructure. In doing so, the environmental impact and disruption to the land caused by transmission lines is greatly reduced. The proposed line has been strategically selected to follow a path of least resistance, avoiding key landscapes. The proposed location of the farm has been strategically placed so that it mitigates any potential impact on the landscape. The integration of wildlife corridors and avoidance to vegetation removal where possible ensures that the siting of the solar farm has as little environmental impact as possible.

As noted below, the scale of the proposed Meadow Creek solar farm is reduced by fragmentation of the PV arrays as a consequence of the retention of significant stands of trees across the site, avoidance of waterways and the stands of trees that are along much of the surrounding roadway. Excepting the transmission towers the solar farm infrastructure including PV arrays, battery energy storage systems, fire management and access infrastructure site below the majority of tree canopy height and will not impact on the open character of the landscape.

The new transmission towers and substation proposed to be located at the connection with the existing transmission lines on the Whorouly - Bobinawarrah Road will impact the local character within the immediate vicinity out to approximately 250 metres. However as with the solar farm, the generally flat terrain and presence of scattered trees throughout this landscape limit visibility of this infrastructure from other landscape character types. The visual impact from the proposed solar farm will be primarily limited to the immediate neighbouring properties and adjacent roads due to the relatively flat terrain and scattered trees on and surrounding the proposed site. These aspects combine to restrict views to the immediate location of the viewer. The retention of existing stands of scattered trees and wind breaks along some fence lines contribute to fragmenting continuous views of the PV arrays. Additionally, the proposal has been sited and designed having regard to the key guidelines and design advice applicable to renewable energy facilities under the Wangaratta Shire Planning Scheme.

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

Clause 53.13 applies to applications to use or develop land for a renewable energy facility other than a wind energy facility. The clause outlines application requirements which must be provided with an application, and decision guidelines for consideration by the responsible authority.

In accordance with this Clause, an Environmental Management Plan Framework has been submitted with the application (**Appendix N**). This specifies measures to avoid and minimise environmental and amenity impacts during the operation of the facility; design measures and procedures to manage dust, odour, light spill, mud, flood, surface water quality and stormwater run-off; response measures for environmental incidents, including a program for recording and reporting; and organisational responsibilities. Given the early stage of the development, it is appropriate at this stage to submit a framework plan only, with the detail of the Environmental Management Plan to be confirmed as a condition on the planning permit (in accordance with the *Guidelines*).

Please refer to **Appendix O** for an outline of the proposal's response to the application requirements and decision guidelines of Clause 53.13 and to **Appendix N** for a copy of the Environmental Management Plan Framework.

This assessment finds that the proposal is an appropriate response to the requirements of Clause 53.13.

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

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

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

- Has been sited to minimise impacts to biodiversity including native vegetation, as demonstrated by the accompanying report prepared by Biosis.
- Is closely sited to the electricity grid.
- Has good access to main roads.
- Minimises landscape impacts, through the retention of biodiversity and not sited to dominate the landscape.
- Avoids strategically significant agricultural land within region.
- Is informed by extensive and ongoing consultation with the local community, as demonstrated by the accompanying Consultation documentation prepared by National Partners & Urbis.
- Suitably manages its bushfire risk, as demonstrated by the Bushfire Risk Assessment prepared by Ecology & Heritage Partners.
- Is appropriately set back and provides suitable landscape screening, as demonstrated by the Landscape Plan prepared by Urbis.
- Appropriately manages amenity impacts, including visual impact, glint and glare, traffic, and noise. Refer to the Landscape Visual Impact Assessment prepared by Horizon Studio for further information.
- Will be supported by appropriate management measures during construction and operation as demonstrated by the Environmental Management Plan prepared by Urbis.

Response to the Farming Zone

In accordance with the permit requirements of the Farming Zone, no solar panel is located within 50 metres of a road in the Transport Zone Schedule 2. The only infrastructure which encroaches within this setback are internal roadways and fencing, with landscaping also to be established within these setbacks. Otherwise, the proposal has been appropriately sited having regard to the design and siting requirements of the Farming Zone. Detailed discussion of visual impacts is included in a subsequent section of this report, which confirms that the siting and design of the facility are appropriate having regard to the character of the area.

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

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6.9. TRAFFIC AND ACCESS

A Transport Impact Assessment (TIA) has been prepared by Salt to assess the likely impacts to the road network arising from the proposed solar energy facility and BESS. The TIA assessed likely impacts during both construction and operation of the facility. It is noted that in the process of preparing this report, the project team has liaised with Wangaratta Rural City Council to determine the most appropriate haulage route for heavy vehicles.

Access to the site is proposed from several locations as indicated on the site plan:

- Primary access to the site will be afforded from two locations. These include the Oxley-Meadow Creek Road south of the intersection with Docker-Carboor Road, which provides access to the main farm area.
- Access to the terminal substation and transmission line will be provided from Whorouly-Bobinawarrah Road to the east of Oxley-Meadow Creek Road.

Construction

Materials will be transported from Melbourne to the site. Therefore, delivery vehicles will utilise the Hume Freeway to travel between Melbourne and Meadow Creek as this represents the shortest travel time and most direct route. The haulage routes for delivery vehicles, has been prepared in cooperation with Wangaratta Rural City Council.

The TIA and relevant swept path diagrams outline the likely vehicles that will be used to service the site and confirms that the vehicles will be able to appropriately access the site. It is noted by Salt that the largest vehicle required for material delivery will be a 26m low-loader truck, which will be used to deliver the transformers.

During the solar farm's peak construction, up to 350 workers might be present. Approximately 50 workers will be needed for the transmission line's construction. It is expected that 80% of these workers will commute via minibus shuttles, which can carry 14 passengers each.

The remaining will drive personal vehicles. This equates to a peak of 280 workers arriving by 20 shuttle buses. The remaining 70 will travel in private vehicles. In total, there will be up to 90 inbound worker vehicles/shuttle buses in the morning and 90 outbound in the evening.

A Traffic Management Plan will be prepared following planning approval. A dilapidation survey will ensure the current condition of the road network is assessed, and that any damage to infrastructure that arises can be appropriately remedied.

Operation

The amount of construction traffic is low in traffic engineering terms and will have minimal impact on the operation of the surrounding road network. Up to 100 truck movements per day (average of 9 per hour) are expected during peak construction activities.

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6.10. VISUAL AND OTHER AMENITY IMPACTS

Planning Policy Framework and *Solar Energy Facilities – Design and Development Guideline (DELWP, October 2022)*

A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment has been undertaken by Horizon Studios and is included at **Appendix E**. This includes an integrated Glare and Glint Assessment. Photo simulations**.**

In accordance with the relevant Decision Guidelines of Clause 53.13-3 (Renewable Energy Facility (Other than Wind Energy Facility), a key determining factor of a solar farm is the visual impact of the proposal.

Horizon Studios have prepared a map of the theoretical visibility of the solar farm within the surrounding areas to determine the effect of the proposal on the surrounding area in terms of noise, glint, light spill, vibration and electromagnetic interference. The relevant visual impact considerations have been tested against the proposal below:

Visual Impacts on Sensitive Receptors

The visual impact on the sensitive receptors illustrated in Figure 13 (nearby residences) will be moderate due to their relatively proximity and the frequency and duration of exposure to the view of this infrastructure.

The LVIA states that the visual impact from the proposed solar farm will be limited to the immediate neighbouring properties and adjacent roads. This is due to the relatively flat terrain and scattered trees on and surrounding the proposed site. The visual impact from the transmission towers is generally limited to the local Oxley-Meadow Creek Road and the Whorouly-Bobinawarrah Road areas.

The full assessment of impacts to sensitive receptors is contained within Section 7.4 of the Visual Impact Assessment Summary of **Appendix E.**

To reduce any visual impacts on sensitive receptors, the proposal includes a vegetation screening buffer around the entire perimeter of the site (see Figure 14).

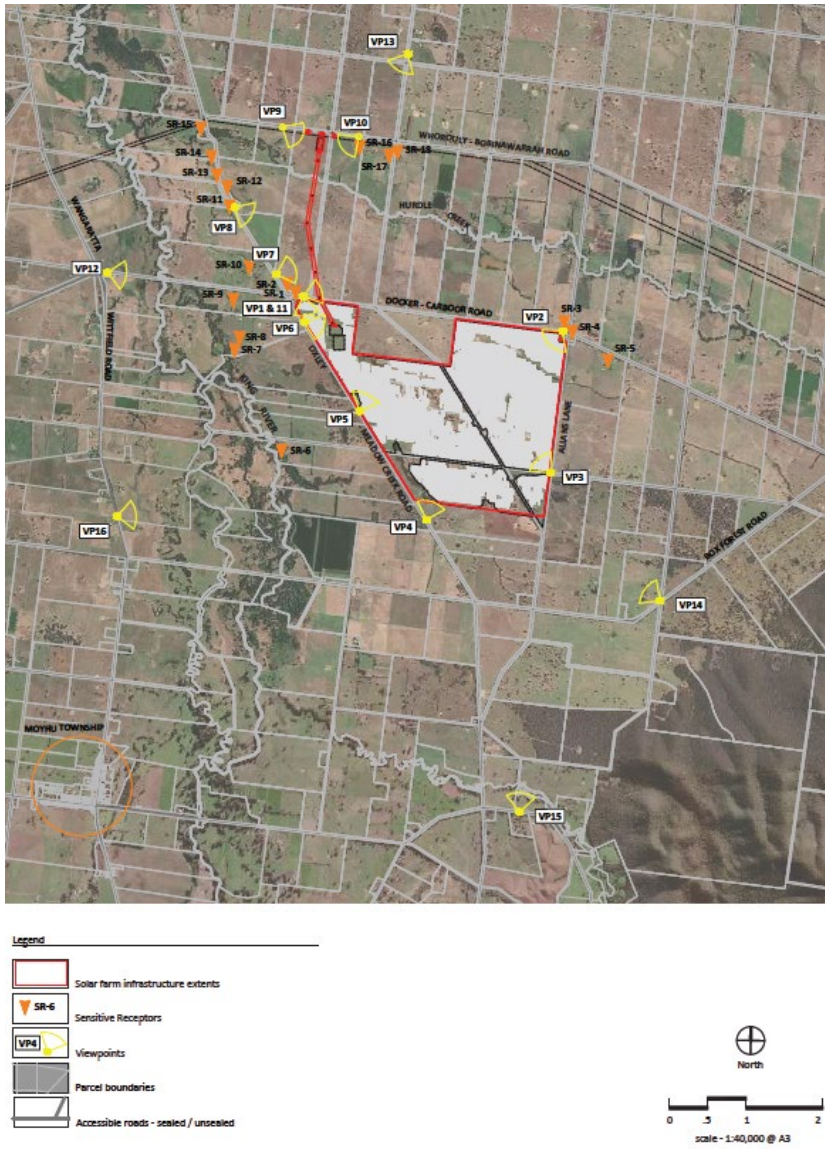

Figure 13: Sensitive Receptors Location

Source: Horizon Studio

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Landscape Character Impacts

The impacts on landscape character are limited to the Agricultural Plans, (LCT1) due to the relatively flat terrain and the scattered trees across this landscape that generally restrict long distance views. Horizon Studio concludes that the magnitude of change is only noticeable from the agricultural plains, whereby the landscape impact rating is 'Medium".

The impacted landscape character is a modified landscape, with grazing and pasture fields being the dominant characteristic. Native trees are also a noticeable feature of the site and along Road boundaries within the site. Scattered trees and vegetated corridors contribute to breaking up the open fields.

The solar energy facility will not detract from the natural qualities of the area, in accordance with Clauses 02.03-2 and 12.05-2S of the Wangaratta Planning Scheme.

To reduce any visual impacts on landscape characters, the proposal includes a vegetation screening buffer around the entire perimeter of the site (see Figure 14).

Glint and Glare Impacts

The proposal's reflectivity, glint and glare impacts have been assessed by Horizon Studio to support this application. The analysis indicates that only drivers using the Docker-Carboor Road may potentially be impacted by glare at times in the early evening during spring and summer.

While this is deemed an acceptable allowance of glare impact, the analysis does not consider potential obstructions between the glare source and the receptor such as vegetation or buildings. As there is substantial existing vegetation in and around the proposed PV array site, the results of the analysis are conservative and the actual glare impacts would likely be less than indicated in the results.

During the establishment of vegetation, it is proposed to install temporary screening within the northern portion of the site. The temporary screen will be erected for as long as it takes for the planted species along this interface to mature. This temporary response will reduce the impact of glint and glare into such time as the mature vegetation actively screens the proposal. For further details, please refer to the Landscape Strategy by Urbis.

Figure 14 Proposed view looking northeast at the site, without a vegetation screening buffer (image on top) and with a vegetation screening buffer (image below). *Source: Horizon Studio*

Source: Horizon Studios

The analysis also indicates that none of the residential receptors or receptors on the other roads adjacent to the proposed site will potentially be impacted by glare from the PV modules.

Lighting Impacts

The proposal is within environmental zone A2. The proposal will not generate an increased lighting impact given there is no requirement for operational lighting. Therefore, lighting impacts are low and will comply with the Australian Standard for the C*ontrol of Obtrusive Effects of Outdoor Lighting (1997)*

6.11. NOISE IMPACTS

Planning Policy Framework and EPA protocol 1826.4

The proposal has been designed to mitigate any potential for noise arising from its operations in accordance with Clause 13.05-1S of the Wangaratta Planning Scheme. Development will not be prejudiced, and community amenity and human health will not be adversely impacted by noise emissions from the proposal.

Solar energy facilities are largely silent during operation – however, ancillary systems such as inverters and BESS units do create noise. Marshall Day Acoustics have prepared a Noise Impact Assessment summarising the operational noise modelling undertaken to assess potential noise impacts from the proposed. The report concludes that noise from the operational solar facility will comply with the requirements of EPA Publication 1826, ensuring the following risks have been mitigated as following:

- Operation of solar farm limited to the day and evening periods only. It is recommended that no operation between 2200 hrs – 0700 hrs be allowed on any day.
- Maintenance activities to occur only during the day period,
- Testing and maintenance of emergency systems to occur only during the day period.
- All inverters for the subject site are to incorporate silencers that reduce operational noise levels to an overall maximum sound power level of 83 DB.
- Inverters must be located a minimum of 500 m from receivers in the site north-west, as shown on the submitted site plans.
- Solar tracker motors must be located at the southern end of solar panel strings, and/or as far as practicable from noise-sensitive receivers.
- Battery units must be oriented with openings/louvres facing away from receivers. Alternatively, noise barriers of nominal 4-6 m height be implemented to mitigate noise and comply with EPA requirements.

Predicted noise levels associated with the operation of the Project during the day, evening and night period have been demonstrated to comply with the applicable noise limits, provided all the noise controls above are implemented during operation. The proposed solar farm has incorporated above recommendations.

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

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6.12. GEOLOGY, SOIL, WATER QUALITY AND HYDROLOGY

Planning Policy Framework and hydrological assessment

In accordance with Clause 14.02-1S, the proposal has sought to protect natural drainage corridors located within and proximate to the site. This is achieved through the provision of buffer areas where existing natural conditions will be retained.

The proposal has also been designed to ensure that it responds appropriately to the considerations of Clause 13.03-1S 'Floodplain management'. Hydrological and risk assessment modelling undertaken by Alluvium indicates that in general, flows across the site are concentrated downhill. The nature of the catchment has resulted in relatively shallow flood depths across the site. The slope of the terrain and small upstream catchment area has resulted in small, localised flow paths dominating the conveyance across the site.

Existing conditions flood modelling was undertaken by Alluvium for a range of *Annual Exceedance Probability* (AEP) events including 5%, 1%, and 0.5% AEP. This provided guidance on the planning of internal infrastructure for the entire study site and facilitated the assessment of any external impacts which may occur due to the site development.

The proposed permanent structures sit outside of any main flow paths and do not create significant flood impacts. The vegetation buffer and access road network run parallel to the western flow path and cause very small and localised increases in flood level within the site boundary in a 1% AEP flood event.

Overall, the site is deemed to reflect an appropriate built form outcome regarding a risk of flooding on site. It is deemed that if site facilities are set at a minimum of 300mm above the 1% AEP flood level, then risk will be satisfactorily mitigated.

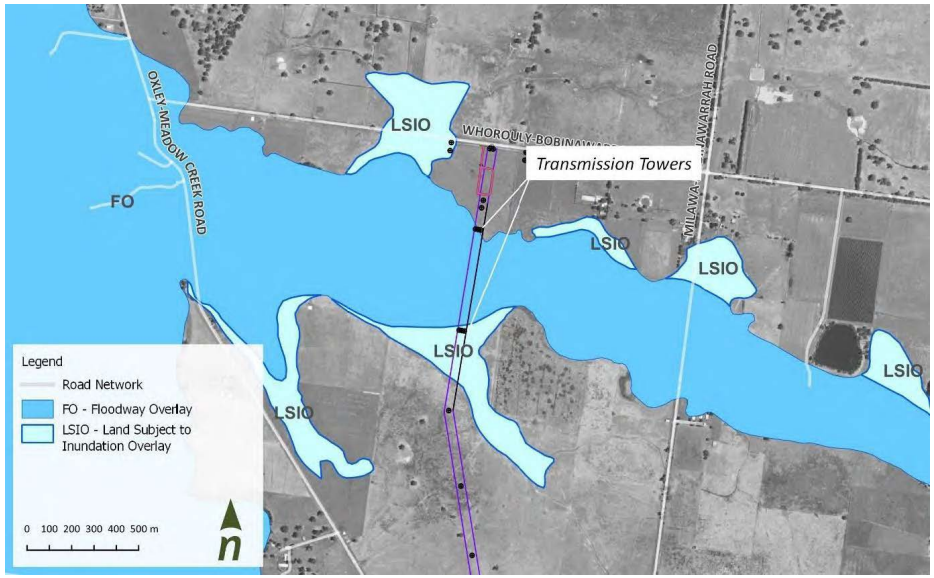
The proposed solar farm has incorporated above recommendations.

Within the current proposed design, two transmission towers sit within the LSIO or FO extents as shown in the figure below. The tower on the southern side of the Hurdle Creek floodplain is located in the LSIO overlay. The transmission tower is not expected to take up a significant volume of flood storage in this area (assuming tower foundations being at-grade) and the impacts of the tower placement in this location are expected to be negligible. The tower located on the north side of Hurdle Creek is located at the edge of the FO.

While this tower is located in the more critical Floodway extent, its placement is very close to the edge of the overlay which suggests that it is located in the flood fringe where depths are typically low. On this basis, this tower is also considered unlikely to create significant changes in flood level or extent if the tower foundations are designed to be at grade. This has been confirmed with Hydrology and Flood Risk Assessment prepared by Alluvium.

Refer to Section 3 of the Hydrology and Flood Risk Assessment prepared by Alluvium.

Figure 15 Extent of Development with LSIO and FO



Source: Hydrology and Flood Risk Assessment – Alluvium

6.13. UNUSED CROWN ROADS

The property at 1033 Oxley-Meadow Creek Road, Meadow Creek is affected by 3 unused Crown roads or “paper” roads subject to the Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978. These roads affect the following Lots and Allotments within the subject property:

Lots

3/LP58517

1/TP227319

Allotments

2B Section 5

2AB Section 5

3AA Section 5

3AB Section 5

4 Section 4

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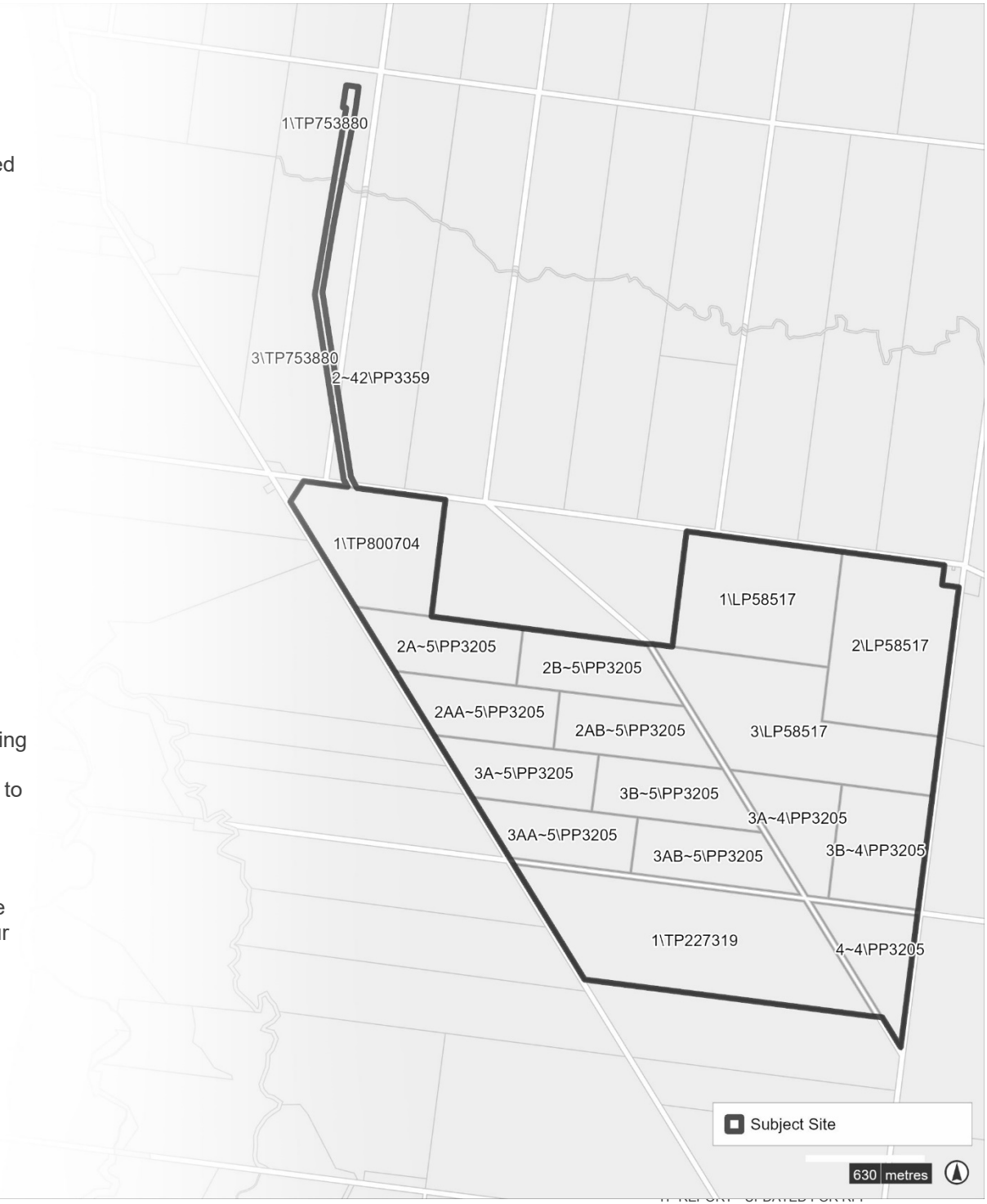
Local Councils have the responsibility of managing Crown roads (whether used or unused), however, the authority to issue licences over these areas lies with the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA). Licences may be granted by DEECA to the owner/s of the adjoining private property (only) to use the unused road area/s for a specific purpose. We note four (4) licences have been granted by DEECA (formerly DELWP) to the subject property owners. The purpose, terms and conditions of these licences is subject to privity of contract, however, we might assume the licences have been granted for grazing purposes.

We note the development proposal requires fences and security gates to be installed either side of the unused roads (presumably on private land) in four (4) locations and that MCSF requires a right of access across the unused roads and also the right to run cabling underneath or over the unused road areas.



It is our understanding that a right of access across the above mentioned Crown Roads does not require grant of a licence; the reason being that the very purpose of the road is to provide access to the public.

The right to install cabling underneath a Crown road needs to be addressed with the local DEECA office in the first instance, who may defer the decision to the local Council.

On Friday 12 of April DEECA confirmed via email, that the right of access across Crown roads does not require consent or a licence from DEECA. Pursuant to the Land Act 1958. Further DEECA confirmed the right to lay cabling underneath the Crown roads should be sought from Wangaratta Council with notification to DEECA (no licence being necessary).

Wangaratta Council has requested the proponent to apply for works within Road Reserve, Asset Protection permit (WWRR).

WWRR permits are traditionally completed post planning approvals and are obtained closer to construction as they require construction schedules, traffic management plans etc. Should a planning permit be issued the applicant would be accepting of a conditional requirement to obtain a WWRR permit for works within Crown Roads.

6.13.1. Ongoing engagement

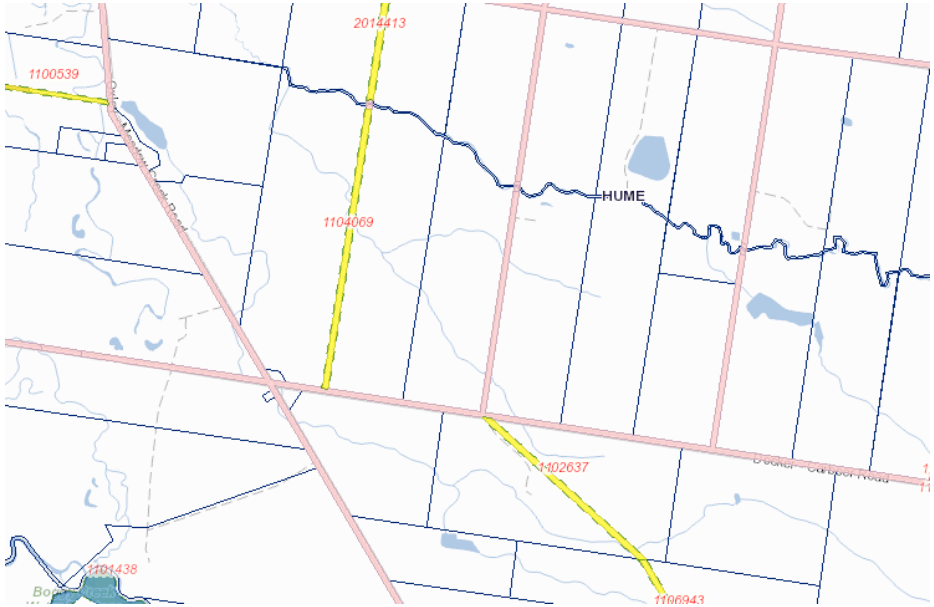
Subsequent to this correspondence and following detailed design of the transmission line route associated with the proposed solar farm, further works were identified within crown land. specifically, the following lots:

2-42/PP3359 – Government Road

2022\PP3359 - Crown Allotment (Hurdle Creek)

At this time, Urbis on behalf of the proponent have engaged the the administrator of both the paper road and the crown allotment, being DEECA.

It is expected that right of access across Crown roads and land will require consent or a license to be issued by DEECA.



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7. CONCLUSION

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

In summary:

- The proposal is suitable for assessment under the Development Facilitation Program pursuant to Clause 53.22.
- The proposal is consistent with the statutory and strategic frameworks of the Wangaratta Planning Scheme.
- The proposal will contribute approximately 332MW generation capacity, with 1000MWh storage capacity in the BESS. Based on these figures, the proposal will contribute significantly to Victoria's emissions reduction and renewable energy targets, as well as to the overall grid stability, as outlined within this report.
- The proposal requires a CHMP which has been finalised and received approval by the TLaWC RAP.
- The proposed installation has sought to minimise impacts on native vegetation, with large areas of the site avoided, and only minimal removal required. Where removal is required, this will be appropriately offset.
- The proposal has been sited and designed in response to the conditions on the site, seeking to preserve waterways from impacts and responding to the topography.
- The proposal appropriately manages its bushfire impacts and has been designed in accordance with all relevant legislation and guidelines.
- The proposal allows for the ongoing agricultural use of the land as sheep will continue to graze beneath the panels. Following the decommissioning of the facility, the site can be restored to its existing conditions.
- The proposal will not unreasonably impact the amenity of surrounding properties, with respect to visual impact and noise.

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

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8. DISCLAIMER

This report is dated August 2024 and incorporates information and events up to that date only and excludes any information arising, or event occurring, after that date which may affect the validity of Urbis Ltd **(Urbis)** opinion in this report. Urbis prepared this report on the instructions, and for the benefit only, Meadow Creek Solar Farm Pty Ltd **(Instructing Party)** for the purpose of Town Planning **(Purpose)** and not for any other purpose or use. To the extent permitted by applicable law, Urbis expressly disclaims all liability, whether direct or indirect, to the Instructing Party which relies or purports to rely on this report for any purpose other than the Purpose, and to any other person which relies or purports to rely on this report for any purpose whatsoever (including the Purpose).

In preparing this report, Urbis was required to make judgements which may be affected by unforeseen future events, the likelihood and effects of which are not capable of precise assessment.

All surveys, forecasts, projections and recommendations contained in or associated with this report are made in good faith and on the basis of information supplied to Urbis at the date of this report, and upon which Urbis relied. Achievement of the projections and budgets set out in this report will depend, among other things, on the actions of others over which Urbis has no control.

In preparing this report, Urbis may rely on or refer to documents in a language other than English, which Urbis may arrange to be translated. Urbis is not responsible for the accuracy or completeness of such translations and disclaims any liability for any statement or opinion made in this report being inaccurate or incomplete arising from such translations.

Whilst Urbis has made all reasonable inquiries it believes necessary in preparing this report, it is not responsible for determining the completeness or accuracy of information provided to it. Urbis (including its officers and personnel) is not liable for any errors or omissions, including in information provided by the Instructing Party or another person or upon which Urbis relies, provided that such errors or omissions are not made by Urbis recklessly or in bad faith.

This report has been prepared with due care and diligence by Urbis and the statements and opinions given by Urbis in this report are given in good faith and in the reasonable belief that they are correct and not misleading, subject to the limitations above.

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APPENDICES

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APPENDIX A APPENDIX A CERTIFICATES OF TITLE

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APPENDIX B APPENDIX B SITE PLANS

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APPENDIX C APPENDIX C ELEVATIONS AND SPECIFICATIONS

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APPENDIX D APPENDIX D LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

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APPENDIX E APPENDIX E LANDSCAPE VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (LVIA)

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APPENDIX F APPENDIX F AGRICULTURAL ASSESSMENT

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APPENDIX G APPENDIX G HYDROLOGY ASSESSMENT

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APPENDIX H APPENDIX H BUSHFIRE & FIRE RISK ASSESSMENT

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APPENDIX I APPENDIX I ACOUSTIC ASSESSMENT

ADVERTISED
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APPENDIX J APPENDIX J TRANSPORT IMPACT ASSESSMENT

ADVERTISED
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APPENDIX K APPENDIX K BIODIVERSITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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APPENDIX L APPENDIX L ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES REPORT

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APPENDIX M APPENDIX M URBIS ENGAGEMENT COVER LETTER

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APPENDIX N APPENDIX N ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN FRAMEWORK

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APPENDIX 0 APPENDIX 0 CLAUSE 53.13 ASSESSMENT

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

✓ Provided V To be provided as a condition

Application Requirement		ASSESSMENT
A site and context analysis, including:		
A site plan, photographs or other techniques to accurately describe the site and the surrounding area.	✓	Site plans, aerial maps and photographs identifying the site location and surrounds have been provided as part of the planning submission. The proposed development has been carefully designed to consider the potential environmental and amenity impacts on the site and its surrounds.
A location plan showing the full site area, local electricity grid, access roads to the site and direction and distance to nearby accommodation, hospital or education centre.	✓	Mapping indicating the site in its wider context, including the site access and location of nearby electrical infrastructure, have been included within the planning submission.
A design response, including:		
Detailed plans of the proposed development including, the layout and height of the facility and associated building and works, materials, reflectivity, colour, lighting, landscaping, the electricity distribution starting point (where the electricity will enter the distribution system), access roads and parking areas.	✓	Site layout plans and elevations are provided at Appendix B, C and E. Refer to Section 2 of the planning report for equipment specification, details and photographs.
Accurate visual simulations illustrating the development in the context of the surrounding area and from key public view points.	✓	Photo simulations and a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment are provided at Appendix E of this report.

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Application Requirement		ASSESSMENT
The extent of vegetation removal and a rehabilitation plan for the site.	✓	The site plan clearly indicates the extent of proposed vegetation removal. The removal, revegetation and proposed offsets are also detailed in the Biodiversity Assessment at Appendix K and within the body of this report.
Written report and assessment, including:		
An explanation of how the proposed design derives from and responds to the site analysis.	✓	Please refer to Section 3 of this report for a discussion of the key design considerations for the proposal.
A description of the proposal, including the types of process to be utilised, materials to be stored and the treatment of waste.	✓	The proposed installation is a solar energy facility. Materials will not be stored at the site and no waste will be produced.
Whether a Development Licence, Operating Licence, Permit or Registration is required from the Environment Protection Authority.	✓	There is no requirement for a Works Approval or Licence from the EPA for the proposed works.
The potential amenity impacts such as noise, glint, light spill, emissions to air, land or water, vibration, smell and electromagnetic interference.	✓	Detailed consideration of potential amenity impacts has been provided within the body of this report, including: – Landscape, visual impacts and glare and glint (Appendix E) – Noise impacts (Appendix I) – Cumulative impacts – Traffic and access (Appendix J) Relevant technical reports are also included assessing each of these considerations. These assessments have found that amenity impacts are acceptable and can be appropriately managed as part of the development.
The effect of traffic to be generated on roads.	✓	The supporting Traffic Impact Assessment concludes that traffic from the proposal will have a negligible impact on the surrounding road network during operation. Construction traffic can be suitably managed. Refer to the body of this report and to Appendix J for further detail regarding traffic.

Application Requirement		ASSESSMENT
The impact upon Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal cultural heritage.	✓	A CHMP has been prepared for the development to ensure cultural heritage is appropriately managed. This has been approved 23 July 2024.
The impact of the proposal on any species listed under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 or Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.	✓	The proposal does not result in any unreasonable impacts on specifies listed under the FFG Act or EPBC Act. Please refer to the discussion in the body of this report and the Biodiversity Assessment at Appendix K for further detail.
A statement of why the site is suitable for a renewable energy facility including, a calculation of the greenhouse benefits.	✓	The site is suitable for renewable energy development due to its proximity to significant electricity transmission infrastructure and its location within a declared Renewable Energy Zone. The site is also not of strategic significance from an agricultural perspective, and agriculture can continue to take place on site once the solar energy facility is developed. The estimated greenhouse benefits arising from the proposal are outlined below. ***Victoria - emissions:*** – up to ca. 0.5% operational emissions reduction (based on 80,064,500 tCO2e 2021 electricity source emissions) – up to ca. 1% operational emissions reduction from electricity as energy source (based on 41,400,000 tCO2e 2021 electricity source emissions) ***Victoria – storage:*** – up to ca. 11% of 2030 target of 2.6GW – up to ca. 5% of 2035 target of 6.3GW
An environmental management plan including, a construction management plan, any rehabilitation and monitoring.	✓	An environmental management plan can be provided as a condition on any permit to issue, in accordance with the DELWP Guidelines. However, an environmental management plan framework has been provided at Appendix R to guide a future environmental management plan.

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DECISION GUIDELINE

DECISION GUIDELINE		ASSESSMENT
The Municipal Planning Strategy and the Planning Policy Framework.	✓	Please refer to Section 4 of this report for an assessment of the proposal against the Municipal Planning Strategy and Planning Policy Framework. This assessment has been divided into key themes.
The effect of the proposal on the surrounding area in terms of noise, glint, light spill, vibration, smell and electromagnetic interference.	✓	The proposal has appropriately considered its amenity impacts, with technical assessments determining that these impacts can be appropriately managed. Refer to the body of this report and technical assessments as discussed above.
The impact of the proposal on significant views, including visual corridors and sightlines.	✓	The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment outlines that the proposal will have a low impact on views and sightlines.
The impact of the proposal on strategically important agricultural land.	✓	Pursuant to the Solar Energy Facilities Design and Development Guideline (October 2022), Agricultural land may be high value and strategically important due to a combination of features such as high-quality soils, good rainfall, access to water, resilience to climate change, infrastructure investment and integration with industry. The property area is rated as low agricultural capability by the North East Catchment Management Authority (NECMA). As such, it is not deemed as strategically significant agricultural land with regards to the considerations of the Solar Energy Facilities – Design and Development Guideline which outlines the Victorian Planning Provisions (VPP). The execution of the proposal will not influence the other agricultural activities in the area.
The impact of the proposal on the protection of declared irrigation districts.	✓	The site is not within a declared irrigation district.
The impact of the proposal on the natural environment and natural systems.	✓	The proposal has appropriately managed its impacts on the natural environment, including through the three-step process for managing impacts to native vegetation. No unreasonable impacts will result to the natural environment or natural systems.
The impact of the proposal on the road network.	✓	The proposal will not result in an unreasonable impact

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DECISION GUIDELINE		ASSESSMENT
Solar Energy Facilities Design and Development Guideline (Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, October 2022).	✓	Appendix Q provides a full assessment against these guidelines.

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APPENDIX P APPENDIX P FARMING ZONE ASSESSMENT

Guideline			ASSESSMENT
General issues	The Municipal Planning Strategy and Planning Policy Framework	✓	Please refer to the body of this report for a thematic assessment against the provisions of the Wangaratta Planning Scheme (including the Municipal Planning Strategy and Planning Policy Framework).
	Any Regional Catchment Strategy and associated plan applying to the land	✓	The subject site is located within the North East Catchment region. The proposal aligns with the North East Regional Floodplain Management Strategy which seeks to underpin the sustainable management of land and water resources, including biodiversity management. The proposed agrivoltaics model on the site represents an innovative approach to both energy generation and agriculture.
	The capability of the land to accommodate the proposed use or development, including the disposal of effluent.	✓	The land can accommodate the proposed use and development, as described within this report. No effluent management is required as the proposal includes a composting toilet. The proposal presents minimal amenity impacts to surrounding properties and will not compromise the long-term use of the site for agricultural purposes.
	How the use or development relates to sustainable land management.	✓	The proposed land use provides a source of renewable energy for the surrounding area, with no operational waste resulting from the proposal. The proposed construction is low impact, avoiding heavy duty foundations and significant disturbance of the land. As a result, the agricultural potential of the land will be retained following development.

Guideline			ASSESSMENT
			The site will also be retained for agricultural use during its operation as the land can continue to be used for sheep grazing.
	Whether the site is suitable for the use or development and whether the proposal is compatible with adjoining and nearby land uses.	✓	The use and development of the land as a solar energy facility is appropriate. The site is located within proximity to the Ovens Murray & Central North Renewable Energy Zones and is proximate to a high-voltage Glenrowan Transmission line and the proposed Docker Terminal Station. Given the existing infrastructure in the area, the use is appropriate. As discussed elsewhere in this report, the site will also continue to be used for agricultural purposes while the facility is in place.
	How the use and development make use of existing infrastructure and services	✓	The use and development will make use of the existing high voltage powerlines traversing the site to facilitate transmission to the local area and beyond. The existing road network will also be used, with upgrades made as necessary (discussed within the Transport Impact Assessment prepared by Salt).
Agricultural issues and the impacts from non-agricultural uses	Whether the use or development will support and enhance agricultural production.	✓	The use will allow for agricultural use of the site to continue, as sheep continue to graze beneath the panels. Due to the low-impact construction of the facility, when it is removed the site can be returned to an exclusive agricultural use.
	Whether the use or development will adversely affect soil quality or permanently remove land from agricultural production.	✓	The installation will not permanently remove the land from agricultural use, as discussed above. The use will not compromise soil quality. When decommissioned, the site can be returned to agricultural use.

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Guideline			ASSESSMENT
	The potential for the use or development to limit the operation and expansion of adjoining and nearby agricultural uses.	✓	The proposal will not impact the operation or expansion of adjoining and nearby agricultural uses as it is contained within the site, produces no emissions, and appropriately manages its noise impacts.
	The capacity of the site to sustain the agricultural uses.	✓	The site will continue to be used for sheep grazing in conjunction with the renewable energy facility.
	The agricultural qualities of the land, such as soil quality, access to water and access to rural infrastructure.	✓	The development will not affect the agricultural qualities of the land. Please refer to the Agricultural Assessment prepared by Biosis at **Appendix K** for further detail.
	Any integrated land management plan prepared for the site.	✓	There is no integrated land management plan that applies to the site.
Accommodation issues	***Not applicable to a proposal for a Renewable Energy Facility or a Utility Installation***		
Environmental issues	The impact of the proposal on the natural physical features and resources of the area, on soil and water quality.	✓	The proposal will not adversely impact soil and water quality. The design and development of the facility has avoided areas of ecological importance and areas proximate to existing waterways. Please refer to the Agricultural Assessment at Appendix I and the Hydrology Assessment at Appendix G for further detail.
	The impact of the use or development on the flora and fauna on the site and its surrounds.	✓	The proposal has sought to minimise its impacts on the flora and fauna on the site. Please refer to the biodiversity section of this report, and the Biodiversity Assessment prepared by Biosis for further detail (Appendix K).

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Guideline			ASSESSMENT
	The need to protect and enhance the biodiversity of the area, including the retention of vegetation and faunal habitat and the need to revegetate land including riparian buffers along waterways, gullies, ridgelines, property boundaries and saline discharge and recharge area.	✓	The proposal retains large areas of native vegetation, with extensive undeveloped areas located on the site. No development is proposed proximate to waterways, which are left in their existing natural conditions. Landscape buffers are proposed along site boundaries, incorporating native species consistent with the character of the area.
	The location of on-site effluent disposal areas to minimise the impact of nutrient loads on waterways and native vegetation	✓	No effluent disposal is proposed. A composting toilet will be located on site, with waste disposed of off-site.
Design and siting issues	The need to locate buildings in one area to avoid any adverse impacts on surrounding agricultural uses and to minimise the loss of productive agricultural land.	✓	The solar installation will be distributed evenly across the site. However, the design allows for continued grazing of sheep on site. Key areas of the site will remain undeveloped to avoid impact on significant ecology. The BESS site is located within an existing plantation, with only the clearing necessary to ensure suitable bushfire safety.
	The impact of the siting, design, height, bulk, colours and materials to be used, on the natural environment, major roads, vistas and water features and the measures to be undertaken to minimise any adverse impacts.	✓	As discussed in the body of this report, the proposal has been sited and designed to manage its visual impact on the site and its surrounds, including landscape character. Please refer to the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment at Appendix E for further detail.
	The impact on the character and appearance of the area or features of architectural, historic or scientific significance or of natural scenic beauty or importance.	✓	

Guideline			ASSESSMENT
	The location and design of existing and proposed infrastructure including roads, gas, water, drainage, telecommunications and sewerage facilities.	✓	The site is traversed by an existing high voltage power line and the BESS is proximate to the proposed Docker Terminal Station. No other services are proposed or to be connected. The existing road network will largely be used, with upgrades as necessary.
	Whether the use and development will require traffic management measures.	✓	Construction Management and Traffic Management plans are proposed to be prepared post-approval in response to conditions on the planning permit, should one issue. Traffic Management measures will be implemented during construction, to be specified as part of the TIA. The ongoing operation of the facility will not require traffic management measures.
Schedule to the Farming Zone	The minimum setback from a road in Transport Zone 2 is 50 metres The minimum setback from a road (any other road) is 20 metres The minimum setback from a boundary (any other boundary) is 5 metres The minimum setback from a dwelling not in the same ownership is 100 metres.		No panels are located within the setback specified. However, the proposed internal roads are within the setback. As these do not constitute a 'building', no planning permit is required. As described within the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, the proposal does not have any unacceptable impacts on sensitive receptors proximate to the site. All existing dwellings are afforded adequate setbacks.

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APPENDIX Q APPENDIX Q SOLAR ENERGY FACILITIES DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINE (2022) ASSESSMENT

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IDENTIFYING SUITABLE LOCATIONS

✓ Complies V Variation Required

Guideline			ASSESSMENT
Ideal siting conditions	A solar energy facility should not lead to: – the loss or interruption of supply to the immediate or broader electricity transmission network – the loss of vegetation, habitat or species of environmental importance – the loss of cultural heritage or landscape values of significance – the loss of productive state-significant agricultural land – increased exposure of the area to fire, flood or other natural or environmental hazard	✓	The proposal has been designed and sited to align with the ideal conditions outlined within the guidelines as follows: – The development of the solar energy facility will not interrupt supply to the electricity transmission network. – While some vegetation removal is necessary given the nature of the development, the facility has been carefully designed to avoid and minimise the removal of native vegetation, with most vegetation on site retained. Necessary vegetation removal will be offset in accordance with the DELWP Guidelines. A detailed avoid, minimise and offset statement has been prepared by Biosis and is included at Appendix K (refer to Section 6 for a review of the strategies) – Consultation with Taungurung Land and Waters Council (Aboriginal Corporation) (TLaWC) representatives have occurred. It is noted that a Cultural Heritage Management Plan was approved 23 July 2024 by TLaWC. – The agricultural assessment (Appendix F) has determined that the subject site is neither highly productive nor highly versatile. It is not considered to be significant or strategically important. Additionally, the land will be retained for sheep grazing in conjunction with the solar energy facility.

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Guideline		ASSESSMENT	
			– As confirmed by both the preliminary bushfire management report (Appendix J) and the hydrology assessment (Appendix Q), the development will not worsen the site's exposure to fire, flood or any other environmental hazard.
	Ideally a solar energy facility should be located: – on land with topographical conditions that avoids the need for unnecessary or excessive earthworks or changes to the natural landscape – to avoid the loss of native vegetation and biodiversity and if losses cannot be avoided, they are minimised and can be offset – close to the electricity grid network to minimise the need for additional infrastructure and associated impacts – a sufficient distance from existing urban areas or designated urban growth areas – where there can be adequate space between facilities within an area to avoid cumulative impacts of built form concentration – away from the floodplain of a major water course or wetland – where it has ready access to main roads	✓	The solar energy facility is located: – on land with suitable topography, such that it does not require any major earthworks or changes to the landscape character. Panels will be supported on poles driven into the ground (or predrilled), avoiding the need for major earthworks. – To avoid and minimise impacts to native vegetation. Where vegetation removal cannot be eliminated, the removal will be appropriately offset. – Close to the electricity grid network – In particular, the proposal will connect to the Docker terminal station to the north of the site. It is proposed to build the relevant transmission lines allowing for the grid connection The proposal will provide appropriate infrastructure to connect the solar energy facility to the wider grid. – A sufficient distance from Docker and Meadow Creek to minimise adverse impacts on these settlements. – Appropriately distant from other renewable projects and electricity facilities in the vicinity, whereby the nearest renewable project is located at Glenrowan, over 25km away. – Away from any floodplain of a major waterway or wetland. The facility has been sited and designed to avoid any negative impacts on the wetland. – With direct access to the Oxley-Meadow Creek Road and Whorouly-Bobinawarrah Road
Connecting to the electricity transmission network	*Electricity transmission network connections* Consideration must be paid to electricity transmission network connections and the potential for cumulative effects in an area	✓	The proposal will connect to the grid via the proposed Docker Terminal Station. This will be via a 220kV overhead cable connecting the main facility site to the BESS site and to the terminal station.

Guideline			ASSESSMENT
	Managing cumulative effects in an area Too many facilities in an area can: – reduce the availability and/or productivity of strategic agricultural land, particularly in irrigation districts – result in landscape-scale visual impacts, due to an overconcentration of built form in an area – impact the area's biodiversity, habitat or wildlife, due to an overconcentration of built form	✓	The proposal appropriately manages its potential to contribute to cumulative effects: – The land is not considered versatile or of strategic agricultural value, as detailed above. The land will continue to be used for sheep grazing following the installation of the solar energy facility. Agricultural productivity is not anticipated to meaningfully decrease because of the installation of the facility. – The development of the energy facility will not result in any landscape-scale visual impacts to the wider area. Significant setbacks mitigate the visual impact of the proposal, and extensive landscape planting will screen the panels from public view. – The development has been designed to avoid and minimise impacts to native vegetation. The design is also considered an appropriate response to the existing habitats of protected species.
Protecting environmental values	*Crown land* Ideally, commercial infrastructure should not be located on, over, under, and should not affect public land and government roads, where it can be located on private land or where exception is provided for under legislation. The proponent must seek DELWP's approval if it requires access to public land. DELWP may require a proponent to undertake an environmental assessment, Native Title assessment and/or community consultation	✓	A transmission line is proposed to connect the solar energy facility to the BESS facility and the proposed Docker Terminal Station. This transmission line will traverse private land, generally in the vicinity of the existing Glenrowan Transmission line.

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Guideline			ASSESSMENT
	Flora and fauna An assessment is required of the proposal's potential impact to existing natural habitats. The appropriate approvals and consents will be required under the: – Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act 1999 (EPBC Act) – Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 – Environment Effects Act 1978 – Consideration should be made to Protecting Victoria's Environment – Biodiversity 2037 strategy	✓	A biodiversity assessment has been undertaken by Biosis, which confirms that impacts on any matter of NES are highly unlikely. Therefore, no referral is likely to be required to the Commonwealth Environment Minister regarding matters listed under the EPBC Act. The Biodiversity Assessment finds that one threatened species have the potential to be impacted, but that no permits are required under the FFG Act. Impacts are minor and therefore acceptable. The project does not trigger a need for an EES referral. Please refer to the body of this report for a detailed discussion of the potential triggers under relevant biodiversity legislation (Commonwealth and State), and to the Biodiversity Assessment at Appendix K.
	Native vegetation and biodiversity An assessment is required of the proposal's potential impact to existing native vegetation Native vegetation requirements and offsets must be met	✓	Please refer to the body of this report, and the Biodiversity Assessment at Appendix K for a detailed assessment of the proposed native vegetation removal. The proposal has adopted the 'avoid, minimise and offset' approach and has avoided most site impacts. Commensurate offsets for impacted vegetation will be provided.
Protecting cultural heritage	Aboriginal cultural heritage values are protected by Victoria's *Aboriginal Heritage Act* 2006 and *Aboriginal Heritage Regulations* 2007. A proponent must consider potential impacts and the views of relevant Aboriginal people before lodging a planning application.	✓	A Desktop Assessment was undertaken to provide information on relevant archaeological studies, previously recorded Aboriginal places, and the environment of the geographic region to develop a prediction model for the Activity Area. A Standard Assessment was undertaken to provide information on the ground surface visibility, previous disturbance to the Activity Area and to identify areas of archaeological potential. A Complex Assessment was undertaken to test the prediction model and areas of archaeological potential within the Activity Area.

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Guideline			ASSESSMENT
			Consultation with Taungurung Land and Waters Council (Aboriginal Corporation) (TLaWC) representatives have occurred. It is noted that a Cultural Heritage Management Plan has been approved by TLaWC 23 July 2024.
Avoiding loss of high-value agricultural land	*Strategically important agricultural land* Solar farms should not undermine important agricultural land. Strategies to consider 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) and its impact at a local or regional scale – the impact of fragmentation and a change of land use to non-agriculture activity on local and regional productivity and output – the impact of a change of land use on recent and/or current efforts to modernise and reform agricultural activity in the area – whether the land has specifically been set aside or defined for agricultural use and development in a planning scheme or other strategic document – whether the change in land use is to the detriment of a government's previous or existing investment and support for the site or the area – whether the proposed solar energy facility can co-locate with other agricultural	✓	As confirmed by the agricultural assessment, the proposal is not located on strategically important agricultural land, and impacts to agricultural productivity are acceptable: – the site's soils are not high quality or niche to a particular kind of agricultural activity. The site is not considered suitable for cropping. – Rainfall is moderate and variable with a pronounced dry season. No specific farm or public infrastructure is provided to the site, and the site is not within an irrigation district. – Sheep grazing will continue to be possible under the panels. The proposed development will not result in a significant loss of regional agricultural productivity. The capacity of the land is estimated at 12.7 DSE/ha. – The change of land use will not have any impact on efforts to modernise and reform agricultural activity. – The land has not been specifically set aside or defined for agricultural use beyond the application of the Farming Zone to the site. – There is no specific government investment relating to the agricultural use of this property or this area. The proposed solar farm has been designed to allow sheep to continue to graze the land, ensuring that while some productivity must necessarily be lost to accommodate the new facility, most of the land's productive capacity will be retained.

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TP REPORT - UPDATED FOR RFI

Guideline		ASSESSMENT
	activity, to help diversify farm' income without reducing productivity	
Minimising impacts on landscape values	Consideration must be made to the visual impacts of the solar energy facility in relation to the surrounding landscape. The visual impact of a solar energy facility relates to: – the sensitivity of the landscape and its ability to absorb change – the size, height, scale, spacing, colour and surface reflectivity of the facility's components – the number of solar energy facilities located close to each other another within the same landscape – the excessive removal, or planting of inappropriate species of vegetation – the location and scale of other ancillary uses, buildings and works including transmission lines, battery storage units and associated access roads – the proximity to environmentally sensitive areas such as public land, water courses and low-lying areas.	The proposal's visual impact has been comprehensively considered and found to be acceptable: The LVIA states that the visual impact from the proposed solar farm will be limited to the immediate neighbouring properties and adjacent roads. This is due to the relatively flat terrain and scattered trees on and surrounding the proposed site. The visual impact from the transmission towers is generally limited to the local Oxley - Meadow Creek Road and the Whorouly - Bobinawarrah Road areas. The solar energy facility will not detract from the natural qualities of the area, in accordance with Clauses 02.03-2 and 12.05-2S of the Wangaratta Planning Scheme In accordance with Clause 02.03-2, the proposal leaves large areas of the site undeveloped, ensuring that most remnant native vegetation on site is protected in recognition of its ecological value. The proposal has been specifically designed to avoid sensitive areas on site that support ecological communities hosting native flora and fauna.
Natural hazard management	*Bushfire Management* Proponents should consult the relevant fire management authority early in the site selection	A preliminary Bushfire Risk Assessment has been prepared by EcoLogical Australia and is located at Appendix H. The assessment includes:

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URBIS
TP REPORT - UPDATED FOR RFI

Guideline		ASSESSMENT
	and design process, to ensure a facility avoids unnecessary bushfire risk exposure and has fire management planning in place to manage risk. Within rural and regional areas, a proponent should consult the CFA's Guidelines for renewable energy installations for information about bushfire risk management and other risk management matters.	A Bushfire Risk assessment in accordance with AS3959:2018 and Clause 13.02-1S, including a bushfire hazard assessment from the landscape scale. A Fire Risk Assessment in accordance with the CFA Design Guidelines and Model Requirements for Renewable Energy Facilities (CFA 2023) The CFA has been consulted as part of the application process who have provided commentary which has informed the final design. The CFA have indicated that they have no objections to the proposal subject to standard conditions.

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BEST PRACTICE FOR PROPONENTS

Guideline			ASSESSMENT
Engaging the community	*Early community consultation is important* Community engagement should start well before a planning permit application is lodged with the responsible authority, to understand the community's views and to address any concerns.	✓	The permit applicant has undertaken extensive consultation with community groups and residents, as discussed within the body of this report. Please refer to Appendices L and M.
	Engaging Traditional Owners Proponents are encouraged to consider engaging with traditional Owner groups at the inception stage of the project.	✓	Consultation with Taungurung Land and Waters Council (Aboriginal Corporation) (TLaWC) representatives have occurred. It is noted that a Cultural Heritage Management Plan In consultation with the traditional owners, the applicant has lodged a CHMP (approved 23 July 2024) to ensure that cultural heritage is managed throughout the development process. .
	Developing well-planned consultation Community engagement and benefit-sharing are fundamental to generating community support and delivering positive and effective outcomes for solar energy facility projects	✓	A comprehensive engagement process has been planned and undertaken by Nation Partners, consistent with the *Design and Development Guidelines* and with the *Community Engagement and Benefit Sharing in Renewable Energy Development in Victoria* guide (DELWP 2021). Please refer to the Engagement Outcomes Report prepared by Nation Partners for detail (Appendix L).
	Ongoing engagement Once a solar energy facility is built, it becomes an ongoing feature of the local community. After construction, the facility operator should shift its engagement focus to maintaining positive, mutually beneficial relationships with the community.	✓	Engagement with the community will continue following the construction of the facility. The applicant's approach to these considerations has been informed holistically by the *Community Engagement and Benefit Sharing in Renewable Energy Development in Victoria* guide, as well as by engagement with Wangaratta Shire Council. The eventual decommissioning of the project will also be informed by community engagement.

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Guideline			ASSESSMENT
	When planning the decommissioning process, the community should be engaged with any plan to rehabilitate the land, or to refurbish and upgrade the facility to extend its operating life.		As per Section 5.3 of this report, the **Project webpage for future engagement can be** found at www.meadowcreeksolarfarm.com.au. This is continuously updated to inform the community. The engagement team is also available via email at info@meadowcreeksolarfarm.com.au.
Design stage	*Siting facility components* A proponent should consider: – 30m minimum setback – increasing the minimum setback to an appropriate distance to manage bushfire hazard areas – 6m separation distance – locating inverters away from neighbouring property boundaries – grouping ancillary infrastructure in a single location accessible from a main road – providing appropriate landscaping to screen any buildings or solar components from view from a neighbouring sensitive use, main road, or other highly visible public vantage point.	✓	The proposal has been carefully designed in response to the siting components outlined within the guidelines, per the below: – The minimum boundary setback a minimum of 15.220 metres in discrete locations. It is noted that the siting of the solar panels is setback behind landscaping and internal roads in typical locations, achieving an adequate setback. However, most setbacks between physical structures and the site boundaries exceed 30 metres. – The minimum setback has been designed to respond to the CFA Design Guidelines, ensuring appropriate management of bushfire hazard. – Inverters have been located away from neighbouring property boundaries to minimise noise impact. Please refer to the noise impact assessment prepared by Marshall Day Acoustics for details. – Ancillary infrastructure is primarily located on the BESS site, which is readily accessed from Docker -Carboor Road. – Appropriate landscaping will be provided to the solar energy facility, ensuring sufficient screening from neighbouring properties and other public vantage points.
	Landscape screening A proponent should: – use vegetation species that are indigenous to the area or region	✓	The proposal implements extensive landscape screening, as detailed within Appendix D and the body of this report. Species proposed for the landscape buffers consist of those indigenous to the region, including Eucalyptus, Banksia and Acacia's.

Guideline		ASSESSMENT
	– locate vegetation along the perimeter of a site, within proposed setbacks – ensure vegetation will be of sufficient height, width and foliage density at maturity to screen relevant solar components and the associated built form from view – plant vegetation early in the construction stage – plant vegetation in accordance with any fire management plan arrangements, to avoid increased bushfire risk exposure.	Vegetation is to be located within proposed setbacks to screen the solar facility from the public realm and adjoining properties. Different buffer types are specified depending on the sensitivity of the area, with trees with mature heights of up to 20+ metres in appropriate locations. Vegetation will be planted at an appropriate stage during construction and will be designed in accordance with bushfire risk.
	Glint and glare management A proponent should: – site and design solar components and associated buildings and infrastructure to ameliorate glint and glare impacts to within acceptable levels – use anti-reflective solar panel coatings and non-reflective frames and avoid using reflective materials and paints on buildings and infrastructure – adjust the orientation of panels relative to glare risks such as oncoming traffic coming down a road from an elevated area – locate landscape screening of a sufficient height, width and foliage density at maturity to reduce glint and glare impacts.	The proposal does not result in any adverse glare and glint impacts to nearby sensitive receptors, as described within the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment at Appendix E. The assessment states that glint and glare will only be visible in spring and summer evenings. The analysis indicates that only drivers using the Docker - Carboor Road may potentially be impacted by glare at times in the early evening during spring and summer. While this is deemed an acceptable allowance of glare impact, the analysis does not consider potential obstructions between the glare source and the receptor such as vegetation or buildings. As there is substantial existing vegetation in and around the proposed PV array site, the results of the analysis are conservative and the actual glare impacts would likely be less than indicated in the results. Landscape amelioration will further mitigate potential for glare.

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Guideline		ASSESSMENT
	Designing security measures Security measures should: – prevent light spill to nearby sensitive land uses and vegetated areas – use external lighting of a lux and colour output that provides safe levels of illumination while avoiding impacts on neighbouring habitat – be designed to consider the impact on the movement of wildlife within the area – be set back an appropriate distance from a property boundary and use landscaping or vegetation to screen security fencing and lighting – provide appropriately located emergency access points as required by the relevant emergency management authority.	There is no requirement for operational lighting for the solar energy facility, ensuring minimal impact from illumination to the surrounding environment. Access points and roads provide suitable access to the site for emergency vehicles.
	Traffic impacts A traffic impact assessment (TIA) must be prepared as part of a planning permit application	Please refer to Appendix J for the Traffic Impact Assessment prepared in support of the application.
	Noise Noise attenuation measures could include: ensuring any components operate to relevant standards acoustic housing or baffles at the noise source	For details of noise impacts and proposed attenuation measures please refer to Appendix I (Noise Impact Assessment).

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Guideline		ASSESSMENT
	conducting maintenance and other operational activity during the daytime using landscaping or locating noisier components centrally within a site.	
	Earthworks and dust management A proponent should minimise changes to the topography of the site caused by grading or other ground works, to avoid significant changes to the overland flow of water and visual impacts on the landscape. It should determine appropriate dust suppression measures for the construction and operation stages of the facility.	Further detail regarding earthworks and dust management will be provided within the Environmental & Construction Management Plan, to be provided as a condition on the planning permit, should one issue.
	Natural hazard risk management – bushfire The MFB, CFA and DTP are the relevant fire management authorities in Victoria. A solar energy facility built within the BMO or BPA must maintain site vegetation to appropriate management levels. This includes: maintaining grass at below 100mm in height during a declared fire danger period establishing fire breaks around the perimeter of the facility providing adequate onsite water supply and firefighting equipment	The solar energy facility has been designed in accordance with the CFA Design Guidelines for Solar Energy Facilities, to ensure the risk of bushfire and grassfire is minimised. Appropriate firebreaks have been provided to the solar energy facility and to the BESS. Adequate water supply has also been provided throughout the site, with site access managed in accordance with CFA requirements. Please refer to the Preliminary Bushfire Risk Assessment at Appendix H for further detail regarding bushfire hazard management.

Guideline		ASSESSMENT	
	meeting site access management requirements.		
	Other matters The following requirements should inform the design of the solar farm: Fire authority must be consulted if dispensation is sought for a building over 500sqm (under Dangerous Goods (Storage and Handling) Regulations 2012 Design and layout should provide for 50m setback from high voltage power line, and 5-10m setback from a substation 30m separation distance between physical structure and site boundary should be provided to mitigate against heat island effect	✓	No buildings are proposed over 500sqm. Appropriate setbacks are provided to the high voltage powerlines and substation. Setbacks of a minimum of 15.220 (in discrete locations) metres have been provided from all site boundaries. This occurs in tight locations across the site, whereby typical setbacks are more than 30 metresbetween physical structures and site boundaries.
Construction and operation stage	The following documents will be required through permit conditions: – Environment management plan – Risk and emergency management planning – Site access and traffic management – Construction noise and dust management	✓	All required documents will be prepared and endorsed by the responsible authority prior to commencement of development, in accordance with standard planning permit conditions.

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Guideline			ASSESSMENT
Decommissioning	A proponent should consider: – who will be responsible for decommissioning the facility – at what stage the responsible authority will be advised the facility will be decommissioned – the processes, plans and procedures for removing all built form and for restoring the land to its pre-developed or natural state – where the panels and other equipment will be disposed and if they can be recycled – the timeline for the decommissioning work.	✓	The permit applicant will operate the facility throughout its operational lifecycle and will be responsible for decommissioning the facility at end of life. A condition in accordance with the above can be included on any planning permit to issue.

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APPLYING FOR A PLANNING PERMIT

GUIDELINE			ASSESSMENT
Application requirements	*Site and context analysis* The site and context analysis is intended to show the current lie of the land and the immediate surrounds of the proposed solar energy facility.	✓	A Site Plan is provided at Appendix B. Please refer to Section 2 of the Planning Report for details regarding the subject site and surrounds, as well as the existing site conditions. This section includes aerial maps and photographs identifying the site location, surrounds, and regional context.
	Design response The purpose of the design response is to outline the proposed use and development of land relative to the site and its immediate location.	✓	The solar facility has been carefully designed to respond to the site's context, opportunities and constraints and DTP's *Solar Energy Facilities Design and Development Guideline October 2022*. The design layout considers: – Grid connection. – Amenity impacts – Landscape and visual impact to neighbouring properties. – Noise impacts. A Noise Impact Assessment that describes noise impacts will be issued shortly following submission. – Cumulative impacts – Environmental considerations – Potential loss of agricultural land – Biodiversity and ecological values – Native vegetation – Bushfire mitigation – Waterways, hydrology and flooding mitigation – Efficiency and economic viability of the solar facility

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GUIDELINE			ASSESSMENT
Decision guidelines	*Clause 65 Decision Guidelines*	✓	Refer to the body of this report for further details regarding the Clause 65 Decision Guidelines.
	Clause 53.13 Renewable Energy Facility	✓	Refer to Appendix O for an assessment against the decision guidelines of Clause 53.13.

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APPENDIX R APPENDIX R SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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