

Our ref: SSD-46543209

Andrew Mills

Chair

Independent Planning Commission

GPO Box 3415

Sydney NSW 2001

ipcn@ipcn.nsw.gov.au

18/12/2024

Subject: Muswellbrook Solar Farm – Referral to the Independent Planning Commission

Dear Mr Mills,

The Department has completed its assessment of the merits of the application for the Muswellbrook Solar Farm (SSD-46543209).

The application is referred to the Independent Planning Commission for determination as there were more than 50 unique submissions objecting to the project.

ESCO Solar Farm 9 Pty Ltd (ESCO) proposes to develop a new State significant solar farm located approximately 2.5 kilometres (km) east of Muswellbrook in the Muswellbrook Shire local government area (LGA), within the Hunter-Central Coast Renewable Energy Zone (HCC REZ).

The project would have a generating capacity of approximately 135 megawatts (MW) and includes a 135 MW / 270 MW-hour (MWh)-hour battery energy storage system (BESS). The project would connect to an existing 132 kilovolt (kV) transmission line, operated by Ausgrid.

During the exhibition of the environmental impact statement (EIS) the Department received a total of 59 unique submissions from the community, in addition to advice from 14 government agencies. Of the public submissions received during exhibition of the EIS, 54 objected to the project, five supported the project and one provided comment.

ESCO has reached an in-principle agreement with Muswellbrook Shire Council to enter into a Voluntary Planning Agreement (VPA).

In assessing the merits of the project, the Department has considered the environmental, social and economic impacts of the project, submissions on the EIS, relevant environmental planning

instruments, the suitability of the site, and the public interest, in accordance with the requirements of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.

During the assessment process the Department visited the site, and consulted with local residents, Council and relevant government agencies.

Based on this assessment, the Department considers that the project is approvable, subject to the recommended conditions of consent.

I have attached a copy of the Department's assessment report and other relevant documents for the Commission's consideration.

If you have any questions, please contact Iwan Davies on [REDACTED] or via email at [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely,

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of Iwan Davies.

Iwan Davies

Director

Energy Assessments