January 2023

# YASS SOLAR ENERGY PARK FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## PROJECT OVERVIEW

### What is the Yass Solar Energy Park?

The Yass Solar Energy Park is a proposed large-scale development which aims to harness solar energy to store and deliver cheap, reliable and clean electricity for NSW. Preliminary investigations are being undertaken to help develop a concept plan.

The proposed project includes the construction, commissioning and operation of an energy park, including solar panel arrays, an energy storage system (battery) and other associated ancillary infrastructure.

Preliminary estimates indicate that there may be up to 220,000 solar panels, generating up to 139 MW which is enough to power 51,000 average NSW homes.

### Where is the proposed location?

The Yass Solar Energy Park's proposed location is within the Yass Valley Local Government Area (LGA). The potential site is located south-west of the Yass township, with a potential development site of approximately 328 hectares. The area is characterised by gently undulating terrain and is largely used for grazing purposes.

The proposed site has been selected based on a number of factors including the project's:

- solar resources
- land use compatibility including agricultural grazing lands and biodiversity conservation
- relative distance from existing dwellings
- proximity to existing infrastructure at Yass Transgrid Substation.

### Why is the project needed?

Electricity generation is the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions, with the National Electricity Market (NEM) dominated by coal-fired power stations. The NEM is one of the largest interconnected electricity systems in the world and connects the electricity grids of the six eastern and southern states and territories to deliver around 80 percent of all electricity consumption in Australia.

The Australian energy landscape is transitioning to a greater mix of low-emission renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar. At the same time, consumers are demanding lower power bills and a more secure and reliable service.

To facilitate a strategic transition from coal-fired power generation to renewable energy, NSW Government developed the **Electricity Strategy** and **Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap**.

The state government's Roadmap aims to deliver 12 GW of new renewable energy capacity and 2 GW long-duration energy storage by 2030, with the expected retirement of four NSW coal-fired power stations.

The Yass Solar Energy Park will help support the NSW Government to facilitate a transition from coal-fired power generation to renewable energy, increasing the supply of clean energy to the network. The project will generate, store and provide renewable energy, leveraging existing transmission infrastructure in the local area.

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## What infrastructure will be on site?

The proposed infrastructure includes:

- solar arrays
- energy storage system (battery)
- operations and maintenance building(s)
- ancillary and supporting infrastructure such as electrical cabling, internal access roads, and connection substations.

## How does solar power work?

Solar energy is an abundant source of free energy that can be converted into electricity using a range of ever-improving techniques. Solar Photovoltaic (PV) panels are currently the most widespread type of solar PV technology.

Solar panels have a layer of silicon cells, a metal frame, glass casing, and wiring to allow current to flow from the silicon cells. Silicon is semi-conductive so it can absorb and convert sunlight into electricity. When light is absorbed by a silicon cell, it causes electrons to start moving, which initiates a flow of electric current. This is known as the 'photovoltaic effect'.

### SOME FACTS ABOUT SOLAR ENERGY:

- **There is enough solar energy every hour to meet the Earth's power needs for an entire year**
- **Australia has the highest average solar radiation of any continent in the world**
- **There are more solar panels than people in Australia**
- **Solar panels last about 25 to 30 years.**

## What is the timeline and approval process for the development?

Typically, renewable energy projects can take between three and seven years from initial concept through to construction. From early 2023, initial stakeholder feedback and local studies, like ecology and cultural heritage surveys, will be conducted to help our understanding of local values and points of interest to be considered in the concept design for the Yass Solar Energy Park. Ecologists have been engaged to complete on-site biodiversity surveys throughout 2023.

The results of the early engagement and preliminary studies will be detailed in a Scoping Report, which will be submitted Q1 2023 to NSW Department of Planning and Environment (DPE). The Scoping Report will inform the the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) which will detail requirements for the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Following the SEARs being issued, specialist technical studies will be undertaken alongside continued community engagement. The studies and continued community feedback will assist in refining the design of the development. Feedback will also be used to minimise potential impacts and maximise benefits. The detail of the studies and engagement outcomes will be detailed in the EIS.

Depending on the outcome of the studies and community feedback, the EIS will likely be submitted to DPE Q4 2023. Exhibition of the EIS and subsequent submissions from stakeholders will be soon after. Responding to the submissions received and completing grid connection requirements will occur throughout 2024, with construction potentially commencing in 2026.

Throughout the development process, we will work within the NSW Wind Energy Framework and follow recommendations by the Clean Energy Council, Re-Alliance and the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner. This will guide opportunities for community feedback and collaboration with key stakeholders to ensure the project has a positive impact on the local and broader environment.

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## LOCAL ECONOMY AND BUSINESS

### What are the economic benefits of the Yass Solar Energy Park?

The proposed development of Yass Solar Energy Park will provide a range of direct and indirect economic benefits, including:

- increased local employment and contractor opportunities during construction and operation
- increased spending and activity in the local economy
- creation of a community benefits program for local initiatives
- supporting the transition to cleaner and cheaper energy for Australian households and businesses.

### How will ENGIE support local business and employment in the region?

Developments such as the Yass Solar Energy Park support jobs in industries where reliable, affordable and sustainable energy is essential to doing business.

ENGIE intends to work with local businesses where possible to stimulate the local economy and supply chains. We are firmly committed to creating jobs for local people and engaging with Indigenous and local suppliers.

## COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

### How will you consult the community?

ENGIE is committed to open and transparent engagement with stakeholders and welcomes the opportunity to work with local residents and community members.

Stakeholder and community consultation will occur across all stages of the development proposal.

ENGIE will actively engage with landholders and communities throughout the scoping phase to identify local considerations that will assist in refining a design for the proposed energy park. Initial investigations are underway to understand the environmental and engineering considerations.

Consultation activities and opportunities to engage will occur from early 2023 and ongoing. As part of the NSW planning approval process, formal submissions will be invited via the NSW DPE 'Have Your Say' webpage.

Information on the Yass Solar Energy Park and how to participate in consultation activities will be made available on the project webpage at: **engie.com.au/yass**. If you have any questions, please contact us:

email: **yassenergypark.au@engie.com**
phone: **1800 845 067**.

## ABOUT ENGIE

### What does ENGIE do?

ENGIE designs, builds and operates power generating plants that produce energy from natural gas and renewables, accompanied by low $CO^2$ emissions.

ENGIE provides energy networks, technology, and a range of services to make people, communities and businesses productive, safer, effective, more comfortable and more efficient.

### What is ENGIE's contribution in Australia?

ENGIE is proud to be setting the standard in Australia and New Zealand in lower carbon energy generation, renewables, energy efficiency and technology-based solutions.

ENGIE employs more than 1,800 people across 30 locations in Australia and New Zealand.

ENGIE owns and operates about 1,000 MW (gross) of renewable (wind turbine) and gas-fired generating plants in Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia, with many more renewable projects in the development pipeline.

ENGIE's retail business, SimplyEnergy, serves markets in Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia, New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory and Queensland.

ENGIE's commitment is to go beyond energy, creating smarter, safer and more sustainable environments for communities.

## Contact us

At ENGIE we recognise the value of open and transparent conversations with local community members. If you have any questions about the Yass Solar Energy Park, please reach out to us.

**1800 845 067**
**yassenergypark.au@engie.com**