New South Wales Government
Independent Planning Commission

TRANSCRIPT OF MEETING

RE: WALLAROO SOLAR FARM (SSD-9261283)

DEPARTMENT MEETING

PANEL:	MR ANDREW MILLS DR BRONWYN EVANS AM MR RICHARD PEARSON
OFFICE OF THE IPC:	TAHLIA HUTCHINSON
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING, HOUSING AND INFRASTRUCTURE:	IWAN DAVIES GABRIELLE ALLAN CAMERON ASHE
LOCATION:	Zoom Videoconference
DATE:	3:00PM – 3:45PM WEDNESDAY, 10th JULY 2024

<THE MEETING COMMENCED

ANDREW MILLS: Good afternoon. I'd just like to start by making an introductory statement, so thank you. Before we begin, I'd like to acknowledge that I'm speaking to you from Gadigal land, and I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the countries from which we virtually meet today, and pay my respects to their Elders past and present.

Welcome to the meeting today to discuss the Wallaroo Solar Farm case, SSD-9261283, currently before the Commission for determination. The Applicant, Wallaroo Solar Farm Pty Limited, is seeking approval to develop a 100 megawatt solar farm with a battery energy storage system and associated infrastructure.

My name is Andrew Mills, and I am the Chair of the Independent Planning Commission and of this panel. And I am joined by my fellow Commissioners, Dr Bronwyn Evans and Mr Richard Pearson. We're also joined by Tahlia Hutchinson from the Office of the Independent Planning Commission. In the interest of openness and transparency and to ensure the full capture of information, today's meeting is being recorded, and a complete transcript will be produced and made available on the Commission's website.

This meeting is one part of the Commission's consideration of this matter, and will form one of several sources of information upon which the Commission will base its determination. It is important for Commissioners to ask questions of attendees and to clarify issues whenever it is considered appropriate. If you are asked a question and are not in a position to answer, please feel free to take the question on notice, and provide any additional information in writing, which we will then put on our website. I request that all members here today introduce themselves before speaking for the first time, and for all members to ensure that they do not speak over the top of each other to ensure accuracy of the transcript.

Thank you. We'll now begin.

So an agenda has been circulated for our joint benefit, with some things that we would just like to be able to touch on. I thought it might be useful if we started just hearing from the Department around the context of this project in the energy transition environment.

IWAN DAVIES: Thank you. Chair, good afternoon. My name is Iwan Davies. I'm the Director for Energy Assessments at the New South Wales Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure. Before I begin, I'd also like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we all join today's meeting. I'd like to pay my respects to their Elders, past and present, and extend that respect to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people here today.

Chair, can I just check; I have a presentation here that touches on energy transition or land use compatibility, I think you just raised. It also touches on other matters that the Commission has included in its agenda. Would you like to me to run

through the presentation in its entirety, or specific matters?

ANDREW MILLS: I'm happy for you to run through the presentation, but I'm wondering, would you be happy if we stopped you along the way and asked questions?

IWAN DAVIES: Absolutely yes, certainly. And the presentation I think should last about 15 minutes, if that's OK?

ANDREW MILLS: That doesn't take into account our questions, I guess?

IWAN DAVIES: Absolutely not. No. Thank you. OK, so if we could perhaps share screen, Cameron? And perhaps if I could ask that we move to slide two, please.

So as I mentioned, I'll provide a brief overview of the key assessment issues focused on those in the Commission's agenda, and in particular, the key reasons for the Department's recommendation to the Commission to approve the project. Next slide please, Cameron.

So regarding the strategic and regional context, before I dive into the assessment issues, it's important to provide some strategic context about the project in relation to its location, and access to the existing electricity network. Noting that all coal fired power plants in New South Wales are scheduled for closure in the next 20 years, the project would assist in providing large scale renewable energy generation to meet increased electricity demand. The Department considers that the project is consistent with the relevant national, state and local policy documents, which identify the need to diversify the energy generation mix, and reduce the carbon emissions intensity of the grid, while also providing energy security and reliability.

There are additional considerations from a regional context that the project site would benefit from. The site has direct access to the existing 132 kilovolt electricity transmission lines that cross the site. The site has good transport links and is in close proximity to the Barton Highway.

There are minimal biodiversity and heritage impacts from the project. The site is located on land that is not mapped as biophysical strategic agricultural land, that is, BSAL land, and predominantly on land that has a land and soil capability of Class 4 and 5, which is defined as land restricted to low to moderate impact uses. The land is currently primarily used for grazing. There are no significant visual or noise impacts on residences.

Overall, the Department considers the site to be appropriate for the project, and is consistent with the Department's large scale solar energy guideline. The project would also provide flow-on benefits to the local community, including up to 200 construction jobs and contributions to Council. There would be broader benefits the state through the injection of approximately $166 million in capital investment

into the New South Wales economy. Next slide please, Cameron.

Regarding engagement, the Department exhibited the EIS in May and June 2023, and received 97 public submissions, consisting of 88 objections, four comments and five in support. The most common matters raised were agricultural land, visual amenity and biodiversity impacts.

Throughout the assessment process, the Department sought advice from 12 government agencies in addition to Yass Valley Council and the ACT government, and visited the site. Next slide please, Cameron.

I'm now going to talk about what we found to be the key areas for assessment and the matters identified in the Commission's agenda. Next slide, please.

Energy transitions. The project aligns with a range of national and state policies which identify the need to diversify the energy generation mix, and reduce the carbon emissions intensity of the grid, while providing energy security and reliability. The project is in an area with direct access to the transmission network, with available capacity and abundant solar resources, on land where solar development is permissible with development consent under the Transport and Infrastructure SEPP.

The project has a capacity of 100 megawatts, which would generate enough energy to power about 40,000 homes. Solar generation is consistent with the New South Wales Climate Change Policy Framework of achieving net zero emissions by 2050. Next slide please, Cameron.

I'll get into a bit more detail on land use compatibility now. So the proposed development is permissible via the Transport and Infrastructure SEPP. The project is consistent with the local and regional plans, including the Yass Valley LEP and the South East and Tablelands Regional Plan 2036, which includes a direction to position the region as a hub of renewable energy excellence.

It's noted that the Yass Valley Settlement Strategy 2036 recommends a five kilometre buffer along the Yass Valley and the ACT border to be maintained as productive rural land, or high quality natural environment, to prevent encroachment of intensive residential development, and reduce urban sprawl from the ACT, while protecting productive rural land and protecting the biodiversity and natural resources of the area. Yass Valley Council objected to the proposed development, as Council considered it did not align with the strategy.

As expanded on below, the Department considers that the proposed development is in keeping with the settlement strategy for the following reasons.

The site could be returned to agricultural production as the inherent agricultural capability of the land would not be affected in the long term. The project would, in the short term, limit the potential for residential development or other conflicting land uses to occur on the site. And the project is located in an area which is not

considered high quality natural environment, with the site not holding high biodiversity value land.

Regarding the loss of agricultural land, the site is currently primarily used for grazing. The development footprint is comprised of Class 4 and 5 land, which is has limited agricultural capabilities. The project's development footprint, being 165 hectares, combined with the other approved and/or operational SSD solar farms in the South Eastern Tablelands region, would be approximately 1,400 hectares, the loss of which represents a tiny fraction, 0.04%, of the 3.3 million hectares of land in the region currently used for agricultural output.

The land, subject to the development of the solar farm, would also be capable of returning to usable agricultural land following decommissioning of the project. The Applicant has also committed to grazing sheep on the property where appropriate, in conjunction with the landowners.

ANDREW MILLS: Iwan, can I just stop you there, and just ask in relation to that, has the Applicant gone into any detail in relation to the use of the land as grazing concurrent with the solar farm? And by that, I mean, will it be agistment? Has any discussion, or has there been anything about the access of livestock to and from the property, things like that? Or are we talking the need for yards, sheep dip facilities, shearing facilities and things like that? Or is this purely thought of as agistments for adjacent properties? Has any discussion gone on about any of that?

IWAN DAVIES: No, that's absolutely, that's a fair question, Andrew. So generally, for solar farms throughout the state, and when I have visited solar farms, it is more as you've described; use by neighbouring landowners that have facilities on their land, or current facilities that the current landowner may use. And the land is simply used for sheep grazing, and the sheep are transferred or transported on and off site.

I may just ask my team if there is any further detail in the EIS. But before I do, perhaps I should advise that the Department has included a condition requiring grazing where possible, but it's not a requirement. I want to be clear that the use that we are assessing here is for a solar farm development. Sheep grazing would be in addition to the use that is proposed.

So the team has just messaged. We don't believe there is further detail to the matters you've raised Andrew, and perhaps a question for the Applicant. But again, our assessment is based on the land use being a solar farm. Sheep grazing would only be in addition. Thank you.

ANDREW MILLS: Thanks.

IWAN DAVIES: Thanks. So the Applicant prepared a land use conflict risk assessment, a LUCRA, as part of the EIS, to assess the potential impacts of the project on land uses surrounding the site. The LUCRA concluded that potential impacts on surrounding land uses, including agriculture, rural residential land use,

regional growth areas and transport were manageable, with the implementation of proposed mitigation measures, including traffic management, landscape planting, sheep grazing, weed management, rehabilitation and decommissioning of the project.

Additionally, neither Council or DPI Agriculture raised concerns that the project would compromise the long term use of the land for agricultural purposes. And importantly, the loss of a relatively small area of agricultural land in the region must be balanced against the broader strategic goals of the government, along with the environmental and economic benefits of solar energy.

The Department notes that the project's location aligns with the relevant technical and commercial factors required for selecting suitable sites for large scale solar energy development, under the New South Wales government's large scale solar guideline. And basing on the findings of the EIS, the project would not result in any unacceptable impacts on the local community or the environment.

Overall, the Department considers that the project would be unlikely to generate any significant land use conflicts, and would be compatible with existing and future land uses. Next slide please, Cameron.

Regarding visual impacts, the Department visited the site and nearby non-associated residences to understand the visual impacts and to further understand residents' concerns. The Applicant has incorporated a number of measures into the project design to minimise its visual impacts, including a reduction of the solar array from 155 hectares to 139 hectares, including, importantly; avoiding development on the hill on the site, on the western boundary of the site. Establishing vegetation screening between the project site and sensitive receivers. Preparation and implementation of a landscape management plan to guide plant selection, planting locations and ongoing maintenance of the vegetation screening. Use of fast growing and native tree species, as recommended by the Ginninderra Catchment Group, as well as planting of shrubs in consideration of biodiversity and pollinator benefits, and minimising unnecessary nighttime lighting of the development and using lower intensity lighting to reduce disturbance to neighbouring properties.

The Department recognises that the introduction of the solar farm to a rural setting would result in a change to the local landscape, but considers the development would have a limited impact beyond the project's immediate vicinity. All residential receivers would experience low, very low or nil visual impacts post-mitigation, prior to mitigation. One representative viewpoint, represented in a cluster of dwellings within the ACT, would experience moderate visual impacts on a worst case scenario basis.

Three Bicentennial National Trail viewpoints were identified as experiencing moderate visual impacts, pre-mitigation. Post-mitigation, each of the viewpoints were assessed as experiencing low visual impacts. The remaining public receptor viewpoints were all assessed as experiencing low or very low visual impacts.

Subject to the recommended conditions, the Department is satisfied that the Applicant has adequately reduced the visual impacts of the project to an acceptable level.

RICHARD PEARSON: Can I just ask a question on that, Iwan? And you mentioned fast growing, locally endemic species. One of the continuing issues appears to be that interface between the ACT, where you've described the moderate impact, and the solar farm. My understanding is that's a bit elevated above the New South Wales terrain, and therefore the extent to which that can be visually mitigated. Am I on the right track there, or is that an area that's capable of landscape mitigation?

IWAN DAVIES: Yes, so I may actually share screen if – yeah, I'll just share screen briefly, Richard. If, Cameron, you could stop sharing for a second? Thank you. So the area in question, can you see that?

RICHARD PEARSON: Nothing yet.

IWAN DAVIES: OK, that may have just – bear with me. Can you see that now?

RICHARD PEARSON: Yes, yep.

IWAN DAVIES: OK, so to provide some context, the representative viewpoint was based at this location, on James Harrison Street in the ACT, which is south of the project. I believe the photo montage was located, was taken from around this area, this side of the road. Given it's a worst case scenario representative viewpoint, you can see, you can briefly see the site in the distance. There's the residence that's on the site. So it's probably at the same elevation as the site, looking at this; I don't have the topographic information in front of me. But just to provide some context, and perhaps the panel may wish to visit this location during its site visit.

To provide some context here, there are a number of, I suppose, scattered trees along the road verge, and other buildings at the same elevation that essentially block the view, including hedgerows, fences, tree lines and the like. So it is absolutely a worst case scenario, and it appears to be at the same elevation. And importantly, with the amendments made to the project, where panels were removed from the elevated hill on the other side of the project, that reduces those impacts.

RICHARD PEARSON: OK, thank you.

ANDREW MILLS: Just in terms of screening, while we still have that kind of picture there, the parts of the project's area, I guess, the footprint of the farm that seems to go right up against the border, or close enough to it, there seems to be no actual proposed screening at those, right at border points, and there's two in particular. Whereas the various diagrams in the assessment do show screening all round most of the solar farm. The two points that seem to touch the border don't

have any. Is that your understanding?

IWAN DAVIES: Yes, if I just zoom in, perhaps, to the project layout figure.

ANDREW MILLS: Yes, that one. So you see at the bottom left parts where they seem to touch the border, the red line, there, yes, and the other one. That seems to be none. And I thought that curious, given that's right up against what will be potentially future residential area in the ACT.

IWAN DAVIES: Yes, OK, so my understanding of the future – I'm unsure about this section here, and I note there are a number of scattered trees or a little bit of woodland in this area, and perhaps that is why there is no vegetation screening proposed in these two sections. And the future residential area is to the west of the creek here, to the southwest of the creek.

The area I was just pointing out is just in this location here, and vegetation screening is proposed. But you'll note that there's a creek line running through here, and that, of course, is lower ground. So we wouldn't expect vegetation screening near the creek. But my understanding is that given there is some fairly scattered, and in some areas, dense vegetation in these areas, that that is perhaps not required, given the potential impacts from these residences here are not moderate. They're either low, very low or nil.

That's my understanding, and the Department is certainly, I think it's a fair statement to say that the Department is certainly keen for Applicants to only propose screening where it is required, to ensure the success of that screening, to ensure that efforts are put into where screenings are required, and not to perhaps around the site where it may not be required.

ANDREW MILLS: Especially the screening, if I can put my –

CAMERON ASHE: Just to add – yes, sorry, Andrew, just to add to Iwan's point there, that area where the solar array joins the border, sorry, that is a nature reserve in the ACT as I understand. Whereas the future urban release area, whether it's an initial development, will occur in the future, is further west, southwest of the project site, where that landscape screening is currently proposed.

ANDREW MILLS: So there's an element of relying on existing vegetation to do the screening for them, effectively, that the natural existing vegetation provides that screening, that's what I'm hearing, yes?

IWAN DAVIES: That's correct, and yes, that's the best outcome for screening in the first instance, is the existing vegetation, and the existing well established vegetation.

ANDREW MILLS: Thank you for that.

IWAN DAVIES: Were there any other questions before I move on to other

matters?

ANDREW MILLS: Just the visual impact. The other question I had was just to confirm, the low assessment is an assessment based on the standards from 2022, is that –

IWAN DAVIES: That's correct, yep.

ANDREW MILLS: So the current draft standards haven't been applied against this, just as a sanity check or anything like that, have they?

IWAN DAVIES: No, they haven't, the 2022 guideline, yep.

ANDREW MILLS: Yes, that's OK, I just was curious more than anything, so thank you.

IWAN DAVIES: OK, good. Thank you. I'll perhaps stop sharing again. If Cameron, you'd like to bring those back up. OK, so just the next slide, please, Cam.

OK. Regarding other issues, the Department also conducted a detailed assessment of the matters listed in this slide, and concluded that there would be no significant impacts. I'll now discuss the other matters set out in the Commission's agenda.

Regarding traffic, including the separate approval pathway for roads and intersection upgrades. Traffic accessing the site would do so via the Barton Highway, Wallaroo Road, Gooromon Ponds Road and Southwell Road. The heavy vehicle transport route during construction would be coming from Port Botany, and would be via the Hume Highway, Federal Highway and the Barton Highway.

To avoid urban traffic conditions in Canberra, it's most likely that the oversize and over mass vehicles would use an alternative northern access route from the Hume Highway via Yass Valley Way, and then the Barton Highway. Overall, the proposed transport route has sufficient capacity for the predicted traffic generation.

After consulting with Council, road upgrades would be required for the Southwell Road and Gooromon Ponds Road intersection, and would include sealing a portion of Southwell Road. Additional permits for B double use and road weight limit exceedances would be required for Wallaroo Road and Gooromon Ponds Road. After consulting with Transport Canberra and city services, the Barton Highway and Wallaroo Road intersection would require minor widening to the westbound and southbound turning lanes, with detailed design established in future consultation with Transport Canberra, and would be subject to a separate ACT approvals process. The Applicant has committed to undertake ongoing consultation with Transport Canberra prior to obtaining this approval.

Accordingly, while the project considers the needs for these upgrades, they do not form part of the Department's recommended conditions, noting that the Applicant

is to undertake a separate approval process with Transport Canberra. The Department has also included a condition requiring separate approvals for the OSOM vehicles. Subject to the recommended conditions provided, the Department and Transport are satisfied that the project would not have any significant impacts on roads, network capacity, efficiency or safety. Are there any questions regarding traffic before I move on to glint and glare?

RICHARD PEARSON: How long is that road upgrade? I think you mentioned, was it Southwell Road?

IWAN DAVIES: Southwell Road, how long is it? I can give you a rough guide, unless Cameron or Gabby know. I think it might be about 300 to 400 metres, is that right, on Southwell Road?

RICHARD PEARSON: A fair bit of the submissions is about impacts on local roads. As is often the case, I suppose. But it's really only the construction phase, I suppose, where there's significant traffic generation as a result of this development, and so the road upgrades that facilitate the construction is the intersection and road upgrades. Is that all about construction, or is it about operation, or is it about giving something back to the community?

IWAN DAVIES: It's absolutely about construction of the project, Richard. There would be very little operational traffic movements. I don't have that number in front of me, but it would be single figures. So it would – of course, there's the opportunity for upgrades to the project, i.e. replacing solar panels and decommissioning of the project. But absolutely those road upgrades are for the construction period, construction phase of the development, with little operational traffic.

RICHARD PEARSON: Thank you.

BRONWYN EVANS: And Iwan, if I may ask a question; you noted that there would be some road upgrade on Wallaroo Parkway and Barton Highway that Transport Canberra needs to be the consenting authority, and we can put that as a condition that they must get the right consents. Is there anything else we need to do, beyond noting that that action has to be taken by the Applicant in consultation with Transport Canberra?

IWAN DAVIES: There's no further action, as far as I'm concerned, or that I feel is required. The condition is in there at B6 at this stage. But of course, happy if the Commission feels that there should be some kind of consultation there with Transport Canberra.

BRONWYN EVANS: Thank you.

IWAN DAVIES: Which will be, of course, required anyway, but to provide that clarity.

OK, so moving on to glint and glare, bear with me.

So the Applicant's glint and glare analysis, which is based on a worst case scenario, identified the potential for moderate to high temporary glare to be experienced by 12 residential receptor locations, predominantly to the north east of the project site within New South Wales, and to the project site within the ACT.

At the request of the Department, the Applicant prepared an addendum glint and glare assessment, to assess the effectiveness of additional operational controls to reduce potential glare. This included solar panel tracking controls to restrict panels operating at low angles, that is between zero and five degrees, between the hours of 5:30am and 8:30am, to avoid potential glare generation.

RICHARD PEARSON: Can you just – sorry, Iwan, can you just explain that? Because it's a little bit of a technical issue this one. What is that – why do you get it particularly in the morning? Is it because the sun's low in the sky, and it can reflect into people's bedrooms? What's the technical analysis around that?

IWAN DAVIES: Yeah, so that's absolutely right. It's in the mornings when the sun is rising, and you have those angles that that may impact those at a similar elevation to the project. As the sun tracks through the day, you don't have that reflectivity. So it's in the mornings where it was assessed as potentially impacting those receivers. Hence that limit in those morning hours.

RICHARD PEARSON: So is the system automated that that happens? Like, I'm sure there's not someone going around doing it manually.

IWAN DAVIES: Absolutely.

RICHARD PEARSON: Is it like a computer programmed thing, is it?

IWAN DAVIES: That's correct, yeah, that would be automated into the solar farm, and can be operated from either the operational building onsite, or my understanding, and perhaps a question for the technicians on the Applicant side, but also I'd say absolutely could be done remotely as well.

RICHARD PEARSON: Yep, thanks.

IWAN DAVIES: Thank you. So the results indicated that by utilising those operational controls, no receptors would be unacceptably impacted by glint and glare, with low to nil glint and glare produced by the method. In addition, the Applicant has also committed to the use of neutral, non-reflective colours for onsite ancillary infrastructure to reduce glint and glare.

RICHARD PEARSON: One other question, if I may, sorry. I recall in one submission, someone was talking about yellow glare. I don't know what that means, or is it just glare generally, and seemed to be implying that it was a something that they would experience for large slabs of the year, but later in the

day, I think. This was a Canberra submission, as I recall. Is that something different to the morning glare issue?

IWAN DAVIES: So we assess all types of glare. And yes, yellow glare is a thing, as is blue glare. And from our assessment, I mean, I can pull some wording – there is the technical guideline to the solar guideline, talks to how that glint and glare is assessed. But the assessment found there wouldn't, it wouldn't meet the criteria during those afternoon periods.

RICHARD PEARSON: OK. Is that afternoon glare? Is that what yellow glare is?

IWAN DAVIES: I'll provide, I'll perhaps take that on notice without –

RICHARD PEARSON: Yes, no, sure. I mean, it's a little bit off piste, but it seemed to be an issue for a couple of residences in Canberra. But that's fine. Thank you.

IWAN DAVIES: OK, thanks, Richard. OK, so next, I believe, was contamination. The Department considered the remediated land provisions of the Hazard SEPP. A preliminary risk screening confirmed the project was not categorised as potentially hazardous or potentially offensive development. The site is also not listed as a contaminated site in the New South Wales EPA's contaminated land record, and list of New South Wales contaminated sites. Given the site has historically been used for agricultural uses, the Department considers the site would be suitable for the proposed development.

Further to this, the use of metals in solar panels has not been found to pose a risk to the environment, as they are enclosed in thin layers between sheets of glass or plastic within the solar panel. To readily release contaminants into the environment, solar panels would need to be ground to a fine dust. As such, contamination of soil resulting from the proposal is not expected.

The Department has included strict soil and erosion operating conditions in the draft consent, including measures in line with government guidelines, including the Managing Urban Stormwater, Soils and Construction, or the Blue Book, and the Soil and Water Management Plan, which includes monitoring and reporting requirements.

ANDREW MILLS: Iwan, just on the point you made in relation to the panels themselves, there have been, in that Canberra and surrounding areas, severe storms. And of course, we continue to have the potential for severe weather events that could damage the panels, smash – Canberra lost roofs and massive damage to cars and so on a number of years ago, from a significant hailstorm. That could smash up all of the solar panels, for example, a worst case scenario.

You mentioned it would require the panels to be ground down for it to then present, the metals within the solar panels to present a risk. Just given the scenario I've painted, have you considered whether or not that kind of event gives rise to

contamination risks of that kind in relation to the metals in the panel?

IWAN DAVIES: The Department has researched the matter, Andrew, and to the best of our knowledge, it would have to be ground to a fine dust to have those types of impacts. Hence why we – and going to your question – hence why we have included operating conditions, including monitoring reporting requirements regarding potential soil impacts, and then enforce those on the Applicant in the conditions.

DR BRONWYN EVANS: Can I ask a follow up question, Iwan, to the one about the solar panel contamination risk? It comes up quite frequently in submissions. And I'm wondering, is there research papers that are in the public domain that we can have access to, just to understand how that assessment was done, and how that's explained?

IWAN DAVIES: I'd have to take that one on notice, Bronwyn.

DR BRONWYN EVANS: Thank you, thank you.

IWAN DAVIES: OK, thank you. Regarding subdivision. Subdivision is required for the project to separate out the parts of the site that will be utilised by TransGrid for connection to the project, including the substation. The proposed subdivision is below the minimum lot size of the Yass Valley LEP, however, is necessary for the operation of the substation and ancillary facilities.

The proposed subdivision would not result in any additional dwelling entitlements. Yass Valley Council did not raise concerns regarding the subdivision, and under section 4.38(3) of the EPA Act, the development consent for the project can be granted despite the subdivision component of the application not being in line with the LEP.

Anything further on subdivision? If not, I'll perhaps go to my final slide.

So in summary, electricity generating works on the site are permissible with consent, in accordance with the Transport and Infrastructure SEPP. The overall agricultural productivity of the region would not be significantly reduced. The site has good solar resources, access to the road network, and direct access to the electricity network.

The project has been designed to largely avoid site constraints, including nearby non-associated receivers, agricultural land, water courses, remnant native vegetation, and Aboriginal heritage sites, while maintaining its ability to utilise the existing electricity infrastructure and road network.

The project would assist in transitioning the electricity sector from coal and gas fired power stations to low emission sources, and is consistent with New South Wales policy. It would have a generating capacity of 100 megawatts of clean electricity, which can power approximately 40,000 homes, and 45 megawatts and

90 megawatt hours of energy storage to dispatch energy to the grid when the energy generation from renewable energy resources is limited.

The Department considers that the project achieves an appropriate balance between maximising the efficiency of the solar resource development, and minimising the potential impacts on the surrounding land users and the environment.

Through job creation and capital investment and a planning agreement with Council, the project would also stimulate economic investment in renewable energy and provide flow-on benefits to the local community. On balance, the Department considers that the project is in the public interest and is approvable, subject to the recommended conditions of consent. Thank you.

ANDREW MILLS: Can ask a follow up question, and it in part relates to the, I guess, the subdivision point, substation and so on. What's the connection from that substation to the grid? Is it underground, overground, by lines? How does that part work?

IWAN DAVIES: That would be over, that would be above ground, as a cutting to the transmission, to the transmission line.

ANDREW MILLS: And then the power that's generated, does that – perhaps a different question. I'll phrase it differently. Do those transmission lines serve both the ACT and New South Wales?

IWAN DAVIES: Those transmission lines serve the entirety of the national electricity network, which covers the eastern states.

ANDREW MILLS: I don't want to monopolise. Richard and Bron, would you have other questions?

DR BRONWYN EVANS: I did have a question, Iwan, and it related to – you mentioned the battery, the 40 megawatt battery storage. It from reading the proposal, it seemed that they were distributed across the site. Is that a correct understanding of how they're going to be located, and is that a usual way? I would have expected them to be more concentrated, if you have an understanding or how your assessment viewed that distributed network of containers.

IWAN DAVIES: Absolutely, and fair question, Bronwyn. So many of our applications include the batteries that are spread throughout the site, which are called decentralised batteries. And some applications include options, either centralised – or many include options, either a centralised or decentralised, as technology advances. Our assessment absolutely considered that the projects would be spread throughout the site, including those visual and potential noise impacts.

ANDREW MILLS: Is there a particular reason for that, to spread them?

IWAN DAVIES: Yes, so perhaps, rather than take it on notice, I may – there's some technicalities behind it, that perhaps I'll point you to the Applicant in the first instance. But there are advantages to both a centralised and/or decentralised system.

ANDREW MILLS: And this, again, may be a question more for the Applicant, so feel free to direct us there. There's reference to nine batteries, but there's also reference to 36 containers in the EIS. I'm just trying to get my head around does that suggest that it takes four containers for one battery?

IWAN DAVIES: That would be an appropriate presumption, Andrew. Yeah, batteries do require those multiple containers, and particularly to negate any hazards or fire risks, including ensuring the appropriate separation distances between those battery units.

ANDREW MILLS: Got it, OK, thank you.

RICHARD PEARSON: One final question from me, and again, this is probably more for the Applicant, but there's a statement somewhere that I've read about subsidised electricity for adjacent residents. Is this something that's come across your review of the project?

IWAN DAVIES: I'd have to ask the team, if we're able to talk to that at this stage, or if that's something we take on notice.

CAMERON ASHE: I think that might be one we take on notice, unless you've got something there, Gabby?

GABRIELLE ALLAN: No, I've seen similar references, but there's no detail on how that might be managed.

RICHARD PEARSON: Right. Well, we can talk to the Applicant about that as well, I think. I just wondered if it's something that you were across, but maybe it's a thought bubble, I don't know. We can find out.

IWAN DAVIES: Yeah, thanks, Richard. We perhaps won't take it on notice, and perhaps if you asked the Applicant, and any further, of course, any further questions after that, certainly happy to provide input.

RICHARD PEARSON: Sure.

IWAN DAVIES: Thank you.

ANDREW MILLS: All right. If there are no other questions, Bronwyn, Richard, nothing else that you would like to add, Iwan and the team?

IWAN DAVIES: Not from me, thank you Chair.

ANDREW MILLS: Thank you very much for all of that today, that was very helpful to the panel in its deliberations. I appreciate that, and I have no doubt there may be opportunities to come back to you with further questions as we go along. Thank you. Thank you for the work that's been done so far.

IWAN DAVIES: Thanks very much.

DR BRONWYN EVANS: Thank you.

ANDREW MILLS: Thank you all.

GABRIELLE ALLAN: Thank you.

CAMERON ASHE : Thank you.

GABRIELLE ALLAN: Thanks very much.

>THE MEETING CONCLUDED