

## **GEGHA Project Planning and the Environmental Assessment Process**

### **How is the project being planned?**

The GEGHA Project has been separated into two separate portions for planning purposes:

1. The 18 MW (DC) 'Wathagar Stage 2' Solar Farm is being permitted under a separate Development Application which will be prepared and submitted to the Moree Plains Shire Council. The Northern Joint Regional Planning Panel is the nominated consent authority;
2. The Hydrogen plant, Ammonia plant and associated storage, load out, water supply, evaporation pond and perimeter fencing will be permitted under the State Significant Development process, involving the preparation and submission of an Environmental Impact Statement in support of the Development Application lodged through the NSW Major Project Planning Portal. The Minister for Planning is the consent authority, facilitated by the Department of Planning and Environment (DPE).

### **Legislative Context and Environmental Impact Statement Overview**

The GEGHA Project meets the criteria of a State Significant Development under Part 4 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 and State Environmental Planning Policy (Planning Systems), 2021.

Declaration of a State Significant Development triggers the requirement for the preparation of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIS). The Project developer ('Applicant') is required to prepare a Scoping Report to clearly identify the key matters assess in the EIS.

Following preparation of the Scoping Report, the DPE invites broader governmental agency assessment and coordinates a response to the Applicant, providing project-specific Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) that are used to form the basis of expected environmental assessment during the preparation of the EIS.

The project's scoping report and Project SEARs are available via the Project website [www.gegha.com.au](http://www.gegha.com.au) or directly on the NSW Government's Major Projects Planning Portal.

### **Environmental Impact Statement – Timing**

The GEGHA Project received its SEARs on the 21<sup>st</sup> June 2023 and the EIS planning process commenced soon afterwards. Specialist studies will be completed by the end of 2023 with lodgement of the EIS planned for Q1 2024 and a determination expected in Q3 2024 (estimate only).

### **Environmental Impact Statement - Preparation**

All environmental aspects raised in the Scoping report and requested by the Project's SEARs will be comprehensively assessed, analysed and evaluated as part of the EIS planning process.

Several specialist studies have been commissioned to further define site suitability including assessment of Hazard and Risk, Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal heritage, Biodiversity, Traffic and Transport, Noise, Air Quality, Visual Amenity, Soil, Water and Bush Fire susceptibility.

The outcome of these assessments will be presented and evaluated in the EIS and will be used to further refine final proposed site layout and subject land to avoid and minimise impact to existing environmental values as far as is reasonably practicable.

The EIS is subject to an independent review by a Registered Environmental Assessment Practitioner (REAP) who provides a third party validation that the content of the EIS meets the requirements of the Project SEARs and accompanying guidance criteria.

### **Environmental Impact Statement – Lodgement and Exhibition**

Following completion of REAP review, the EIS will be finalised by Hiringa for lodgement in consultation with the DPE. Following formal lodgement of the EIS, the DPE will review the document to check for consistency with the SEARs and then advertise and coordinate the exhibition period which will last at least 28 days. The main purpose of the exhibition period is to provide the Community the right to have a say on the merits of the Project prior to a final decision being made.

### **General Enquiries and Project Information**

Outside of the formal EIS exhibition period, there is an ongoing opportunity to contact us via a contact form on our website or via our project email address: [gegha@hiringa.com.au](mailto:gegha@hiringa.com.au). Please get in touch with us if you have any specific questions about the project.

### **How do I make an EIS Submission?**

You can join the project mailing list via the Project website [www.gegha.com.au](http://www.gegha.com.au) or view the Project's progress via the NSW Government's Major Project Planning Portal.

Mailing list participants will be notified when the project's Environmental Impact Statement is on exhibition and invited to review it and provide comment. The DPE will also independently advertise the upcoming exhibition period.

Submissions can be positive, negative or neutral towards the project and any contributions are welcome. Submissions should be made directly to the DPE via the Major Projects Portal, via post or hand delivered to a departmental office. Submissions will only be accepted during the project's exhibition period. There are further minimum requirements for valid submissions on the DPE's website.