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Department of  
**Primary Industries and  
Regional Development**

# Goldfields Solar Energy Project

## *FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS*

### **What is the Goldfields Solar Energy Project?**

The State Government made an election commitment to commence a feasibility study for a major solar energy project in the Goldfields, to secure the future energy generation to Kalgoorlie-Boulder and the region. Following extensive stakeholder consultation, it was concluded that, prior to a feasibility study, the process would benefit from a Preliminary Assessment.

### **Why the Goldfields region?**

Despite the comparative advantages of the Goldfields region as a seemingly obvious location for a major solar project - such as year round high solar energy levels, large amounts of undeveloped land and high industrial demand for electricity - no major solar project has yet been developed in the region.

### **What was the purpose of the Preliminary Assessment?**

The purpose of the Preliminary Assessment was to identify – and propose solutions to - the challenges facing the successful development of a large scale solar project in the Goldfields, and to inform the direction of the feasibility study. Throughout the process, extensive consultation was undertaken with a range of stakeholders, including local energy groups, mining companies, solar developers, and government agencies.

### **What was the outcome of the Preliminary Assessment?**

The Preliminary Assessment was finalised in March 2018. It reviewed the issues and set out an explanation of the impediments to a large-scale solar project being developed in the Goldfields. The Preliminary Assessment also explored potential solutions and set out a number of options for the State Government's consideration.

### **What are the next steps for the Goldfields Solar Energy Project?**

Following the outcome of the Preliminary Assessment, the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) has been appointed to lead the investment of the \$0.5m election commitment. DPIRD, along with other key stakeholders, will now commence actions that were recommended in the Preliminary Assessment.

### **What actions will be taken?**

Three key actions will be commenced to secure increased solar energy in the Goldfields in the short, medium and long term. These actions are:

1. Investigate opportunities for a Virtual Power Plant (VPP) trial in the region – DPIRD, in collaboration with the PUO and Western Power, will develop a proposal for a VPP trial. In order to maximise the

positive benefits for the region, a robust business model will be developed for further consideration by relevant Ministers.

2. Support private sector in pursuing 'behind the meter' solar options – DPIRD will assist companies interested in building solar projects for their operations by supporting them through land tenure processes (along with the other relevant agencies).
3. Making land available for large scale solar projects into the future - DPIRD will commence work with the relevant State Government agencies to unlock land for the development of large scale renewable projects, to coincide with the implementation of network regulation changes in 2022.

### **What is a VPP?**

A VPP is a series of solar panels and batteries installed on rooftops which are then connected together using software. This software then enables an operator to control the collective energy from the batteries as if it were from a single generator.

### **Will there be a VPP trial in Kalgoorlie-Boulder?**

At this stage, DPIRD will lead the development of a proposal. It is expected that a business model will be presented to Cabinet for consideration as to whether to proceed with a trial.

### **Is this project the first of its kind?**

There are currently several VPP projects underway in Australia, but – should it proceed – it would be the first in the Goldfields. This is an exciting prospect at the leading edge of technological innovation and was revealed by the Preliminary Assessment as one of the best ways, in conjunction with the broader work into land availability, to bring renewable energy, innovative technology, and network support to the region.

### **How will Kalgoorlie-Boulder and the Goldfields region benefit from this project?**

Work to develop a VPP trial in Kalgoorlie-Boulder will allow the State Government and other key stakeholders to assess how innovative technologies can help manage network challenges in the region. The proposal will also consider the installation of a VPP on public housing in Kalgoorlie-Boulder, given the potential for reducing electricity bills for residents. In addition, making land available for future renewable energy solutions will be a priority to meet high industrial demand for electricity, secure opportunities for regional growth into the future, and help move Western Australia to a low emissions economy.

### **How has this project been funded?**

A commitment of \$0.5 million for this project was confirmed in the 2017-18 State Budget.