



## COMMISSION APPROVES \$400-MILLION WALLA WALLA SOLAR FARM

27 November 2020

The state's Independent Planning Commission has approved a multimillion-dollar solar farm for the NSW Riverina Region.

FRV Services Australia Pty Ltd (the Applicant) sought planning approval for the 300 megawatt solar farm on 605 hectares of agricultural land 5km northeast of Walla Walla.

The \$399-million Walla Walla Solar Farm development is projected to create 250 jobs during the 20-month construction period, as well as ongoing operational roles.

The Department of Planning, Industry & Environment finalised its whole-of-government assessment of the Project in September this year. The state significant development application came to the Commission for determination due to opposition from Greater Hume Shire Council and the local community.

Commissioners Andrew Hutton (Panel chair) and Professor Zada Lipman were appointed to determine the application. The Commissioners met with the Department, Applicant and Council to discuss the proposed development and conducted an inspection of the site and surrounding area.

They also hosted an electronic public meeting on 5 November 2020 to listen to residents' concerns, which focused on land-use compatibility, biodiversity impacts, visual impacts on the surrounding landscape, and socio-economic impacts.

After carefully considering all the evidence and weighing the community's views, the Commission has today granted development consent for the solar farm, subject to conditions.

"The Commission agrees with the Department's Assessment ... and is of the view that the Project is in accordance with the [Environmental Planning and Assessment] Act and is in the public interest," the Commission concluded in its Statement of Reasons for Decision.

"The Commission has determined that the Application should be granted consent subject to conditions which have been designed to prevent, minimise and/or offset adverse environmental impacts; set standards and performance measures for acceptable environmental performance; outline how the land can be returned to its current use following decommissioning and rehabilitation of the site; require regular monitoring and reporting; and provide for the on-going environmental management of the development."

Of particular note, the Commission found that the decommissioning and rehabilitation of the site should be planned appropriately ahead of the cessation of operations and brought together into a consolidated Decommissioning and Rehabilitation Plan.

“For this reason, the Commission has imposed a requirement for the Applicant to prepare such a plan prior to the cessation of operations, all of which must be to the satisfaction of the [Planning] Secretary,” it stated. “The Commission has imposed a condition to give effect to this requirement. The Commission has also amended the conditions to specify that all solar farm infrastructure, including underground cabling, is to be removed following the cessation of operations.”

**The Commission’s Statement of Reasons for Decision is available here:**

<https://www.ipcn.nsw.gov.au/projects/2020/10/walla-walla-solar-farm-ssd-9874>

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