



16<sup>th</sup> September 2013

**Mr Mark Jenkins**

South-Eastern Australia Environmental Assessments  
Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities  
Canberra ACT 2600

Via email: [mark.jenkins@environment.gov.au](mailto:mark.jenkins@environment.gov.au)

Reference A: 2011/5865 Capital Solar Farm

Dear Mr Jenkins,

As you are aware, the public exhibition period in relation to project 2011/5865 closed on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> September 2013. One submission was received during this period (**Attachment 1**).

The submission raised concerns over two items, namely the recent weed spraying undertaken on part of the property and the potential for the creation of a localised rain shadow. The Proponent's response to these concerns is detailed below.

**Weed Control and Natural Temperate Grassland (NTG)**

At present, the Proponent neither owns nor leases the proposed development site. The Proponent's interest in the proposed development site is limited to the rights as grantee under an option to lease the land. The Proponent's rights under the option to lease do not extend to the use or control of the land in question and will not change until such time that the option to lease has been exercised by the Proponent.

In early 2013, the Proponent was notified by the landowner that the landowner had received a weed control notice from Palerang Council in November 2012. By the time that the Proponent was made aware of the weed control notice, the landowner had already sprayed a majority of the site and planted some areas with oats.

The landowner advised that he had sprayed the land in order to comply with the weed control notice, as failure to comply with the notice can result in fines and costs recovery, in accordance with the *Noxious Weeds Act 1993 (NSW)*. The Proponent notified the Department shortly after becoming aware of the weed control activities and reiterated its previous invitations for the Department to visit the site, to which the Department accepted.

During the site visit, the Department and others noted that despite the spraying undertaken by the landowner, the NTG was worth protecting as it may regenerate. Further, it was noted that a large portion of the proposed development site had not been sprayed by the landowner and as such the NTG located on this portion was not affected.

Notwithstanding the weed control activities that occurred on part of the development site in early 2013, the Proponent's view is that the herbicide strategy to be developed

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by the Proponent as part of the construction environmental management phase of the project, remains as relevant now as it was prior to the landowner undertaking the weed control activities. The strategy will aim to target noxious weeds on the site in a manner that minimizes the adverse impact on NTG and other non-target grasses.

The Proponent contends that weed management under the project's herbicide strategy will provide a coordinated and monitored approach, better able to achieve the dual objectives of weed management and NTG improvement.

### **Potential for a 'Localised Rain Shadow'**

The Proponent notes that the issue of whether the solar farm constitutes a solid mass has been discussed in the Capital Solar Farm Environmental Assessment prepared by NGH Environmental Ltd, dated 20 October 2010 (the **Environmental Assessment**) and subsequently as part of the materials accompanying the Controlled Action exhibition.

In these documents, it has been stated that the proposed Capital Solar Farm does not present a solid mass, with total shading occurring to only 30% of the land. Micro climate impacts have been discussed in detail. They are expected to include small changes to temperature and moisture distribution around the panels in the immediate vicinity of the panels only. They are expected to even out rapidly, given the grassed intervals between panels (~7m) and free draining soils onsite. Maintenance of groundcover (in accordance with the groundcover management plan) will also regulate this impact. No discernible effects are likely to be observable onsite. Specifically, no offsite soil or water impacts are expected in this regard.

Rain shadows are usually associated with topographical features (such as mountain ranges) which affect the movement of rain-producing weather. The solar panels onsite would be low lying and would not alter the existing landforms or terrain onsite. A localised rain shadow, apart from the areas directly under the panels, as discussed above, is not expected.

### **Conclusion**

The Proponent does not propose any further amendment to the project, referral or management plans. Please feel free to contact myself if you require any further information.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Griffin', is written over a faint, light-colored rectangular stamp or watermark.

**David Griffin**  
GM Development