

# Solar Systems

North-West Victorian Large Scale Solar Power Project

Consultation Outcomes Summary

January 2009

## **1. Overview**

Solar Systems is committed to undertaking a genuine and thorough consultation process.

The purpose of this document is to summarise the activities that have been undertaken to date in order to achieve the objectives of the Consultation Strategy for the Large Scale Solar Power Station near Mildura, Victoria .

## **2. Objectives**

The objectives of consultation are to:

- Implement an education campaign to raise awareness and understanding of the project and its benefits among the local community and other stakeholders,
- Offer community members and stakeholders a genuine opportunity to discuss and provide input into the project, and to
- Achieve community and stakeholder engagement and support for a successful and efficient environmental and planning process.

## **3. Key Stakeholders**

Key stakeholders associated with the Large Scale Solar Power Project include but are not limited to:

- The local community (residents and business).
- The Rural City of Mildura.
- Progress / Planning Associations.
- Local indigenous group representatives.
- Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD).
- Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE).
- Department of Primary Industries (DPI).
- Aboriginal Affairs Victoria (AAV)
- Department of Innovation Industry and Regional Development (DIIRD).
- The Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA).
- VicRoads.
- Powercor.
- Landcare groups.
- Environmental groups and associations.
- Relevant Members of Parliament.

- Relevant Ministers (Minister for Planning, Minister for Environment and Climate Change and Minister for Energy and Resources covering the relevant Acts as specified in Section 19(1)(c) of the Planning and Environment Act 1987.

#### **4. Consultation Activities**

In order to achieve the objectives of the consultation strategy for the project, activities have included:

- Dedicated and staffed Solar Systems Project Information Centre at 83 Lime Avenue, Mildura open Monday to Friday 9am to 5.30pm and Saturdays 9am to 12 noon (open from Wednesday 5 November 2008 to Saturday 29 November 2008).
- Multiple one-on-one neighbour consultation on the project and the three potential sites.
- Meetings with government agencies / departments, local government and local politicians.
- Correspondence with relevant Ministers.
- Community notice advertised in local press.
- Community notice posted on bulletin boards (ie, Post Office, Library, Council Offices, Shops).
- Community information sessions throughout November and December 2008 including (for example) the Lions and Rotary Clubs and attendance at Red Cliffs Community Market.
- Dedicated Freecall 1800 telephone number to respond to queries relating to the project (from 5 November 2008 and ongoing through 2009).
- Meetings with indigenous groups (see Appendix 1 for full list).
- Briefings with special interest groups and industry advisory groups (see Appendix 1 for full list).
- Meetings with emergency services and transport services (see Appendix 1 for full list).
- Meetings with job and network training providers (see Appendix 1 for full list).
- Meetings with local business people (see Appendix 1 for full list).
- Follow-up meetings with community members.
- Community static display staffed by Solar Systems personnel in Red Cliffs township (attendance at information desks and the Red Cliffs Country Markets).
- Mildura Mall and Mildura Centro Shopping Centre information stands.
- Board and Community Group presentations.
- Red Cliff post box and letter box flyer drops.
- Outlying regions information packages and roadside mail box flyer drop offs to Werrimul, Nangiloc, Colignan, Sunny Cliffs and Carwarp.
- Television, print and radio media from the announcement of the first stage of the large scale solar power station project being constructed in the Mildura region.
- Community focus forums – as required.
- Follow-up meetings with neighbours, groups and individuals.
- Follow-up meetings with government agencies.

Please see **Appendix 2** for a register of community consultation episodes and information distribution.

## **5. Consultation Outcomes and the Response from the Community**

### **Mildura Rural City Council**

Mildura Rural City Council (MRCC) support has been extremely positive and council has been very proactive in providing regional information to Solar Systems. Standing Councillors (based on discussions / briefings held prior to the November 2008 elections) were all very much in favour of the project going ahead in the region. MRCC personnel (from the Chief Executive Officer down) have continued to be extremely helpful with additional relevant information needs and in agreeing to the particulars of councils involvement on the approvals process.

Further, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of MRCC has stated his unequivocal support for the project and newly elected Councillors are showing support for the solar power station being constructed in the region to boost the local economy during this time of drought and economic downturn. Ongoing consultation with Councillors will continue to ensure they are kept informed of project progress and to foster continued support from these public figures.

### **Special Interest Groups**

A number of Special Interest Groups (SIG's) were consulted with throughout November and December 2008 (refer Appendix 1). These included environmental groups such as Sunraysia Bird Observer's Club and Landcare Groups. Others include Lions and Rotary Clubs to name just a few of the 70 plus groups that were consulted with.

All SIG's have expressed widespread support for the project going ahead near Red Cliffs. The general consensus amongst participants of the SIG's is that the social and economic benefits for the community as a whole will give the region a "shot in the arm". Drought has affected the main industry of the area which is irrigation and the widespread view is that the Solar Systems project will go a long way towards improving the economic and social climate which, as it stands currently, is quite depressed.

The forums held for SIG's allowed many questions to be answered from those that participated. Questions answered from these groups were associated with all aspects including any potential environmental effects of the project during construction and operation, the planning process that needs to be followed, the performance of the completed power station and economic and social benefits for the region just to name a few. After responding to their various queries, all SIG's were very much in favour of the project continuing and were looking forward to it being completed.

### **Businesses**

The business community of Sunraysia has shown extraordinary support for the Large Scale Solar Power Station to be constructed. In addition to being community members of Sunraysia and having an interest in the project from that perspective, many business people are also aware of the flow on effects that a monetary injection will have in the region.

Businesses are also feeling the effects of the economic downturn and the opportunities that exist for contractors are seen as a potential revenue source for this sector. Furthermore, it also recognised by the business community that up to 950 jobs in total will be created at the peak of construction (with up to 25% locally sourced) and that this will have direct flow on effects for a wide range of goods and services providers.

## **Government Departments**

The project facilitation efforts by the various Victorian government departments have been highly commendable during the early stages of the planning process and during the community consultation period. As a result of the project being funded in part by a grant from the Victorian government, a high level of understanding exists between Solar Systems and State government departments regarding the project (and its requirements) and the magnitude of the “team” effort required to finalise the environmental and planning approvals.

Naturally, the proper planning processes need to be followed by Solar Systems and the assistance from government departments in continuing to facilitate this process will be vital. Feedback from such departments has been positive in relation to the community consultation program Solar Systems have undertaken. The Victorian government have been clear that a comprehensive community consultation effort must occur to ensure public backing for the project. Solar Systems are confident that this has been undertaken and will continue to be throughout the planning and construction phases.

## **Community**

Community support for the project has been extraordinary and can only be described as “overwhelmingly positive”. Of the thousand plus people that Solar Systems have consulted directly with during the months of November and December 2008, no negative comments has been forthcoming regarding the project or the manner in which public consultation has been undertaken. Feedback received continues to be of an extremely positive nature. Perhaps the only adverse comment, if it can be called this, is “why aren’t we building the power station any sooner!”

The community has shown a strong interest in the project in response to the invitations sent out to them (via a number of means including the media, advertising, letter box drop offs, direct contact). As can be viewed in Appendix 2, over 450 people personally visited the Project Information Centre (PIC) and many more attended the various information desks that were located around Mildura and Red Cliffs.

In so far as the community is concerned, based on the feedback received, Solar Systems now has a mandate to proceed with obtaining approvals for, and subsequently constructing the large scale solar power station in the Mildura region near Red Cliffs.

## **Appendix 1. Invitees Register for Large Scale Solar Project Information Forums**

Civil Aviation Safety Authority  
Mildura Aboriginal Corporation  
Latje Latje people  
Nyeri/Wergaia people  
Nangiloc/Colignan & District Community Association  
Inc  
Sporting Shooters Association  
Mildura Pigeon Club Inc.  
Mildura Rural City Council  
Sunraysia Alternative Technology Association  
Cardross Progress Association Inc.  
Victorian Mallee Fowl Recovery Group  
Sunraysia Field Naturalists  
Sunraysia Bird Observers Club  
Birds Australia  
Kulkyne Way Landcare Group  
Mallee Landcare Group Coordinator  
Carwarp Landcare Group  
Maria Reidl  
Country Womens Association Millewa Group  
Country Womens Association Carwarp Branch  
Victoria Police  
Red Cliffs Lions Club  
Red Cliffs Rotary Club  
Ross Lake  
Don Carrazza  
Stefano De Pieri  
Alex Dowsley  
Sunraysia Mallee Economic Development Board  
Mildura Chamber of Commerce Inc  
Red Cliffs Chamber of Commerce  
Irymple Progress Association  
Murray Darling Association  
Millewa Advisory Group  
Australian Citrus Growers Inc.  
Australian Table Grape Association  
Mildura District Dried Fruits Association  
Murray Valley Citrus board  
Sunraysia Citrus Growers Inc  
SunRISE 21  
Victorian & Murray Valley Winegrape Growers  
Murray Valley Winegrape Growers Inc  
Victorian Farmers Federation  
Mildura Tourism  
Centrelink  
Mildura Transport & Logistics Cluster  
Victorian National Parks Association  
Ouyen Incorporated  
Merbein Development Association

Sunraysia Irrigators Council  
Mallee Sustainable Farming  
Sunraysia Area Consultative Committee  
Mildura Airport  
Beekeepers Choice  
Hattah Store  
Sunraysia Institute of TAFE  
La Trobe University  
MADEC  
Centacare  
Sunitafe Employment Solutions  
AusNac  
SMGT  
MEGT  
VECCI  
Skilled Employment  
Prestige Staffing  
Auslink  
State Emergency Services  
Rural Ambulance Victoria  
St Johns Ambulance  
Mildura Base Hospital  
Mildura Fire Brigade  
Red Cliffs Fire Brigade  
Carwarp Fire Brigade  
Pisconeri Transport  
GTS Freight  
Pickering Transport Group  
Wakefields Transport  
Sunsalt

## Appendix 2. Register of Community Consultation Episodes and Information Distribution

Month	Day	Date	PIC	RC Stand	Centro	Mall	Forums	Letter Box	Mail Box	RMB	RC Mkt	Businesses
November	Sat	1										
	Sun	2										
	Mon	3										
	Tue	4										
	Wed	5	29									
	Thu	6	32									
	Fri	7	28									
	Sat	8	14									
	Sun	9										
	Mon	10	18									11
	Tue	11	11									19
	Wed	12	14	20								
	Thu	13	15									
	Fri	14	4									
	Sat	15	9									
	Sun	16										
	Mon	17	12				8					
	Tue	18	12				16					
	Wed	19	13				12					
	Thu	20	15	10					325			
	Fri	21	4				5		760	575	153	
	Sat	22	8		16					150		
	Sun	23										
	Mon	24	18									
	Tue	25										
	Wed	26	48									
	Thu	27	56									
	Fri	28	63	12								

December	Sat	29	28																				
	Sun	30																					
	Mon	1																					
	Tue	2																					
	Wed	3								40													
	Thu	4																					
	Fri	5									7												
	Sat	6										15											
	Sun	7																					100
	Mon	8																					
	Tue	9																					
	Wed	10									18												
	Thu	11																					
	Fri	12																					
	Sat	13																					
	Sun	14																					
	Mon	15																					
	Tue	16																					
	Wed	17																					
	Thu	18																					
	Fri	19																					
	Sat	20																					
	Sun	21																					
	Mon	22																					
Tue	23																						
Wed	24																						
<b>TOTALS</b>			<b>451</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>750</b>	<b>1050</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>2713</b>										