

11.4 Solar Array Progress Report

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR COMMUNITY
TO 13 DECEMBER 2023 ORDINARY MEETING
GOV400103, ENE100032

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receive and note the report by the Director Community on the Solar Array Progress Report.

Executive summary

At the 19 April 2023 Ordinary Council Meeting, Council provided endorsement of Stage 3 of a 5MW (battery ready) Solar Array. Stage 3 includes onsite the construction, commissioning, and energisation of the solar array. The attached report sets out the progress of the Solar Array Project.

Disclosure of Interest

Nil

Detailed report

The Solar Array project continues to progress. Preliminary works have taken place to provide access to the construction site as well as undertaking the required vegetation screening works required before construction can commence.

At time of writing this report, documentation is still being finalised for the final design of the array. Again, this is required before construction can commence. Ordering the solar panels and tracking system is a keen component of the project timeline as there can be a substantial lead time for these items. We expect this order to be placed in December once the design of the system and the earthworks is finalised. The component with the longest lead time, the inverter, has already been ordered.

Work is progressing with the retail aspect of the project and further work on the design of the augmentation of the Essential Energy lines that are required for the project is also taking place. The cost of this part of the project cannot be guaranteed until the design is finalised and we have pricing come in for this. This may require further budget to be provided depending on the pricing. The impact of exchange rates with a weaker Australian dollar have been felt over 2023 in relation to price estimates for the inverter, panels and tracking system and the contingency in the budget may need to be supplemented in the near year.

At this stage, we are expecting finalisation of the construction phase Between July and September with commissioning of the array shortly after this. The project timeline is focused on an end date in October 2024.

Community Plan implications

Theme	Good Government
Goal	An effective and efficient organisation

Strategy Pursue efficiencies and ongoing business improvement

Strategic implications

Council Strategies

Community Plan
Operational Plan and Development Plan

Council Policies

Not Applicable

Legislation

Not Applicable

Financial implications

Council has provided a budget of \$8.3 million for the Stage 3 works. There is also likely to be a small amount of funds remaining from Stage 1 & 2 which we will transfer into the Stage 3 budget. While a potential request for additional budget is foreshadowed, it is not required at this time.

Associated Risks

There are numerous contracts to manage with this project which is exposing Council to potential issues and cost overruns. These contracts are being carefully managed to ensure minimal impact on the budget and on the project timeline. However, the management of multiple contractors is placing a strain on staff resources.

As noted, the impact of fluctuations in the exchange rate of the Australian dollar is also a significant issue as the little ability to control the timing of purchasing because of the timeframes required. The market for purchasing solar components is also under extreme supply pressure at present.

Ultimately, each delay in the project has potential cost impacts contractually as well as the ongoing requirement of Council to continue its existing electricity arrangements.

Regular reporting to Council provides an opportunity to communicate and manage any ongoing or unexpected risks that emerge with this project.

SIMON JONES
DIRECTOR COMMUNITY

31 October 2023

Attachments: 1. Solar Array Project Update - November 2023.

APPROVED FOR SUBMISSION:

BRAD CAM
GENERAL MANAGER



SOLAR ARRAY PROGRESS REPORT

29 NOVEMBER 2023

MID-WESTERN REGIONAL COUNCIL
MID-WESTERN REGIONAL COUNCIL
COMMUNITY

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Project Update

As at 31 October 2023 the overall project progress of the Solar Array Project was approximately 10%.

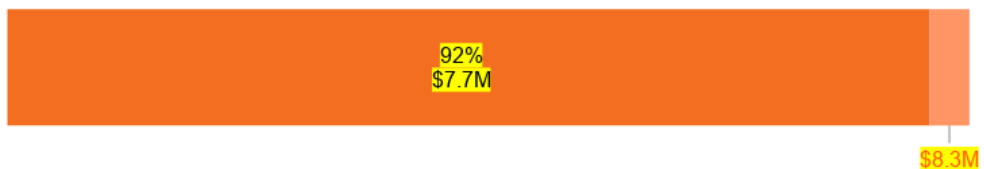
OVERALL PROJECT PROGRESS



PROJECT EXPENDITURE



PROJECT EXPENDITURE COMMITTED



COMMUNITY

Achievements and Highlights

- Stage 1 Completed – *project team establishment, concept design and feasibility confirmation, development application, connection investigation services agreement (CISA), confirm commercial and industrial (C&I) customer uptake levels and pricing and market participation provider.*
- Stage 2 Completed – *detailed design, construction trade package tender process, biodiversity corridor (tree planting) completed.*
- Stage 3 – commenced.
- Access Road completed.
- Vegetation screening completed.

Works still to be completed

- Finalisation of design for the earthworks for the array pad
- Finalisation of design for the panel and tracker configuration
- Solar Array pad earthworks
- Construction of the Solar Array
- Design of the upgrades to Essential Energy infrastructure
- Completing of the electricity infrastructure upgrades
- Commissioning of the array
- Finalisation of the retail methodology and supply

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