

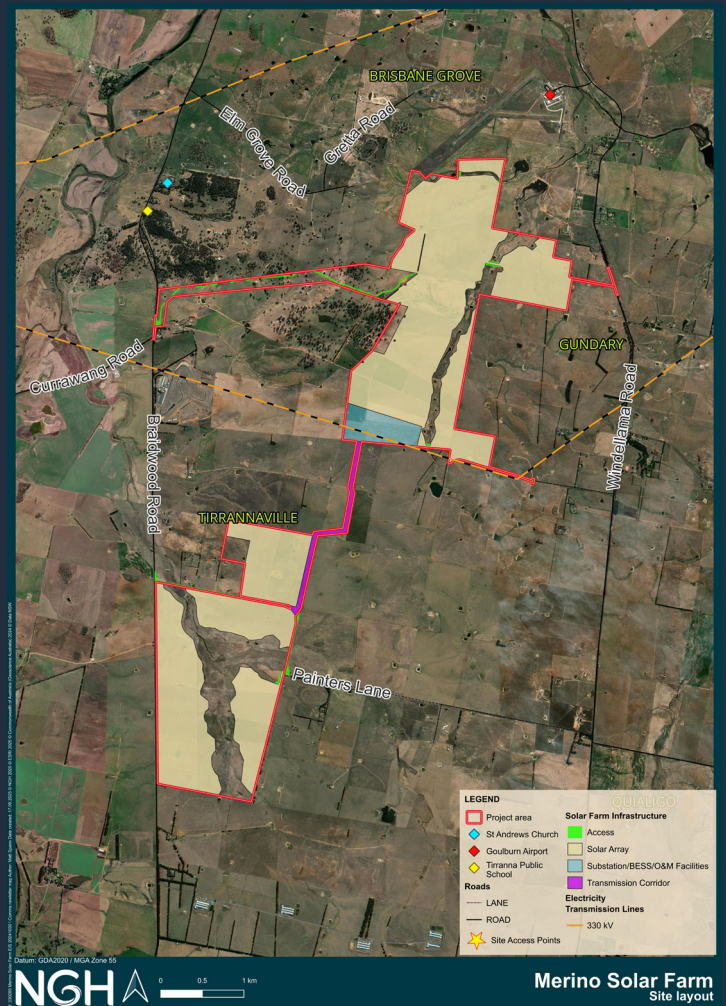
Merino Solar Farm

EDPR Australia is proposing to construct and operate a utility-scale Solar Farm and Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), located 6 km south of Goulburn, between Braidwood Road and Windellama Road, south of the Goulburn Airport.

Key features include:

- A 450 MW solar farm
- A 450 MW / 1,800 MWh BESS (enough for around 4 hours of energy storage)
- An onsite substation connected to the existing 330 kV Transgrid transmission line
- Supporting infrastructure such as transformers, inverters, operations and maintenance buildings, offices, and staff amenities
- A switchyard and parking facilities for ongoing operations.

We are now nearing the end of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) phase, where specialist studies have assessed the Project's anticipated impacts. These assessments also cover many of the questions and concerns raised by the community.



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What happens next?

The full EIS report, encompassing all specialist assessment outcomes, is due to be submitted to the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) by the end of September.

Once the EIS is officially accepted as complete by the DPHI, it will be made available for public review and comment. During this period, various stakeholders, including the general public, industry, and government agencies, will have the opportunity to provide feedback, express support, raise concerns or object to the Project.

The exhibition period, which typically lasts a minimum of 28 days, is an important part of the assessment and approval process and ensures that all voices are heard. It is expected to be available in late September.

If you're interested in reviewing the EIS, providing comment, or following Project updates, keep an eye on the Merino Solar Farm Project page in the **Major Projects Portal**. This will be your primary source for accessing the EIS and staying informed on the next steps as the Project progresses. You can visit the webpage by visiting <https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/merino-solar-farm>, or by scanning the QR code below.



Engagement to-date

Since starting the EIS process in mid to late 2024, we have been engaging with neighbours, community members, and key stakeholders to hear your views and answer your questions.

In February this year, we held two community events: a drop-in session at the Goulburn Soldiers Club and a pop-up booth at the Goulburn Marketplace. Together, these sessions brought more than 50 conversations with community members, giving people the chance to meet the Project team, raise concerns, and learn more about the opportunities the Project may bring. We also shared event details through newspaper ads, emails, letters, and local Facebook groups to make sure as many people as possible were aware and able to join in.

In addition to these events, we continued the conversation through one-on-one briefings and interviews, which are helping to shape the Social Impact Assessment. These discussions gave us valuable insight into community priorities, from protecting landscape values to exploring ideas for a Community Benefit Scheme should the Project go ahead.

Many of you have also expressed the strong passion and deep connection you feel for the region. We respect and value this shared commitment to looking out for one another and maintaining the strength of the community, and we look forward to continuing this conversation as the Project progresses.

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How your feedback has been considered during the EIS

Throughout the EIS process, community feedback played an important role in shaping studies, assessments, and Project design. Your input helped to:

- Focus technical studies on the issues that matter most locally
- Guide how assessments were carried out and what they examined
- Bring in local knowledge, observations, and lived experiences
- Identify potential design changes and mitigation measures early.

All feedback – whether supportive, critical, or in between – was valuable. Specific, constructive input was particularly powerful, as it directly influenced the scope and direction of studies and informed the development of the Project.

The following table outlines the top 5 concerns identified during the consultation process.

Topic	Number of mentions	Detail
Project ownership	Concerns were raised by 66 stakeholders.	One of the strongest themes we heard throughout engagement was concern about the Project's ownership and long-term commitment to the local community. Many people raised questions about EDP Renewables (EDPR), the parent company of EDPR Australia, and whether a multinational company is the right fit to deliver a major infrastructure project in regional NSW. The concerns most often mentioned included: • Whether a foreign-owned company could be trusted to prioritise the best interests of the local community • How long-term maintenance, environmental responsibility, and eventual decommissioning would be managed • Who would be accountable if problems arose once the Project was built and operating. Some community members also expressed a perception that decision-making lacked transparency or local oversight, and survey responses sometimes described the Project as benefiting "overseas interests" rather than local communities. In response, we have remained open and transparent about our ownership structure and history. While we are part of an international company, our Australian team is responsible for delivering, operating, and maintaining this Project. All electricity generated by the Merino Solar Farm will stay in Australia through the National Energy Market (NEM) and will support local energy needs, not overseas markets.
How it is assessed in the EIS		
Project ownership is not assessed in the EIS, as it relates to governance rather than environmental impacts. Concerns about long-term maintenance, environmental care, decommissioning, and accountability are instead addressed in the State Significant Development approvals process, which is expected to require a decommissioning and rehabilitation plan be prepared, which the Project has committed to. This plan would be updated at intervals throughout the operational life of the project, to ensure it is fit for purpose prior to decommissioning. These plans generally outline how infrastructure will be safely dismantled, how materials and waste will be managed, and how the land will be restored to an agreed use—such as farming or habitat—so it is not left derelict.		

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Topic	Number of mentions	Detail
Visual impact	Concerns were raised by approximately 45 stakeholders.	A key concern raised by the community is how the Project may change the rural landscape and the character of the region. Many people expressed worry that the solar farm and associated infrastructure could create a visual intrusion on scenic valleys and ridgelines, altering the look and feel of what is now seen as a natural and unspoiled setting. Specific concerns included the proximity of infrastructure to homes and roads, the potential impact on property values, and the perception that large-scale solar infrastructure would introduce an industrial character into a rural environment. Some survey respondents described the Project as likely to be visually dominant and therefore out of place in the landscape. Feedback also highlighted issues around proposed visual mitigation measures. Some community members felt the timeframe for vegetation screening to grow to an effective height would be too long, while others requested screening on their own properties to reduce the immediate impact on views. Questions were also raised about the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, with some people feeling that the modelling provided does not fully reflect the value of the current views to the local residents. A few stakeholders expressed concerns about the independence of the assessment and whether it accurately represents community experience living within the local landscape.
How it is assessed in the EIS		
The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment must be undertaken in accordance with the relevant NSW State Government guideline – The Large-Scale Solar Energy Guideline: Technical Supplement – Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 2024. It provides a framework for standardised assessment for an impact which is acknowledged to be uniquely subjective to each individual. The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment includes photo montages from key viewpoints to understand potential changes, assess impacts, and identify avoidance where needed, and guide minimisation and mitigation measures. With the inclusion of one setback area, the Project now achieves no greater than a 'low' impact for any nearby residences, using the required multi-step modelling method that considers existing vegetation as well as topography and factors including the likely sensitivity of viewers. A low impact means that further mitigation, such as tree planting, is not required, increasing the confidence that the Project's impacts will be manageable and acceptable. Glint and glare modelling is also being undertaken. It is not anticipated that the solar farm would have any significant impacts on receivers, including the nearby Goulburn Airport, relating to glint and glare. It is important to note as well, that the development footprint assessed in the EIS is the 'worst-case' scenario. True impacts may be less after construction, as the development footprint is refined during the detailed design of the solar farm post-approval.		



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Topic	Number of mentions	Detail
Consultation and transparency	Concerns were raised by 44 stakeholders.	A common theme in the feedback was that many people felt the engagement process had been inadequate or overly controlled. Some community members described feeling uninformed or excluded from key Project decisions, with survey responses highlighting frustration that information was not always shared proactively or was difficult to access. Words such as “brick wall,” “kept in the dark,” and “tokenistic” were used to describe the experience. Some nearby residents also noted they only became aware of the Project later in the planning process, and several stakeholders raised concerns about transparency, particularly around assessment methods, decision-making, and how benefits would be shared locally versus externally. We acknowledge the Project’s earlier pause. SEARs were received in 2023, the company was acquired later that year, and the EIS phase recommenced in October 2024. Since then, we have worked to provide a range of ways for people to engage, including mail-outs, online surveys, Project emails and phone lines, one-on-one meetings, a drop-in session, and a community pop-up. We also recognise that some information requested by stakeholders have not been immediately available while specialist studies were underway, but we have aimed to provide answers and updates now that EIS is coming to completion.
How it is assessed in the EIS		
Ongoing community and stakeholder engagement is documented in the EIS, including feedback received, how concerns have been addressed, and any resulting changes or commitments. Consultation logs are also supplied to the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure so they have transparent oversight into engagement and consultation activities/discussions that occurred throughout the EIS. Engagement activities are designed to ensure communication is accessible, relevant, and responsive to the community. In addition to broad consultation, neighbouring landholders are engaged directly to input into detailed investigations and stay informed of technical findings relevant to them.		



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Topic	Number of mentions	Detail
Traffic and access impacts	Concerns were raised by 39 stakeholders.	Traffic and road safety were major concerns raised during engagement. Many community members were worried about increased heavy vehicle movements on local roads not designed for industrial use, and the potential for road damage, congestion, and impacts on property access and amenity values of local lane ways. Some residents also raised concerns about blocked driveways, unclear traffic routes, and possible delays to emergency services during construction. Several stakeholders expressed frustration about the lack of targeted consultation on traffic and access, particularly for residents living along potential haulage routes. Safety for children and families was highlighted as a key issue, with concerns that heavy vehicles could pose risks to children catching buses, playing near roads, or to residents carrying out day-to-day activities like mowing along verges.
How it is assessed in the EIS		
Local concerns led to an early traffic access option analysis to understand how to rationalise site access requirements, in advance of the Traffic Impact Assessment. Specific advice was sought to address the amenity value of local roads and concerns regarding potential cumulative impacts with Gundry Solar Farm. This was used to determine the access points now proposed, which minimise the use of Gundry Lane and restrict impacts to the western half of Painters Lane. These measures will directly address local amenity and potential for cumulative impacts. While not required to manage traffic or road safety, sealing of Painters Lane is offered as an additional benefit of the Project, to be funded through the Community Benefit Sharing. The Traffic Impact Assessment concluded that while construction of the solar farm would increase traffic volumes on local roads such as Windellama Road and Braidwood Road, these roads have capacity to carry these increase traffic volumes for the duration of construction. This was in consideration of local school bus routes. Some road upgrades would be required to facilitate safe vehicle movements, such as widening of the western portion of Painters Lane, the construction of turning bays from Windellama Road into the Project site, and from Braidwood Road onto Painters Lane. These are now proposed as part of the Project. A haulage route assessment from the Ports of Newcastle and Melbourne has been prepared, with the final choice of route to be made in the detailed design phase, post-approval. Additional permits are required for over size, over mass vehicle movements. A Dilapidation Report will be required to ensure local roads are returned to the same or better condition after construction finishes. Operational traffic volumes would be low (less than 20 vehicle movements a day) and would not pose any ongoing safety risks.		

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Topic	Number of mentions	Detail
Fire risk	Concerns were raised by approximately 38 stakeholders.	Bushfire risk was one of the most frequently raised concerns across all engagement activities. Many community members feared that the materials used in the solar panels, the battery and the scale of the development could increase the risk of bushfires in the region. Questions focused on the adequacy of fire mitigation measures, such as vegetation management, access for emergency services, and emergency response protocols. Around seven stakeholders specifically asked who would be responsible for fire safety, the role of the Rural Fire Service (RFS), and whether worst-case scenarios had been properly modelled. Survey respondents also voiced concern, drawing on recent bushfire seasons and expressing low confidence that the Project could be safely integrated into the local landscape. Some residents also raised related concerns about higher insurance premiums due to increased fire risk. Several residents near the Project site noted that the current site forms part of their evacuation plans and asked how this would be managed in an emergency.
How it is assessed in the EIS		
A Bushfire Assessment and Preliminary Hazard Assessment have now been completed, and outlined the following measures to lower the risk of a fire spreading to or from the site: • An Asset Protection Zone of minimum 10m would be maintained surrounding solar farm infrastructure. The Asset Protection Zone surrounding the proposed BESS unit, substation, and associated ancillary infrastructure would be a minimum of 12m to the southeast and northwest, and 10m in all other directions. • The vegetation within the Asset Protection Zone would be managed to appropriate standards to reduce the risk of a fire spreading – including reduced tree and shrub coverage and management (e.g. mowing) of the understory layer • Site access would be constructed to provide suitable access to firefighting vehicles, such as an 8m carriageway (which may include grassed verges) • Provision of adequate firefighting resources, including water storage. The BESS would also include fire management and prevention devices, including: • Adequate spacing to prevent fire propagation between containers • Cooling systems to prevent thermal runaway • Fire alarm and suppression systems • Automatic sprinklers to cool adjacent containers in the event of a fire.		
Hazard assessments establish requirements and commitments within the EIS to prepare further studies, emergency response protocols and management plans post-approval, including: • Fire Safety Study • Emergency Response Plan • Bush Fire Emergency Management and Operations Plan The Fire Safety Study is typically developed with Fire and Rescue NSW post-approval, prior to construction, considering the operational capacity of local agencies. Plume dispersion modelling and analysis of potential toxic gas emissions (e.g., hydrogen fluoride) is sometimes prepared post-approval to inform emergency response planning, with results compared to relevant health criteria.		



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Important social topics

In addition to environmental impacts and Project design considerations, many community members raised broader social concerns. Below is an overview of the key issues we have heard from the community, and how we are approaching them.

Impacts to mental health

We understand that changes in the local environment, especially those involving large-scale projects, can affect people in different ways, including their wellbeing. We take community feedback seriously and recognise that mental health is an important part of a resilient and connected community.

We acknowledge that the Project has caused stress for some neighbours and others in the wider community. It is important to us that we consider not only environmental and economic factors, but also the social and psychological impacts that may arise.

To help better understand these concerns, we have been carrying out assessments on issues such as visual changes and noise. We hope that providing clear information about these impacts will help reduce uncertainty and ease some of the anxiety within the community.

We also encourage everyone to take care of themselves, to check in with friends and neighbours, and to seek support if needed. Services such as Lifeline, Beyond Blue, and local mental health providers are available to offer help when things feel difficult. If this is you, we encourage you to seek support.

Lifeline: 13 11 14 (24/7)

Beyond Blue: 1300 224 636 (24/7)

Will my house be devalued?

We heard strong concerns from the community about whether the Project could reduce property values, particularly for homes close to the site. People told us they worry about changes to views, rural character, and amenity, and some felt the Project might deter future buyers.

Because large-scale solar farms and batteries are still relatively new in Australia, there is limited direct evidence about their impact on property values. However, [research](#) by the Clean Energy Council found the opposite trend in some regions: a 2022 report showed property prices in six NSW and Victorian council areas with major renewable projects rose by 35–51% over five years, alongside growth in jobs, wages, and local economies.

For the Merino Solar Farm, our independent assessments have found that potential impacts from noise and visual changes are low to medium and can be readily managed. While property values are not something the planning system directly measures, we are committed to minimising impacts wherever possible to help protect the liveability and appeal of the local area.

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Will insurance for neighbouring landholders be impacted?

We understand that neighbouring landowners may be concerned about insurance premiums rising as a result of a renewable development being nearby.

While insurance providers apply their own risk assessment and pricing models, the EIS demonstrates that the risks associated with this Project are clearly understood and can be effectively mitigated with a high degree of confidence.

Importantly, the Insurance Council of Australia has stated that they are *“not aware of any instances where Insurance Council members have been unable to provide insurance or have increased premiums as a result of a farm (or a neighbouring property) hosting energy infrastructure.”*

For more information, we encourage you to refer to the [Insurance Council of Australia’s statement](#) regarding farm insurance and energy infrastructure.

What benefits will the community receive?

We are working with Council and the community to design a Community Benefit Sharing program that will deliver lasting benefits for the region. Our aim is to ensure that the advantages of hosting the Merino Solar Farm extend beyond jobs and services during construction and continue to support the community well into the future.

Community Benefit Sharing is a formal part of the planning process for State Significant Developments in NSW. It is not compensation but a way to create tangible, positive outcomes for local communities. Programs can include support for education and skills development, community health, local infrastructure, or other priorities identified by residents.

Community feedback, insights from the Social Impact Assessment, and recommendations from agencies are all helping to shape the design of this program. We also heard concerns about whether the benefits would genuinely reach those most affected, or whether they would feel tokenistic. We acknowledge these concerns and are committed to working with the community to develop a fair and transparent approach that reflects local priorities.

As a result, we have proposed a share of the fund is distributed to those most affected by the Project; direct offers have been made to those landholders closest to the Project. Where these are not accepted, the funds will revert to Council to administer.



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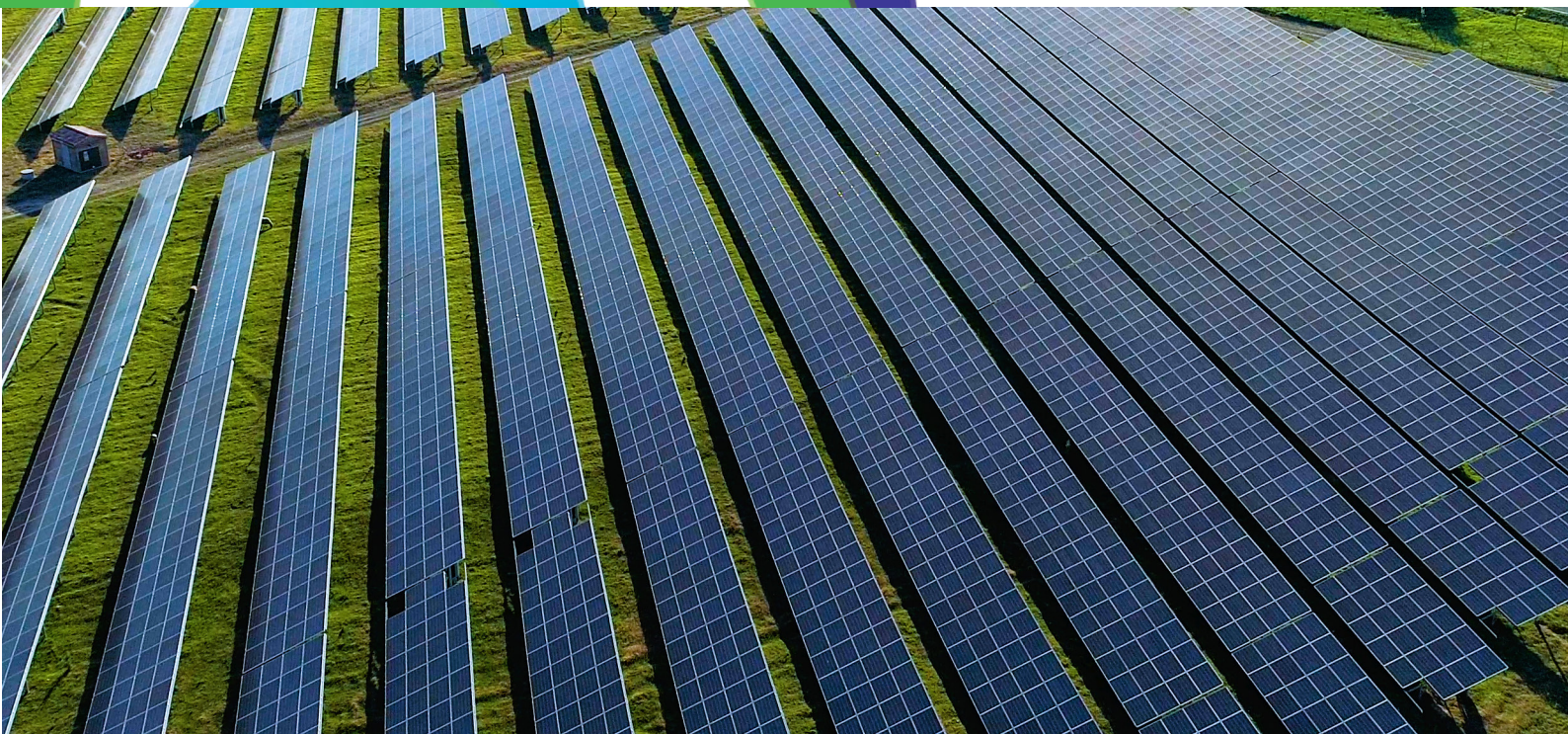
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