



Application for an Electricity Generation Authority

Columboola Solar Farm Nominees Pty Ltd as
trustee for Columboola Solar Farm Op Trust

Information Paper

May 2021



Queensland
Government

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1. Background

Columboola Solar Farm Nominees Pty Ltd (ABN 47 619 392 424) as trustee for Columboola Solar Farm Op Trust (the applicant) has applied to the Regulator for a generation authority under section 179 of the *Electricity Act 1994* (the Act). Under the Act, the Regulator is the Director-General of the Department of Energy and Public Works (the Department), being the chief executive of the department that administers the Act.

The application is for a proposed solar farm, the Columboola Solar Farm, located approximately 15km east of Miles, within the Western Downs Regional Council local government area of Queensland.

The generation authority, if issued, will authorise the operation of the plant and its connection to Powerlink's transmission network via Powerlink's Columboola Substation.

The plant will have a total nameplate rating of 217.25 Megawatts (MW) and a maximum capacity of 162MW.

The applicant will own and operate the plant and will appoint a third-party contractor to provide engineering, procurement, and construction services (EPC) and ongoing operation and maintenance of the plant.

Subject to receipt of all necessary approvals (including this generation authority), the applicant anticipates the plant will be complete and operational in September 2021.

2. Consideration of an Application

Section 180 of the Act provides that the Regulator may issue a generation authority only if satisfied:

- (a) the applicant will operate the generating plant stated in the application;
- (b) the generating plant will be able to provide electricity of a quality suitable for the transmission grid or supply network stated in the application;
- (c) the applicant is a suitable person to be a generation entity;
- (d) the owner or proposed owner of the generating plant (whether or not the applicant) is a suitable person to be the owner; and
- (e) the applicant meets the additional criteria prescribed under a regulation.
(Note that no additional criteria are prescribed by regulation).

In deciding whether the applicant is a suitable person to be a generation entity, or the owner or proposed owner of the generating plant (whether or not the applicant) is a suitable person to be the owner, the Act states the Regulator may consider:

- (a) the person's previous commercial and other dealings and the standard of honesty and integrity shown in the dealings;
- (b) any failure by the person to perform commercial or statutory obligations and the reasons for the failure;
- (c) the person's criminal history;
- (d) if the person is a corporation – the matters mentioned in paragraphs (a) to (c) for persons who are shareholders, directors or holders of other interests in the corporation;
- (e) for the applicant – the applicant's competence to be the operator; and
- (f) additional matters prescribed by regulation.
(Note that no additional matters are prescribed by regulation).

Further, the Act provides that, in deciding whether to issue the generation authority, the Regulator must consider:

- (a) the objects of the Act;
- (b) relevant government policies about environmental and energy issues and the likely environmental effects of building and operating the generating plant; and
- (c) additional matters prescribed under a regulation.
(Note that no additional matters are prescribed by regulation.)

Section 179A of the Act also stipulates that, before issuing a generation authority, the Regulator must invite interested persons to make submissions about the application for the authority and the Regulator must consider the submissions made.

3. The applicant

The information set out in sections 3 to 5 of this Information Paper was provided by the applicant as part of its formal application to the Regulator for a generation authority.

The applicant will be the operator and owner throughout the 30-year operational lifetime of the generating plant. EPC services and ongoing operation and maintenance activities will be contracted to a third party.

The applicant has a Construction and Asset Management Agreement with RES Australia and a Corporate and Commercial Management Services Agreement with ICA Investment Services. Both entities have worked together on a number of opportunities over the past 5 years including Emerald Solar Farm and Dulacca Wind Farm.

RES Australia has been established in the Australian market since 2003 and has provided Construction and Asset Management services to over 1GW of wind and solar projects. RES Australia is a subsidiary of the RES Group which is a renewable energy developer with extensive experience in developing, financing, constructing and operating renewable energy projects with a combined capacity of over 18GW.

ICA Investment Services has experience in project financing in the renewables sector gained through working with developers such as Neoen and RES. ICA has experience in negotiating and managing grid connection workstreams, including connection application and commissioning processes.

4. The proposed generating plant

The generating plant (Columboola Solar Farm) will be located on Kerwicks Road, Hookwood, Queensland 4415 (Lot 70 and 71 on BWR159), which is 15km east of Miles in the Western Downs Region.

The plant will have a total nameplate rating of 217.25 Megawatts (MW) and will consist of 79 inverter units. The maximum export capacity of the project will be 162 MW.

The applicant has a Connection and Access Agreement in place with Queensland Electricity Transmission Corporation Limited (Powerlink) to connect to the transmission grid via Powerlink's Columboola Substation. A new 132 kV, 1.9km long overhead transmission line will be built between Columboola Solar Farm Substation and Powerlink's substation to accommodate the generation plant.

The applicant is an Intended Participant and will apply with AEMO for registration as a Market Semi-Scheduled Generator.

5. Approvals for construction of the generating plant

A generation authority issued under the Act authorises its holder to operate the generating plant and connect it to the transmission grid or supply network.

It should be noted that a generation authority does not authorise or approve the construction of the generating plant and, indeed, that is not a matter within the jurisdiction of the Act or the Regulator. Section 26(2) of the Act states:

‘a generation authority does not relieve its holder or anyone else from complying with laws applying to the development, building, operation or maintenance of generating plant’.

The proponent of the plant has the responsibility to obtain all approvals necessary for construction and ongoing operation of the plant, including relevant environmental and local government approvals.

All relevant development approvals have been obtained by the proponent. Western Downs Regional Council granted a Development Approval in August 2017.

The project’s ecological assessment concluded that it is unlikely there will be a significant impact to local biodiversity values and that formal assessment and approval under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Commonwealth)* is not required.

6. Submissions

Submissions are invited from interested persons in relation to the application from Columboola Solar Farm Nominees Pty Ltd as trustee for Columboola Solar Farm Op Trust for a generation authority.

In particular, the Regulator is interested in matters that may impact on the suitability of the applicant to be a generation entity, as well as the other issues the Regulator must consider under the Act.

Please note that private personal and commercial-in-confidence information contained within a submission may be provided to a third party for the purpose of consideration of the application. In the case where the Regulator provides an opportunity for an applicant to respond to matters raised in a submission, the private personal information and commercial-in-confidence information of the person making the submission will not be provided to the applicant. The State of Queensland through the Department of Energy and Public Works (the Department) has taken steps to ensure the appropriate treatment of such information by departmental staff and contractors. By submitting a submission, you agree that your submission will be used by the Department and its contractors in reviewing and processing the applications.

All personal and commercial-in-confidence information will be stored at the office of the Department, and in accordance with the relevant privacy legislation. The Department’s privacy statement can be found at:

<https://www.epw.qld.gov.au/about/information-privacy>. If you have any questions or

queries you can email the Department's privacy unit at righttoinformation@hpw.qld.gov.au.

Submissions must be made in writing, and sent by email or mail to:

Mail

Attention: The Manager
Commercial
Department of Energy and Public Works
PO Box 15456
CITY EAST QLD 4002
Phone: 13 43 87

Email

energyregulation@dnrme.qld.gov.au

Closing date for submissions is 5.00pm on 4 June 2021.