

Gundry Solar Farm Project

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



Q: Who is Lightsource bp?

Lightsource bp is a global leader in the development and management of solar energy projects. Our purpose is to deliver affordable and sustainable solar power for businesses and communities around the world. Our team includes over 1,200 industry specialists, working across 19 global regions.

Lightsource bp entered Australia in 2018 and has since developed and financed more than 1GW and has a portfolio of projects under development exceeding 7.5GW, as well as a local team of more than 50 dedicated professionals.

In late 2023, bp announced the intention to fully acquire Lightsource bp, which currently operates as a 50/50 joint venture with bp. It is an exciting time for both companies, as it brings to bp our world-class onshore renewable power development capability which will be a critical enabler for delivery of their transformation into an integrated energy company.

Q: Why was this site chosen for the Project?

Lightsource bp carefully considers various factors when selecting sites for its renewable energy projects. The site chosen for this project was ideal due to its:

- Proximity to existing infrastructure and nearby population centres, minimising energy loss during transmission.
- On-site transmission infrastructure, reducing potential impacts from longer grid connections.
- Limited vegetation and not being classified as Biophysical Strategic Agricultural Land (BSAL) or as Class 1, 2, or 3 under the Land and Soil Capability Mapping for NSW.
- Location on a large property with fewer neighbours, limiting the number of residences that would have views of the project
- High solar irradiation levels and relatively flat terrain, allowing for easier construction.

These considerations balance environmental, social, and technical needs, ensuring an efficient and responsible project development.

Q: Is it permissible for the project to be situated outside a Renewable Energy Zone (REZ)?

The Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) concept is relatively new, and until recently, no REZs existed in Australia. While policy makers are now advising consideration of REZs for new renewable energy projects, it is still permissible to locate projects outside these zones. The 2022 Integrated Systems Plan by the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) highlighted the need for a significant increase in renewable energy generation to ensure energy security. Therefore, projects outside of REZs are not only allowed but also necessary to meet this growing demand.

Lightsource bp selects project sites based on criteria such as proximity to existing transmission infrastructure, capacity of the local transmission network, and environmental factors. This approach applies whether the site is inside or outside a REZ. The primary objective is to bolster energy security for individuals, businesses, and the country through renewable energy development.

Q: How has the project's design and layout evolved due to consultation and preliminary studies?

In response to community engagement and outcomes from scoping studies, the project's layout has undergone significant changes to address feedback and environmental considerations. These changes include:

- The removal of solar infrastructure such as trackers, panels, and inverters from about 50 hectares in the north-western part of the site, near Windellama Road. This adjustment directly addresses community feedback and aims to minimise impact on nearby residents.
- The panel layout in the central and southern sections has been altered to avoid impacting threatened trees.
- The ancillary infrastructure in the north-western area, adjacent to transmission lines, has been reconfigured. This area is now planned to include a substation and switching station, and a temporary construction compound and staging area.

These modifications supplement previous measures to exclude areas of moderate or high biodiversity value, flood-prone areas, and to reduce impacts on neighbouring residences, demonstrating a commitment to both community input and environmental stewardship.

Q: What is the projected timeline for the start of construction and its duration?

Pending necessary approvals, including development approval, grid connection, and financing, construction is scheduled to begin in late 2025. Given the scale of the project, the construction phase is anticipated to span approximately 18 to 24 months.

Q: What is the expected operational lifespan of the project and what are the plans for decommissioning?

Current plans propose that the project will be operational for at least 40 years. At that time, Lightsource bp will assess whether to extend the project's life utilising the existing infrastructure, repower the site with newer technology to enhance energy generation, or proceed with decommissioning. When the project is decommissioned, all infrastructure will be removed, and the land returned to its previous use. Furthermore, Lightsource bp has partnered with Lotus Energy to manage the recycling of solar panels, including both at decommissioning and throughout the lifecycle of the project, if damaged during construction or operations.

Q: What opportunities are there for local job seekers, contractors, service providers and businesses to get involved in the project?

The project will create about 250 full time equivalent (FTE) jobs at the peak of construction and two to four ongoing FTE jobs during operation. Lightsource bp will work closely with Goulburn Mulwaree Council and other key stakeholders to deliver an appropriate business engagement, employment, and accommodation strategy for the project.

If you are interested in keeping up to date with opportunities, please register your interest at lightsourcebp.com/au/projects/gundry-work-with-us. More details will be available as the project progresses.

Q: Where will construction materials for the Project be sourced?

Lightsource bp is focused on creating an ethical supply chain that focuses on the need for corporate social responsibility, to ensure all parts of its business are carried out in a way that treats its workers and the environment ethically. Materials for the project will be sourced both from Australian and international suppliers, including those located in Europe and Asia. Lightsource bp works to ensure that all its suppliers are passed through extensive checks, including investigation into our suppliers' environmental, social and governance practices before purchases are made.

Q: How will the local community benefit from this project?

Lightsource bp is committed to being a responsible neighbour and maintaining proactive, effective community engagement. The project offers both direct and indirect benefits to the local community, which include:

- Creating local employment opportunities.
- Providing procurement and construction contracts locally, where possible.
- Establishment of a benefit sharing scheme with the Goulburn Mulwaree Council and the local community. This includes:
 - » Entering into a Voluntary Planning Agreement (VPA) with Council, with funding contributing to affordable housing, public amenities or infrastructure in the region.
 - » Discussing a Neighbourhood Benefit Sharing Program with landowners located in proximity to the project.

These initiatives reflect Lightsource bp's commitment to bringing benefits to the local community throughout the project.

Q: Could the project impact the rental and short-term accommodation market in Goulburn?

An assessment of the potential impact on rental housing and short-term accommodation due to the project's workforce has been conducted. It is estimated that at the peak of construction, there will be a need to accommodate approximately 160 non-local full-time equivalent (FTE) workers. This number accounts for 1.8% of the total commercial accommodation rooms/cabins within a 60-minute drive of the site. Additional accommodation options include caravan parks, private rentals (such as long-term houses or short-term Airbnb), and available unoccupied dwellings.

However, approximately 85-90% of this accommodation is in the ACT. Therefore, concurrent infrastructure projects in the region might lead to accommodation shortages in Goulburn and surrounding townships. As a result, there may be a need to house some workers in Canberra. This indicates a potential, albeit limited, pressure on the local accommodation market during the project's peak construction phase.

Q: What steps is Lightsource bp taking to address potential visual impacts of the project?

Lightsource bp has proactively addressed community feedback regarding visual impacts in the early stages of project development. To mitigate this, the project layout and design has been refined. Key measures include:

- Removing 50 hectares of the most visible solar panels from the north-west corner of the site.
- Relocating the centralised Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) further east.

A comprehensive Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been completed in accordance with the Large-scale Solar Energy Guideline 2022 (Solar Guideline) and its Technical Supplement – Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. This updated approach for LVIA ensures the assessment is:

- Proportional to the development's scale and impacts.
- Understandable and accessible.
- Considerate of community views and the surrounding landscape's values.

The LVIA identified a total of 51 viewpoints that required assessment, including two public viewpoints (Windellama Road and Kooringaroo Road, Figure 3.1 and Figure 3.2) and 49 private viewpoints (residences or future dwellings). The detailed assessment concluded that the visual impacts to:

- The two public viewpoints include one low and one very low.
- The 49 private viewpoints include one moderate, 28 low and 20 very low.

Photomontages illustrating the views from the two public viewpoints are provided on the next page.

Q: How is Lightsource bp managing noise at the project site?

In planning for the project, Lightsource bp has refined the layout to optimise noise management during both construction and operation.

A comprehensive Noise Impact Assessment (NIA) has been completed in accordance with the relevant guidelines. The assessment showed that, based on the design and layout refinements, neighbouring residences are not expected to experience noise impacts during the project's operation.

During construction, some temporary noise may be experienced near residences within 1km of the project area. Lightsource bp is committed to implementing reasonable and feasible mitigation strategies to help minimise any construction-related noise.

Figure 3.1 Windellama Road

PR2a Windellama Road (Public) - 180° panoramic photomontage



Figure 3.2 Kooringaroo Road

Figure A5
PR3 Kooringaroo Road (Public) - 180° panoramic photomontage



Q. What measures is Lightsource bp taking to ensure biodiversity protection?

Lightsource bp has prioritised biodiversity from the outset, incorporating a comprehensive biodiversity assessment into the early stages of project design. This assessment influenced the layout to minimise impact on high biodiversity areas and remnant vegetation. The project utilises the most disturbed areas of the site, which have been extensively cultivated and are currently used for livestock grazing.

Key measures include:

- Retaining remnant vegetation along the northern and southern boundaries, particularly in the eastern portion of the project area. This retains connectivity with a larger area of remnant vegetation east of the project area.
- Implementing setbacks around watercourses within the project area to protect aquatic ecosystems.

As a result of these measures, the project does not require biodiversity offsets under the NSW Biodiversity Offsets Scheme, demonstrating minimal impact on biodiversity. Additionally, on 13 September 2023, a delegate of the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment determined that the project is not a Controlled Action under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act). This indicates that the project does not necessitate further assessment or approval under the EPBC Act. The decision documentation is available on the department's website at epbcpublicportal.awe.gov.au/all-referrals/project-referral-summary/?id=1117f4a9-3fc1-ed11-83fd-00224818abd2

Lightsource bp is committed to carefully managing biodiversity impacts during the construction and operation phase of the project, through the implementation of a Biodiversity Management Plan that will include controls to further reduce impacts on biodiversity.

Q. What measures are being taken to address bushfire risks?

Lightsource bp has implemented specific measures in the project design to address bushfire risks, informed by community input and historical instances of fires in the region. These measures include:

- The creation of a 10-meter Asset Protection Zone (APZ) around the project area's perimeter.
- Placement of non-combustible 20,000-litre water tanks at each site access point.
- The addition of an emergency-only access point on Kooringaroo Road.
- Designing internal access tracks to ensure they are suitable for emergency services vehicles.

Additionally, a bushfire assessment conducted by a BPAD Level 3 accredited practitioner has evaluated environmental features such as vegetation and topography within the project area. The assessment found that the bushfire risk is low, largely due to the landscape being predominantly grazed agricultural land, which naturally reduces grassland fuel loads and potential for bushfires. The APZ, alongside other bushfire measures, is expected to provide adequate safety.

Should the project be approved, a Fire Management and Emergency Response Plan will be developed in consultation with the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure's (DPHI) Hazards Team (formerly the Department of Planning and Environment), RFS and Fire and Rescue NSW. This plan will identify all relevant risks and mitigation measures during construction and operation of the project. Lightsource bp plans to conduct a bushfire training day and site tour with RFS once the project is commissioned.

Q: What is the current status of the project and what are the next steps?

Following a final round of community consultation to be held at the end of March 2024, the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be submitted to the DPHI. The EIS will then go on public exhibition which is a perfect opportunity for the community to learn more about the project and provide feedback. We will inform the community when the document is on public exhibition.

Q. What impact will the project have on agricultural land?

Lightsource bp is considering implementing agrivoltaics once the project is operational. Should agrivoltaics be established, measures will be developed to manage the co-existence of agricultural activities (sheep grazing) with the operation of the solar farm.

A 'Level 3 Detailed' Agriculture Assessment has been completed for the project in accordance with the Solar Guideline. This included a soil and land use resource survey undertaken in May 2023, which verified that the project area does not include Biophysical Strategic Agricultural Land (BSAL).

Findings from the assessment show that the project area is mostly classified as poor to moderate agricultural land (i.e. Class 4, 5 and 6). The expected temporary impacts on agriculture during the life of the project are:

- The cessation of agricultural land use and a decrease in primary productivity within the project area, representing about 0.6% of the total agricultural land in the Goulburn Mulwaree Local Government Area (LGA).
- A reduction in secondary productivity within the Goulburn Mulwaree LGA.

Lightsource bp is committed to managing and mitigating these agricultural impacts during the construction and operation phase of the project and implementing specific management plans for the project area.

Agricultural land use and productivity of land adjacent to the project area and in the broader Goulburn Mulwaree LGA will not be affected by the project as the associated agricultural resources will not be impacted.

Q. What steps are being taken to protect Aboriginal Cultural Heritage on the site?

A comprehensive Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment (ACHA) has been completed for the project, in consultation with Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) to investigate the presence of Aboriginal objects within the project area.

A field survey was completed with a team of the RAP representatives during December 2022. The field survey identified four Potential Archaeological Deposits (PADs) (areas with the potential to contain subsurface artefacts) and 11 open artefact sites. PADs were associated with non-perennial streamlines and consisted of stone artefacts. A total of 70 stone artefacts were identified on the ground surface. Although mature trees were inspected for signs of cultural scarring, none were identified.

The results of the survey fed directly into a test excavation program extending over 2 weeks during April and May 2023. As a result of the test excavation, the final number of identified Aboriginal sites across the project area is nineteen (19) and a total of 295 stone artefacts were recovered. None of these sites had been recorded from previous studies and will be registered on the Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System (AHIMS).

The ACHA concluded that most Aboriginal sites recorded during the field survey have a 'low scientific significance' as they are either isolated finds, in disturbed contexts or are not particularly rare. Two Aboriginal sites have been assessed as having a 'moderate scientific significance' as they are relatively uncommon. Several Aboriginal sites, including the two sites rated as having 'moderate scientific significance', will be impacted by the project. As such, mitigation measures will be implemented to reduce the extent of impact including staged salvage excavation and surface collection before construction.

With the implementation of mitigation measures, the ACHA determined that there are no Aboriginal heritage constraints for the project. Lightsource bp is committed to implementing a range of management and mitigation measures for Aboriginal sites located within the project's development footprint. Furthermore, an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Management Plan will be developed in consultation with the RAPs and the DPHI (with input from Heritage NSW).

Should you have any queries regarding the project, please feel free to contact us at **1300 873 575** or via email at gundarysolar@lightsourcebp.com. We are always available to assist and provide information.