



Wellington Solar Farm Modification 2

Revised Project Layout
State Significant Development Modification Assessment
(SSD 8573 MOD 2)

April 2020



Published by the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment

dpie.nsw.gov.au

Title: Wellington Solar Farm

Subtitle: Modification 2

Cover image: Solar panels. Source: NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment Image Library
<https://images.planning.nsw.gov.au/>.

© State of New South Wales through Department of Planning, Industry and Environment 2020. You may copy, distribute, display, download and otherwise freely deal with this publication for any purpose, provided that you attribute the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment as the owner. However, you must obtain permission if you wish to charge others for access to the publication (other than at cost); include the publication in advertising or a product for sale; modify the publication; or republish the publication on a website. You may freely link to the publication on a departmental website.

Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (April 2020) and may not be accurate, current or complete. The State of New South Wales (including the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment), the author and the publisher take no responsibility, and will accept no liability, for the accuracy, currency, reliability or correctness of any information included in the document (including material provided by third parties). Readers should make their own inquiries and rely on their own advice when making decisions related to material contained in this publication.

Executive Summary

Lightsource Development Services Australia Pty Ltd (Lightsource BP) has approval to develop the Wellington Solar Farm (the project), located approximately 2 kilometres northeast of Wellington, in the Dubbo Regional local government area.

Since its approval in 2018, the project has undergone one modification to extend TransGrid's Wellington substation layout to facilitate the project's connection to the electricity network.

The approved project includes the construction, operation, upgrading and decommissioning of a solar farm with an estimated capacity of 174 megawatts (MW) with 25 MW / 100 MW-hour of battery storage.

Proposed Modification

The proposed modification application seeks approval to amend the project layout to optimise the yield and constructability of the solar farm following detailed design.

The application seeks to increase the solar panel layout area and battery storage facility area, increase the number of solar panels, relocate the temporary construction compound and site access point, and extend the transmission line connecting to TransGrid's substation.

The modification application also seeks approval to relocate all internal overhead transmission lines underground and to allow the use of two operations and maintenance facilities on site.

In addition, Lightsource BP has confirmed that bifacial solar panels would be used and confirmed the capacity of the project as 170 MW.

Engagement

The Department published the modification application on its website on 14 February 2020 and sought comment from Dubbo Regional Council (Council), TransGrid, the relevant government agencies and neighbouring landowners. None of the agencies objected to the proposed modification but provided advice related to their respective regulatory responsibilities. No comments were provided by the neighbouring landowners.

Assessment

In assessing the merits of the proposed modification, the Department has considered the existing conditions of consent, previous environmental assessments for the project, the modification application and supporting information, the amendment letters, applicable government policies and guidelines and requirements of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act).

The key matters considered in the Department's assessment are compatibility of the proposed land use and impacts on biodiversity, heritage, amenity (including visual, traffic and noise) and hazards.

The modification is entirely within the approved project site boundary which is land zoned RU1 Primary Production, R5 Large Lot Residential and SP2 Infrastructure under the *Wellington Local Environmental Plan 2012* (Wellington LEP). Although the development footprint would increase by 6 hectares (ha) (i.e. from 282 ha to 288 ha) within the site boundary, the proposed changes are consistent with the change

in land use for the approved project and the modified project would remain consistent with objectives of these zones.

The modification would impact 4.27 ha of endangered ecological communities (EEC) in low and moderate to good condition. This would increase the project's offset liability by 67 ecosystem credits and one species credit for White-bellied Sea-Eagle. Both the Department and the Department's Biodiversity and Conservation Division are satisfied that the modification would not result in significant biodiversity impacts, subject to the provision of the revised offset liability credits.

The modification confirms that the Narrawa Homestead, listed as a historic heritage item under the Wellington LEP, would be repurposed as an operations and maintenance facility (O&M facility). This would provide public benefits by maintaining the historic heritage values of the building in the long-term. The modification would also allow the use of the approved alternative O&M facility as an additional O&M facility, should it be determined that the Narrawa Homestead is unable to house all the project's electrical equipment. This would allow flexibility in design and assist with the constructability of the project.

The potential amenity impacts (i.e. visual, noise and traffic) and hazard impacts as a result of the proposed amendments are considered to be negligible and will be managed and mitigated adequately with the existing conditions of consent. The Department, Roads and Maritime Services and Council are satisfied that the proposed changes would have negligible impact on road network capacity, efficiency or safety.

Summary

On balance, the Department considers that the proposed modification has merit, and is in the public interest.

In this regard, the proposed modification would allow the benefits of the project to be realised following detailed design, would facilitate connection to TransGrid's substation and would allow greater flexibility to deliver dispatchable energy to the electricity network as a result of an expanded battery storage facility area.

The Department's assessment has concluded that the modification would not result in any significant impacts beyond those that were assessed and approved. Any residual environmental and amenity impacts associated with the proposed modification could be mitigated and managed through the revised conditions of consent.

Importantly, the proposed changes would ensure the project's constructability and ability to connect to the electricity network. As such, the Department considers that the proposed modification should be approved.

Contents

<u>1</u>	<u>Introduction</u>	1
	1.1 <u>Consent history</u>	1
<u>2</u>	<u>Proposed modification</u>	2
<u>3</u>	<u>Statutory context</u>	6
	3.1 <u>Scope of modifications</u>	6
	3.2 <u>Consent authority</u>	6
	3.3 <u>Mandatory matters for consideration</u>	6
<u>4</u>	<u>Engagement</u>	8
	4.1 <u>Department's engagement</u>	8
	4.2 <u>Key Issues – Government Agencies</u>	8
<u>5</u>	<u>Assessment</u>	10
	5.1 <u>Compatibility of Proposed Land Use</u>	10
	5.2 <u>Biodiversity</u>	11
	5.3 <u>Amenity</u>	13
	5.4 <u>Heritage</u>	15
	5.5 <u>Hazard</u>	16
	5.6 <u>Summary</u>	16
<u>6</u>	<u>Evaluation</u>	17
<u>7</u>	<u>Recommendation</u>	18
<u>8</u>	<u>Determination</u>	19
	<u>Appendices</u>	20
	<u>Appendix A – List of referenced documents</u>	20
	<u>Appendix B – Modification Report</u>	20
	<u>Appendix C – Biodiversity Development Assessment Report</u>	20
	<u>Appendix D – Notice of Modification</u>	20
	<u>Appendix E – Consolidated Consent</u>	20
	<u>Appendix F – Summary of Administrative Changes to Conditions</u>	20

1 Introduction

Lightsource Development Services Australia Pty Ltd (Lightsource BP) has approval to develop the Wellington Solar Farm (the project). The project is located approximately 2 kilometres (km) northeast of Wellington in the Dubbo Regional local government area (LGA) (see **Figure 1**).

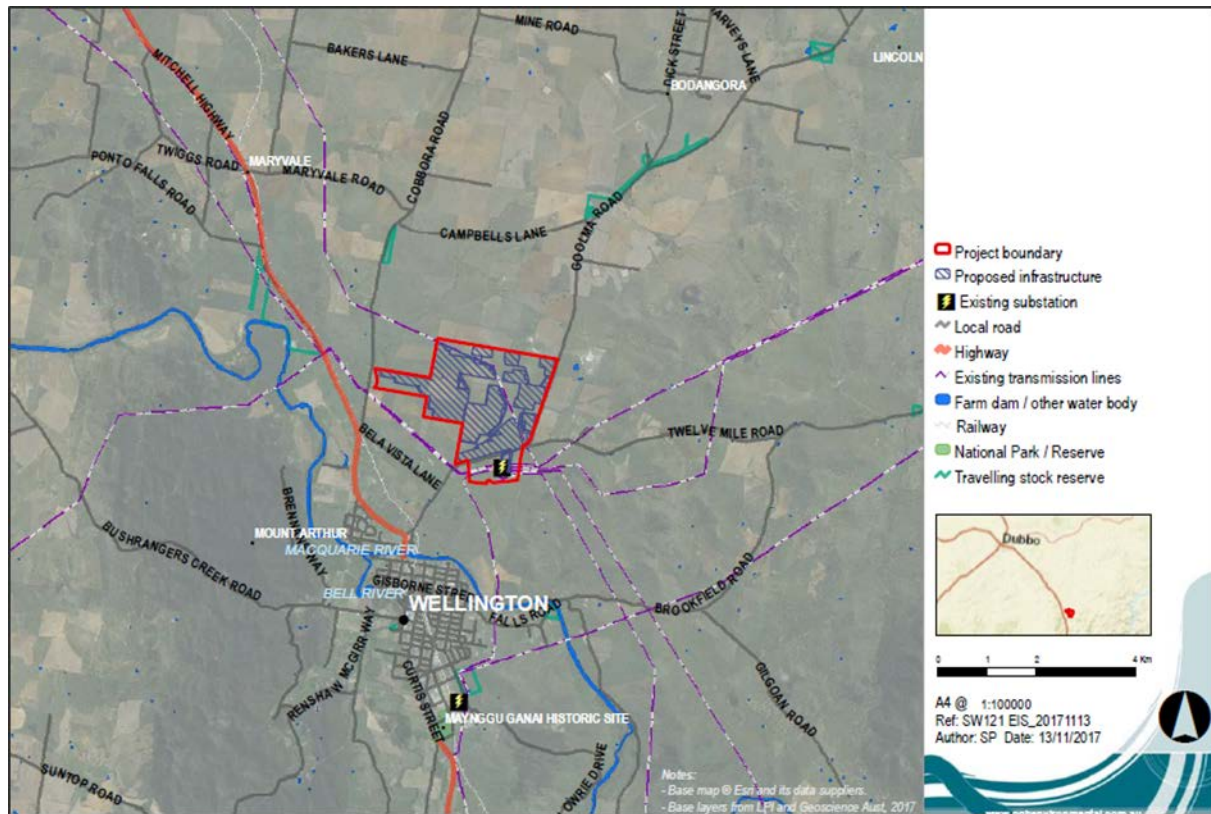


Figure 1 | Regional Context

1.1 Consent history

The project was granted development consent on 25 May 2018 by the Executive Director, Resource Assessments and Business Systems, as delegate of the then Minister for Planning. A subsequent modification to the consent (Modification 1) involved extending TransGrid's Wellington substation layout to facilitate the project's connection to the electricity network and was granted consent on 11 December 2019 by the Director, Energy Assessments, as delegate for the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces.

The consent permits the construction, operation, upgrading and decommissioning of a solar farm with a generating capacity of approximately 174 megawatts (MW) and includes:

- approximately 440,000 solar panels (up to 4.5 m in height) and 50 inverter stations (up to 2.9 m in height);
- a battery storage facility area with 25 MW / 100 MW-hour (MWh) capacity and an onsite substation;
- an underground transmission line, connecting the battery storage facility to TransGrid's substation;

- internal access tracks, staff amenities, offices, maintenance and equipment buildings, laydown areas, onsite car parking and security fencing; and
- vegetation screening along the southeast boundary and western-most corner of the site.

Lightsource BP commenced construction of the project in December 2019.

2 Proposed modification

The modification application seeks amendments to the solar farm layout to optimise the yield and constructability of the solar farm and ability to connect to the electricity network following detailed design.

The modification is described in detail in the Modification Report (**Appendix B**) and amendment letters (**Appendix C**) and seeks to:

- increase the development footprint by 6 hectares (ha);
- increase the solar panel layout area and the number of solar panels;
- reduce the number of inverters;
- expand the battery storage facility area;
- allow the use of the approved alternative operations and maintenance facility (O&M facility) as an additional O&M facility (in addition to the Narrawa Homestead);
- relocate the temporary construction compound and parking areas;
- realign and change the overhead transmission lines from overhead to underground; and
- relocate the site access point.

Lightsource BP has also confirmed that bifacial solar panels would be used and confirmed the capacity of the project as 170 MW.

A summary of the proposed changes to the approved project is in **Table 1**.

Table 1 | Summary of proposed changes

Component	As approved	Proposed modification	Change
Total development footprint	282 ha	288 ha	Increased by 6 ha (2%)
Solar Panels (number & area)	440,000 solar panels (262 ha)	500,714 solar panels (280 ha)	Increased by 60,714 panels and 18 ha (7%)
Inverters	50 inverters	33 inverters	Reduced by 17
Battery storage facility area	Located within 0.25 ha	Located within 1.46 ha	Battery storage capacity remains the same but located within a larger potential site within project boundary (increased by 1.21 ha)

Component	As approved	Proposed modification	Change
O&M facility	Narrawa Homestead or alternative O&M facility	Narrawa Homestead and expanded alternative O&M facility	Total area is increased by 0.013 ha
Temporary construction compound and parking	Located north of the site access Area: 7.7 ha	Relocated south of the Narrawa Homestead Area: 1.1 ha	Relocated within the project site Area reduced by 6.6 ha (86%)
Transmission line to TransGrid's substation (between Goolma Road and substation)	403 m	459 m	Extended further south by 56 m
Transmission lines connecting the panels to the battery storage facility	15 km of overhead transmission lines.	Replaced with 15.74 km of underground transmission lines and realigned to underneath the internal access tracks	Transmission lines length increased by 0.74 km (5%). Realigned and relocated underground
Site access point	Approximately 810 m south of the entrance to the Wellington Correction Centre	Approximately 910 m south of the entrance to the Wellington Correction Centre	Relocated 100 m south of the approved indicative location

The approved and proposed project layouts are illustrated in **Figure 2** and **Figure 3** respectively.



Figure 2 | Approved Project Layout

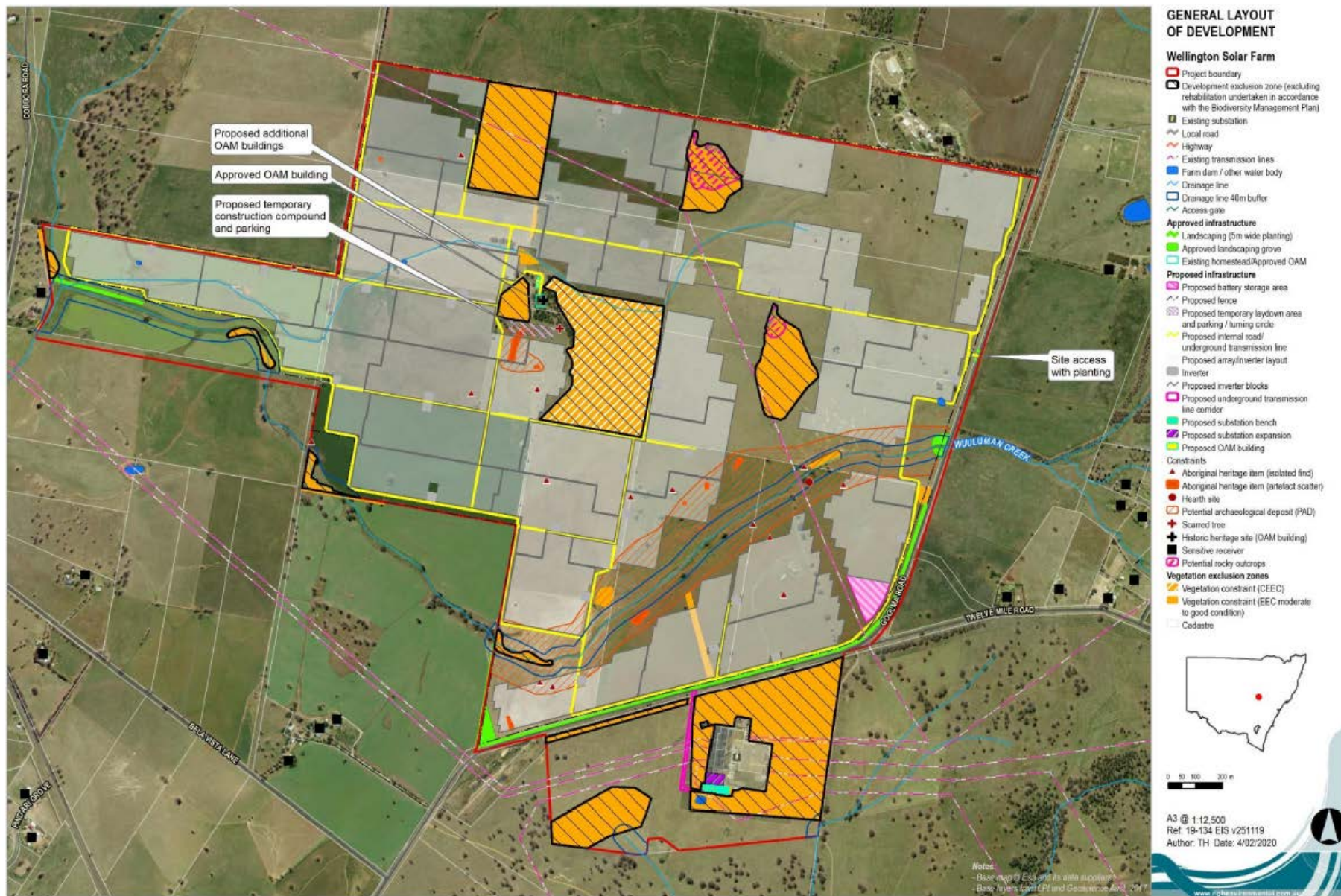


Figure 3 | Proposed Project Layout

3 Statutory context

3.1 Scope of modifications

Consideration as modification

The project was originally approved under Section 4.38 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act) and any modification to this consent must be made under Section 4.55 of the EP&A Act.

Lightsource BP considered that the modified project would be substantially the same as the development that was originally considered in accordance with Section 115(1) of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000* (EP&A Regulation).

The Department has considered the scope of the modification application and the existing consent and considers that the modification is substantially the same development as originally approved and can be considered as a modification and does not require a new development application.

Type of modification

The Department has reviewed the scope of the modification application and considers that the application can be characterised as a modification involving minimal environmental impacts as the proposal:

- would not significantly increase the environmental impacts of the project as approved;
- would not substantially change the approved development footprint; and
- is substantially the same development as originally approved.

Consequently, the Department is satisfied that the application is within the scope of Section 4.55(1A) of the EP&A Act. Accordingly, the application may be assessed and determined under this section.

3.2 Consent authority

Although the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces is the consent authority for the application, the Director, Energy Assessments, may determine the application under the Minister's delegation dated 9 March 2020 as Dubbo Regional Council (Council) did not object to the proposal, Lightsource BP did not make any political donations and there were no public objections. Whilst the modification application was not required to be formally exhibited, the Department informed the nearest landowners of the proposed modification.

3.3 Mandatory matters for consideration

In accordance with Section 4.55(3) of the EP&A Act, the following must be considered in granting the modification application as relevant to the application:

- environmental planning instruments, proposed instrument or development control plan;
- any planning agreement;
- EP&A Regulation;

- likely impacts of the modification application, including environmental impacts on both the natural and built environments, and social and economic impacts;
- suitability of the site;
- any submissions;
- the public interest;
- the reasons for granting the consent for the original application.

The Department has considered the relevance of the considerations for the modification application below.

Environmental planning instruments, proposed instrument or development control plan

The environmental planning instrument relevant to this modification is the *Wellington Local Environment Plan 2012* (Wellington LEP). There are no proposed or draft LEPs or development control plans for Dubbo LGA for consideration in this modification. A consideration of the Wellington LEP is outlined in **section 5** of this report.

Any planning agreement

There are no voluntary planning agreements between Lightsource BP and Council.

EP&A Regulation

There are no additional considerations relevant to the modification application in the EP&A Regulation.

Likely impacts of the modification application

The likely impacts of modification are considered in **section 5**.

Suitability of the site

The Department's assessment of the original application concluded that the site was suitable for a solar farm and associated infrastructure subject to the conditions of consent. Lightsource BP is proposing to modify the development footprint within the approved project boundary. The suitability of the site with the proposed changes is considered in **section 5.1**.

Submissions

The Department notified and sought advice from Council, TransGrid and the relevant government agencies and this is discussed in **section 4**. The Department notified adjoining landowners of the proposed modification. None of the landowners provided feedback on the modification.

Public Interest

The consideration of public interest is provided in **section 6**.

The reasons for granting the consent for the original application

The Department considered the impacts and benefits of the solar farm in accordance with the EP&A Act in granting consent.

4 Engagement

4.1 Department's engagement

In accordance with the EP&A Regulation, the Department is not required to notify any other parties of the modification application. Notwithstanding, the Department sought comment from Council, the Department's Biodiversity and Conservation Division, Road and Maritime Services, Rural Fire Service, Fire and Rescue NSW, Environmental Protection Agency, Heritage Council, the Department's Primary Industries Group, the Division of Resources and Geoscience and TransGrid. The application was also made publicly available on the Department's website on 14 February 2020.

While the Department did not formally exhibit the application, it notified landowners of adjoining residences. None of the landowners provided feedback on the modification.

As the modification application seeks to make changes to the placement of transmission lines to connect into an electricity substation, the Department notified and sought comment from TransGrid as required by Section 45 of the *State Environmental Planning Policy (Infrastructure) 2007* (Infrastructure SEPP). TransGrid supported the modification application.

4.2 Key Issues – Government Agencies

While none of the government agencies objected to the proposed modification, several provided advice. This advice is summarised below and considered in more detail in **section 5**.

Dubbo Regional Council (Council) did not object to the proposed modification. It noted that the design of the alternative O&M facility should be in accordance with the relevant requirements of the *Building Code of Australia*. The Department notes that this is already required by the existing conditions of consent. Council raised no objection to the proposed repurpose of the Narrawa Homestead.

The **Department's Biodiversity and Conservation Division** (BCD) initially raised concern with the approach to the biodiversity assessment. However, following further information provided by Lightsource BP, BCD confirmed it is satisfied with the proposed assessment and has no outstanding issues.

TransGrid supports the extension of the transmission line and confirmed that there are provisions for a connection to its substation. It also noted that the detailed design of the cable and infrastructure within the substation land would be subject to TransGrid's guidelines and Lightsource BP has acknowledged this.

Road and Maritime Services (RMS) confirmed that it does not object to the modification and supports the revised site access location. RMS requested clarification on the volume of traffic required for the increased number of solar panels as a result of this modification. Lightsource BP advised that the original traffic estimates were conservative and can accommodate the additional infrastructure delivered to site as part of this modification.

Fire & Rescue NSW (FRNSW) reiterated its position to require Lightsource BP to prepare an Emergency Response Plan and a Fire Safety Study for the battery storage facility. These requirements are reflected in the current conditions of consent.

Rural Fire Service (RFS) did not object to the proposed modification and raised no specific concerns.

The **Environmental Protection Agency** (EPA) noted that it has no specific concerns about the proposal, but recommended that air quality and waste be appropriately managed. The existing consent already includes requirements to address dust and waste management.

The **Department's Primary Industries Group (DPI Primary Industries) Fisheries Division** did not object to the proposed modification. It noted that new guidelines were in place for the crossing of waterways. This reference is already addressed in the current consent which includes later versions of the relevant guidelines.

DPI Primary Industries Agriculture Division and the Department's **Division of Resources & Geoscience** (DRG) did not object to the proposed modification and raised no concerns.

5 Assessment

The Department has considered the merits of the proposed modification application in accordance with the relevant matters for consideration described in **section 3.3**.

In assessing the merits of the proposed modification, the Department has considered the existing development consent, previous environmental assessments for the project, the modification application, applicable government policies and guidelines, agency advice and requirements of the EP&A Act. A list of the key documents that informed the assessment is provided in **Appendix A**.

The Department has considered whether the proposed changes would result in any material increases in the environmental or amenity impacts of the project. The key matters for consideration on this project include compatibility of the proposed land use, impacts to biodiversity and heritage, and amenity impacts (including visual, noise and traffic) and hazards.

5.1 Compatibility of Proposed Land Use

The existing development consent allows for solar panels and associated infrastructure in a 282 ha development footprint within the 559 ha project site. The proposed changes to the project layout, including the proposed extension of the transmission line connecting to TransGrid's substation, are contained within the project site boundary. The project site is zoned RU1 Primary Production, R5 Large Lot Residential and SP2 Infrastructure under the Wellington LEP (shown in **Figure 4**).

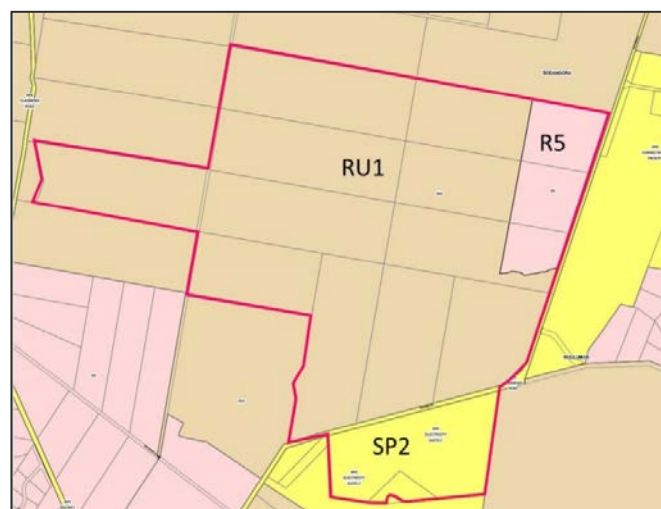


Figure 4 | Land Zoning within the Project Boundary

The proposed modification seeks to increase the development footprint by 6 ha with a total development footprint of 288 ha.

The proposed changes modify the locations of, or are extensions to, infrastructure already approved under the existing consent within the approved site boundary. The Department considers that the modified project would remain consistent with objectives of the zones, would not result in additional impacts on the inherent agricultural capability of the land, is consistent with the existing consent and the land, and could also be easily returned to its pre-existing condition in the future once the project is decommissioned.

The Department considers that the proposed changes represent an effective and compatible use of the land within the region. The existing conditions, including the decommissioning and rehabilitation objectives in the consent, adequately address the potential impacts on agricultural land.

5.2 Biodiversity

The Biodiversity Development Assessment Report (BDAR) assessed the biodiversity impacts for the new areas proposed to be impacted and areas where the impacts would now be avoided and excised from the development footprint.

The Department accepts that it is not possible to further avoid impacts to native vegetation to allow the project to optimise the yield and constructability of the solar farm.

There are two native vegetation plant community types (PCTs) (White Box grassy woodland and derived native grassland and Blakely's Red Gum grassy tall woodland) within the development footprint in various conditions (see **Figure 5**). Both plant communities form part of the same Box-Gum Woodland Endangered Ecological Community (EEC) under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act* 2016 (BC Act).

The proposed changes would impact an additional 4.27 ha of predominantly (95%) low quality derived native grassland native vegetation (see **Table 2**), with 11.11 ha excised from the development footprint. The BDAR considers that this would have a net zero change to the ecosystem credits required due to the excised areas having a higher ecosystem credit requirement (67 credits for areas impacted compared to 136 credits for the excised areas).

The Department and BCD do not accept the reclassification of the vegetation in the excised areas in the most recent BDAR to generate credits. In addition, the Department notes that these areas did not generate ecosystem credits when they were assessed as part of the original application.

Consequently, the Department has taken a conservative approach and considered that the excised areas do not generate credits and considered only the impact of the new areas of the development footprint. The Department supports the proposed modification subject to the recommended conditions requiring Lightsource BP to offset an additional 67 ecosystem credits.

Table 2 | Impacts to vegetation from the proposed modification

Vegetation community	PCT	Zone	Condition / vegetation integrity score	Area impacted (ha)	Credits required
Blakely's Red Gum - grassy tall woodland	277	Zone 1	Low / 6.1	0.03	0
White Box grassy woodland – planted woodland	266	Zone 2	Moderate to good / 12.3	0	0
White Box grassy woodland – woodland	266	Zone 3	Low / 21.4	0.06	1
White Box grassy woodland – woodland	266	Zone 4	Moderate to good / 26.5	0.01	1
White Box grassy woodland – derived grassland	266	Zone 5	Moderate to good / 30.0	0.05	1
White Box grassy woodland – derived grassland	266	Zone 6	Low / 31.3	4.12	64
Total				4.27	67

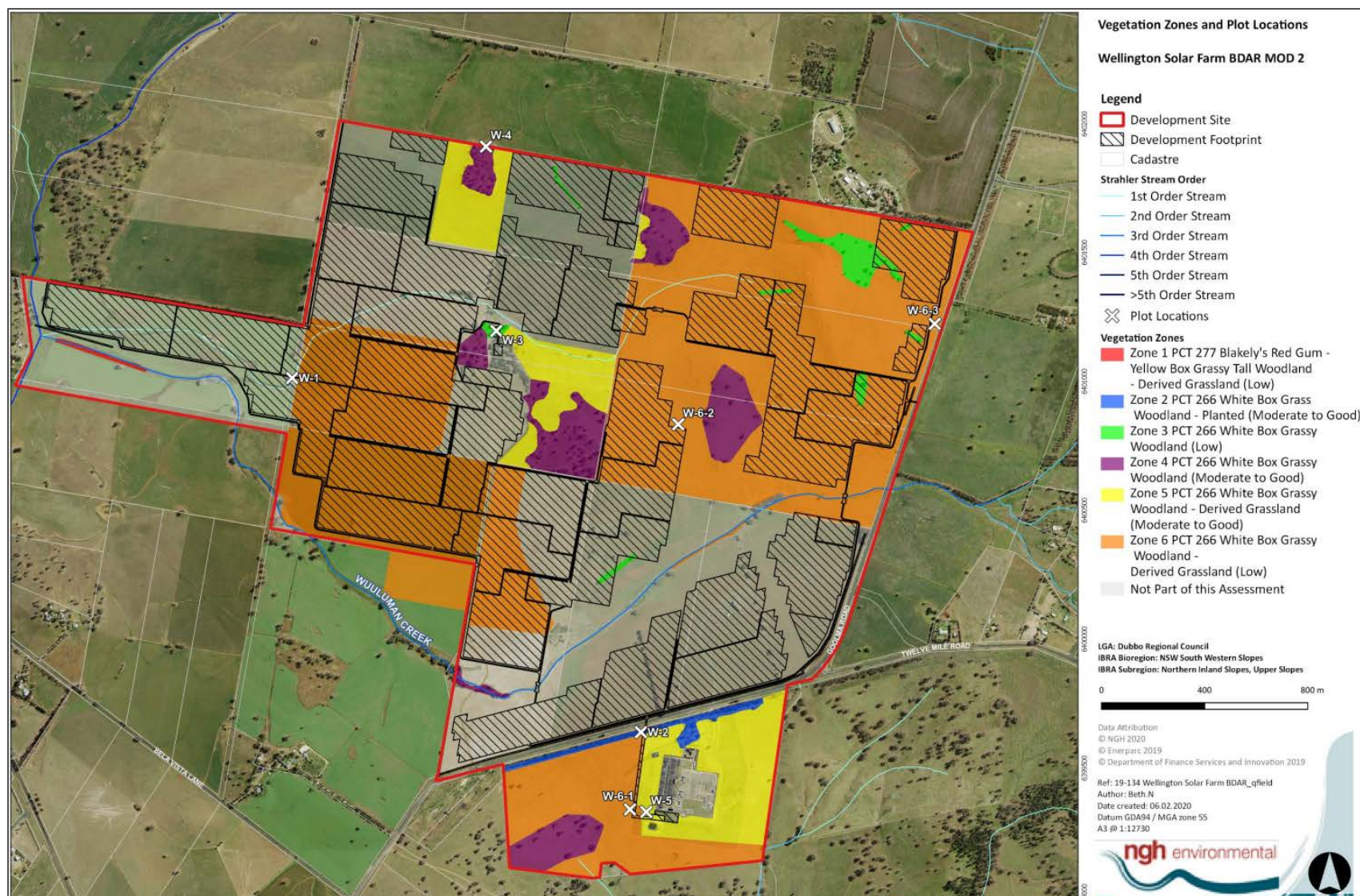


Figure 5 | Vegetation Community Zones within the Proposed Modification

Both vegetation communities are listed as a Critically Endangered Ecological Community (CEEC) under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). However, during the field survey in November 2019 this area was confirmed not to be CEEC due to a lack of dominance of native species in the understorey. BCD has confirmed the assessment was undertaken appropriately and had no further concerns with this matter.

Assessment of impacts to fauna species was based on habitat assessment and most of the potential fauna candidate species were excluded due to a lack of suitable habitat available onsite. Fauna surveys were not conducted in November 2019 due to time constraints and the relevant fauna species were conservatively assumed to be present.

The area of impact for this modification (4.27 ha) has been assessed as suitable habitat for the White-bellied Sea-eagle (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*) which is a vulnerable species under the BC Act. Therefore, this resulted in one additional species credit (meaning a total of three species credits is now required for the project).

Both the Department and the BCD are satisfied that the modification would not result in any significant biodiversity impacts, subject to the provision of the updated offset liability credits.

5.3 Amenity

Visual

There are approximately 19 residences within 1 km of the site, and approximately 169 residences within 2 km, with the nearest residence (R4) located approximately 200 m to the west.

A visual assessment of the proposed modification was completed by NGH Environmental and included an assessment of the nearest residences. This assessment concluded that the visual impacts at any non-associated residences would be negligible due to the scale of the modification, the distance from receivers and intervening vegetation. The location of residences surrounding the project and the viewshed of the approved and modified layouts are shown in **Figure 6**.

The proposed modification would involve a relatively minor (6 ha) expansion of the development footprint (including expanding and relocating the solar panel areas, expanding the battery storage facility area and relocating the temporary construction compound to the centre of the site), as shown in **Figure 2** and **Figure 3**.

While the proposed expansion of the solar panel area in the west of the site would reduce the setback distance between the nearest residence (R4) and the panels (from approximately 400 m to 250 m), the presence of existing vegetation along Wuuluman Creek, and the proposed landscape screening between R4 and the panels, would provide sufficient visual buffer to R4. The proposed expanded panel area is therefore unlikely to have a significant impact on the views from residence R4.

The other proposed additional solar panel areas are located away from residences and road users and are not expected to result in any significant visual impacts.

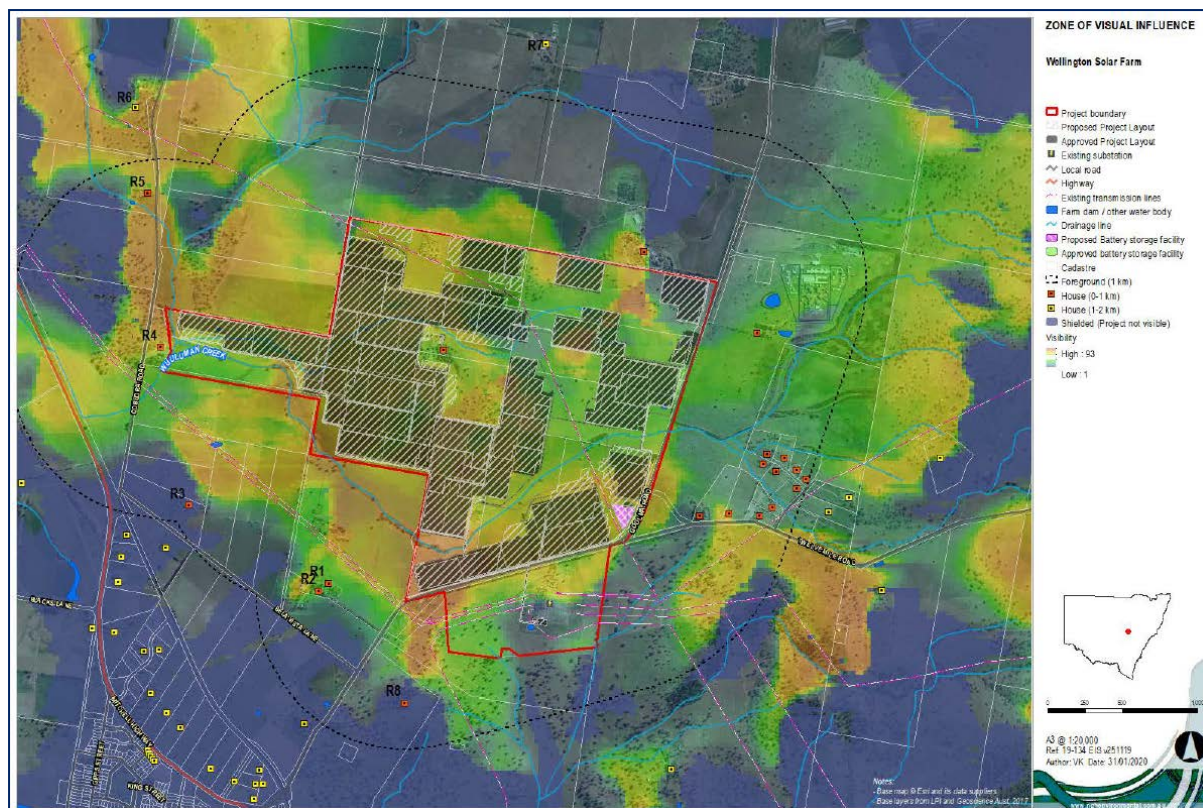


Figure 6 | Viewshed analysis of the approved and proposed layout

Although the approved battery storage facility area would be increased from 0.25 ha to 1.46 ha, the maximum height of the battery infrastructure (i.e. 4 m) located within that area would remain unchanged and below the maximum height of the solar panels (i.e. 4.5 m). The Department considers that although the battery storage facility may be located further east (reducing the distance to the nearest receiver from approximately 450 m to 390 m) it would not significantly increase visual impact beyond the already approved impacts.

The approved overhead transmission lines are now proposed to be located underground which would eliminate this element from the view (including for users of Goolma Road).

RMS and Council did not raise concern regarding potential visual impacts of the proposed modification on nearby road users.

Overall, the Department is satisfied that the proposed modification would not significantly increase visual impacts and no additional mitigation measures are required.

Traffic

The proposed modification includes the relocation of the site access point, located off Goolma Road, 100 m south from the indicative location included in the original EIS. RMS considers the new site access point to be in a safer location and Council did not have any concerns relating to its revised location.

There would be no additional vehicle movements as a result of the proposed modification.

Any potential impacts from the proposed modification would be managed through the measures detailed in the Traffic Management Plan that would need to be updated following approval of this modification application.

Subject to the recommended conditions, the Department, RMS and Council are satisfied that the modification would not result in significant impacts on road network capacity, efficiency or safety.

Noise

The assessment identified that the noise management levels at the nearest receivers would be exceeded but would remain well below the highly noise affected level of 75dB(A). The Department is satisfied that any noise impacts from the proposed modification would be short-term and minor and could be managed by the existing conditions of consent.

The operational noise of the proposed project as modified would comply with the relevant criteria.

5.4 Heritage

Aboriginal Heritage

The Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment Report submitted with the original project included the areas of the proposed modification and confirmed that no Aboriginal heritage sites were recorded within the proposed modification footprint.

As such, the Department and BCD consider that the proposed modification would not increase the Aboriginal heritage impacts of the project or require any changes to the heritage management conditions under the existing consent.

Historic Heritage – Narrawa Homestead

Narrawa Homestead is of local significance and is listed as an historic heritage item under the Wellington LEP.

The original EIS considered two options for the project's O&M facility, namely the Narrawa Homestead or a new purpose built facility.

In assessing the original proposal, the Department considered that the preferred option should be to repurpose the Narrawa Homestead, as it would provide public benefits by maintaining the historic heritage values of the building in the long-term and could be returned to its original use following decommissioning.

The existing consent allows Lightsource BP to construct a purpose-built O&M building only if it has demonstrated that repurposing the Narrawa Homestead is not reasonable or feasible.

This modification application confirms that the Narrawa Homestead would be repurposed as an O&M facility (for facilities such as offices, toilets and electrical equipment), maintaining the historic heritage values of the building in the long-term.

The modification also seeks to use the approved alternative O&M facility as an additional O&M facility and increase the size of the facility to allow flexibility in design and assist with the constructability of the

project, should it be determined that it is not feasible for the Narrawa Homestead to house all of the project's electrical equipment.

Council raised no concerns about the proposed repurposing of the Narrawa Homestead.

The Department accepts the use of the alternative O&M facility as an additional O&M facility should it be determined that the Narrawa Homestead is unable to house all of the project's electrical equipment, but maintains the requirement in the conditions of consent for the Narrawa Homestead to be repurposed.

5.5 Hazards

The approved project includes a battery storage facility with 25 MW / 100 MW-hour (MWh) capacity within an area of 0.25 ha. The modification application confirms that the delivery capacity of the battery would remain unchanged, but that the approved battery storage facility area would be increased from 0.25 ha to 1.46 ha (reducing the distance to the nearest receiver from approximately 450 m to 390 m).

The Department considers that given the delivery capacity of the battery storage facility would remain unchanged, the proposed changes to the battery storage facility location and area are consistent with the potential hazards of the approved project. In addition, the potential impacts would be managed through the existing requirements in the consent to prepare and implement a Fire Safety Study.

The Department has also recommended a condition limiting the battery storage facility to 25 MW / 100 MWh to strengthen the conditions to manage the potential hazards.

In regard to bushfire risk, the existing consent requires Lightsource BP to maintain a 10 m Asset Protection Zone (APZ) around the perimeter of the project site, which would remain for the modified project.

RFS advised that it has no objection to the proposed modification, subject to compliance with the existing conditions, and FRNSW referred to the recommendations in its previous advice to the Department when the project was originally assessed. These recommendations are reflected in the existing consent.

The Department considers that hazard and bushfire risks can be adequately managed through the existing conditions, including the requirement for a Fire Safety Study and Fire Management and Emergency Response Plan.

5.6 Summary

In summary, subject to the revised conditions, the Department considers that the proposed modification would not result in significant impacts on the environment or amenity impacts beyond those currently approved for the project and that the revised conditions of consent would adequately address any potential impacts.

6 Evaluation

Proposed modification

The Department has assessed the modification application in accordance with the relevant statutory requirements, having regard to the Modification Report and documentation relating to the currently approved project. The Department has assessed the proposed modification to modify the project layout, including the increased solar panel layout area, changes to ancillary infrastructure and the associated increased development footprint within the project site, as described in **section 2**.

Likely impacts of the modification application

In assessing the merits of the proposal, the Department has considered the:

- relevant matters for consideration identified in **section 3.3**;
- existing conditions of approval;
- previous Environmental Assessments for the project; and
- requirements of the EP&A Act.

The Department considers that the proposed modification application meets these requirements as:

- the modification is consistent with the objectives of the Wellington LEP;
- the proposed modification would not significantly impact on the natural and built environments, and there would not be any social and economic impacts beyond those already assessed;
- there are no draft environmental planning instruments, development control plans and planning agreements or requirements in the EP&A Regulation relevant to the modification application;
- TransGrid supports the proposed modifications and will continue working with Lightsource BP on this development;
- there are no land use conflicts between the land and the use of surrounding land in the locality (including agricultural land) noting that the solar farm and associated infrastructure have been assessed in detail and the existing consent would effectively manage and minimise any residual impacts associated with the project; and
- the modification application is consistent with the reasons given for the original consent.

The Department's assessment has found that the proposed modification would not result in any significant impacts beyond those that were assessed and approved under the existing consent. Any residual environmental and amenity impacts associated with the proposed modification could be mitigated and managed through the revised conditions of consent.

Importantly, the proposed modification would allow the benefits of the project to be realised, particularly as it would ensure the project's constructability and ability to connect to the electricity network.

Consequently, the Department is satisfied that the proposed modification is in the public interest and should be approved.

The Department has drafted a Notice of Modification (see **Appendix D**) and a consolidated version of the development consent as modified (see **Appendix E**). To permit the proposed modification, the conditions have been updated with a new definition of the EIS, revised biodiversity offset liability, revised heritage requirement, new battery storage capacity restriction and updated development layout plan. Lightsource BP has reviewed the proposed changes to the conditions and does not object to them.

7 Recommendation

It is recommended that the Director, Energy Assessments, as delegate of the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces:

- **considers** the findings and recommendations of this report;
- **determines** that the application Wellington Solar Modification 2 (SSD 8573) falls within the scope of Section 4.55(1A) of the EP&A Act;
- **accepts and adopts** all of the findings and recommendations in this report as the reasons for making the decision to approve the modification;
- **modifies** the consent (SSD 8573);
- **signs** the attached approval of the modification (**Appendix D**).

Recommended by:



1/4/20

Javier Canon
Senior Policy Officer
Energy Assessments

Recommended by:



1/4/20

Iwan Davies
Team Leader
Energy Assessments

8 Determination

The recommendation is **Adopted** / ~~Not adopted~~ by:



3/4/20

Nicole Brewer

Director

Energy Assessment

as delegate of the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces

Appendices

Appendix A – List of referenced documents

Wellington Solar Farm Modification Application, Lightsource BP, February 2020.

Amendment letters, Lightsource BP, dated 19 March 2020 and 24 March 2020.

Appendix B – Modification Report

Appendix C – Amendment Letters

Appendix D – Notice of Modification

Appendix E – Consolidated Consent

Appendices B to E – see the Department's Major Projects Website at:

<https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/project/26211>

Appendix F – Summary of Administrative Changes to Conditions

Condition Number	Considerations	Reasons for changes
Definitions	Definitions	Amend definition of EIS to include the Modification Application Report and additional information provided to the Department. Insert a definition of over-dimensional vehicle.