



## **Whitsunday Solar Farm**

# **Community Engagement Plan**

**2014 to 2016 and onwards**



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## Pit Pony Tavern



Pit Pony Tavern  
Address: Stanley Street, Collinsville Qld 4804



*Panorama view on site (top), community meeting venue for Whitsunday Solar Farm at Pit Pony Tavern (above left), site visit with Powerlink to select available bays at Strathmore substation for grid connection (above right)*

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## **1. Brief History & Current Context**

*A plan to leverage existing community support*

Since 2014 the Whitsunday Solar Farm has enjoyed and sustained widespread community support within the local Regional jurisdiction, predominantly in and around the Collinsville township.

This support extends further afield across wider central North Queensland including larger towns such as Bowen and Proserpine, as well as to the north at Townsville (the likely port facility for the transportation of containers to the Project site) due to the Project's positive engagement of local, state and federal members.

It's testament to this positive local context that - after proactively and individually contacting all landowners in close vicinity to the Project site – there were zero objections raised during the planning approval process. The only submission letter received was from Glencore who operate the nearby Collinsville coal mine, who did not object to the project but rather advised of their periodic activities and the potential to share their excess water.

Community perceptions of the Project site are enhanced by its unobtrusive location, being well away from the main Bowen Developmental Road, with Stage 1 proposed for AREAN also being entirely screened by trees from Stathmore Rd used by local cattle graziers.

This Community Engagement Plan (CEP) builds upon this existing good will, and provides a framework to regularly – and proactively – engage and consult with a wide spectrum of local entities and individuals, and to bring the community along with the Project’s journey.

Whitsunday Solar Farm Pty Ltd benefits from a depth of experience in successful community consultation within its consortium, both through the founder of Edify Energy (who led the financing and construction of over 20 utility solar farms across the UK between 2011 to 2015) as well as Bouygues extensive experience as one of the world’s largest infrastructure firms.

Additionally, Solar Choice’s impartial residential model has since 2008 productively served some thousands of residents in and around Proserpine, Bowen, Collinsville and the wider central North Queensland region with informative Quote Comparisons for residential solar and battery storage options, and is a recognised and well-respected business in these communities.

## 2. Key Objectives

This CEP will focus on the following key objectives:

- A. Collaborative and proactive dialogue with neighbours in close vicinity to the Project site.
- B. Wider community engagement and interaction through regular public meetings and Q&A sessions at all stages of the Project at Collinsville's Pit Pony Tavern.
- C. Education opportunities through site tours with local Schools, training and education bodies, as well as local indigenous groups through dialogue with the Birriah people.
- D. Interaction, engagement and involvement with a diverse spectrum of local stakeholders and interested entities.

### 3. Plan to achieve Objective A

*Collaborative and proactive dialogue with neighbours in close vicinity to the Project site.*

During January and February 2015 (prior to the April 2015 public notification period for the planning application), Solar Choice individually liaised with all neighbours in close vicinity to the Project site to listen to their various concerns, to listen to any issues they may have and in turn address such matters (if any) in a response paper for Council.

Discussions were directly engaged with the following neighbours:

Property Owners in Vicinity	Relative location to Project Site
<b>Tom &amp; Karen Murphy</b>	“Tabletop” north west of site
<b>Bill &amp; Rea Hoffman</b>	North west of site
<b>Kevin Hoffman</b>	North of site
<b>Paul &amp; Sally Fry</b>	“Strathmore Station” west of site
<b>Terry Beggs</b>	“Kerale” St Colinta Holdings, west of site

Following these proactive discussions, no objections were lodged against the project during the public notification period, however the Project recognises that these neighbours may potentially develop reservations that need to be proactively engaged in the lead up to construction, during construction and then for the long term life of the Whitsunday Solar Farm.

Under this CEP, the Project will continue this direct, personal and collaborative dialogue with all five of these neighbouring landowners, plus any others in close vicinity to the project, through the following three key methods:

- i. Direct and personal provision of clear information about the Project's progress by phone, email and/or where possible in additional individual meetings at the homes of these nearby landowners;
- ii. Actively listen to the concerns of neighbouring landowners, and subsequent follow up by email to the landowners confirming that their concern has been noted and registered; and
- iii. Incorporate feedback from neighbouring landowners where appropriate into the Environmental Management Plan, Landscape Management Plan and/or Fire Management Plan for the Project.

This CEP recognises that common concerns of cattle graziers within a close vicinity to a solar farm site that may need to be addressed with the above landowners through on going direct contact are set out Figure 3.1 below.

Figure 3.1: table of common concerns from neighbouring landowners to a solar farm

<b><i>Common solar farming concerns from neighbouring cattle graziers</i></b>
<b>Impact on rural aesthetics</b>
<b>Decrease in surrounding property value</b>
<b>Road safety for trucks etc during construction</b>
<b>Construction noise</b>
<b>Windblown dust and sprays from surrounding farms affecting yield of solar farm, potential liability issues</b>
<b>Control of pests, weeds, vermin</b>
<b>Perceptions of aggregated inverter noise/low frequency humming</b>

#### 4. Plan to achieve Objective B

*Wider community engagement and interaction through regular public meetings and Q&A sessions at all stages of the Project at Collinsville's Pit Pony Tavern.*

Feedback from the Collinsville community groups is that Tuesday nights are the optimal evening in the week for the community to attend public Q&A sessions on the Project.

Accordingly, the Project has made advance bookings at the Pit Pony Tavern, for the following dates:

Date	Project Stage	Activity	Status
<b>27 September 2016</b>	Clarity on timing to Financial Close  (pending Offer to Negotiate an ARENA Funding Agreement)	Community meeting at Pit Pony Tavern	Booked
<b>24 January 2017</b>	Construction	Community meeting at Pit Pony Tavern	Booked
<b>21 March 2017</b>	Construction	Community meeting at Pit Pony Tavern	Booked
<b>25 July 2017</b>	Construction well advanced, nearing conclusion of Stage 1	Community meeting at Pit Pony Tavern	Booked

Notification to the public of these meetings will be delivered at least a fortnight in advance through the following avenues:

- Public advertisements in the local newspaper of the upcoming Q&A session;
- Dissemination by Whitsunday Regional Council on their website and/or mailing list
- Email notification by the Project to all of the local stakeholders in our database, see table at Figure ??

*Meeting room/venue at Pit & Pony Tavern, Collinsville*



The meetings will also be notified on the Project's Community Engagement Website that includes an impressive video fly-over simulation for (<https://vimeo.com/128611923> ), Community Feedback Form and newsletter subscription. See <http://www.solarchoice.net.au/blog/whitsunday-solar-farm-community-engagement>

These meetings will be open to all members of the public to attend as an open forum through which to learn about the Project's progress, and to have their free say. It's anticipated that these meetings will also allow a conduit to engagement of subcontractors, or other job opportunities either directly or indirectly engaged in the project.

The meetings will be convened and chaired by a representative of the Project.

A list of names and email contacts of all attendees who wish to register will be taken, and minutes of each meeting disseminate to them within seven calendar days.

Any specific matters that the community would like addressed by the Project can then be tabled to the Directors of Whitsunday Solar Farm Pty Ltd, and subsequent resolution of any action relayed to the list of attendees.



## 5. Plan to achieve Objective C

*Education opportunities through site tours with local Schools, training and education bodies, as well as local indigenous groups.*

The Project has already proactively notified a range of Schools and other education and training entities in the local region of the educational and clean energy future benefits that the Whitsunday Solar Farm will bring to the region as one of Queensland's largest proposed photovoltaic generators.

Post construction, and where safe during construction at the discretion of EPC firm Bouygues, the project will conduct site tours for students and interested participants from local indigenous groups.

These entities include:

**Birriah Indigenous group, Body Corporate**

**Collinsville State High School**

**Collinsville State School**

**Scottsville Primary School, Collinsville**

**St John Bosco Catholic School, Collinsville**

**Bowen State High School**

**Bowen State School**

**Proserpine State High School**

**St Catherine's Catholic School, Proserpine**

## 6. Plan to achieve Objective D

*Interaction, engagement and involvement with a diverse spectrum of local stakeholders and interested entities.*

The Project has already, and will continually, reach out to a widespread mix of local stakeholders and local peak bodies to keep them informed and engaged on the progress of the Whitsunday Solar Farm.

These local stakeholder groups and bodies include:

Organisation Name	Contact Person	Contact Details	Notes
<b>Collinsville Connect</b>	Sue Clark	(07) 4785 6934 37 Stanley St, Collinsville QLD 4804	Also runs a telecentre
<b>Collinsville Community Assoc</b>	Cassandra Woodhouse	81 Garrick St, Collinsville 07 4785 5965	Also Centrelink agency
<b>Girudula, Indigenous group</b>	Algon Walsh, Jim Gaston	07 4786100	Bowen
<b>Collinsville Lions Club</b>	Marissa Kearney	07 47855347	Marrissa also runs Post Office
<b>Bowen Rotary Club</b>	Lynette Driesner	29 Herbert St, Bowen	
<b>Bowen Lions Club</b>	Affie Perrin (ladies auxiliary)	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/bowen.lions/">https://www.facebook.com/bowen.lions/</a>	
<b>Collinsville Workers Club</b>	Pat Havil	07 47855452	
<b>Collinsville Youth Coalition</b>	Cassandra Woodhouse	Garrick St, Collinsville	
<b>Retired Miners Group</b>	Jack Dempsey	07 47855452	

## **7. Conclusion**

This CEP recognises the key significance of engaging the local Collinsville and wider regional community, and – in doing so - focusses on four very clear and specific objectives.

The CEP sets out a framework for proactive collaboration and dialogue at both an individualised level for immediate neighbours, plus also a strategy for wider community involvement, interaction, participation and education.

The CEP is very much a living document, and can and will be adapted as the Project moves closer to financial close then through construction to its O&M phase.

**Appendix A** –

Whitsunday Regional Council, endorsement letter confirming absence of objections from community and dialogue with the Birriah people.

See below.



Our reference:  
For further information please contact: Kellianne Wynne  
Direct dial no.: 4945 0260

10 June 2016

Angus Gemmell and John Cole  
Whitsunday Solar Farm Pty Ltd  
c/o Level 3, 39 East Esplanade  
**MANLY NSW 2095**

Angus and John,

**RE: LETTER OF SUPPORT – WHITSUNDAY SOLAR FARM PTY LTD**

This letter is provided in support of Whitsunday Solar Farm Pty Ltd's application for ARENA funding for a large scale renewable energy project directly adjoining Powerlink's Strathmore Substation near Collinsville.

Whitsunday Regional Council is committed to infrastructure which enables economic development and facilitates investment opportunities within our Region, including alternative energy sources.

On 22 December 2014, the proponent lodged with Council a development application for a Development Permit for a Material Change of Use of Premises for a Major Utility (Solar Power PV Facility). During the statutory public notification period of 15 business days only one (1) submission was received, however this was not in opposition of the application. A Negotiated Decision Notice was approved by Council on 30 July 2015.

**Customer Service Centres**

**Bowen**

P: 07 4761 3600  
67 Herbert Street  
Bowen Qld 4805

**Collinsville**

P: 07 4785 5366  
Cnr Stanley and Conway Streets  
Collinsville Qld 4804

**Proserpine**

P: 07 4945 0200  
83-85 Main Street  
Proserpine Qld 4800

F: 07 4945 0222

E: [info@whitsundayrc.qld.gov.au](mailto:info@whitsundayrc.qld.gov.au)  
W: [www.whitsundayrc.qld.gov.au](http://www.whitsundayrc.qld.gov.au)

ABN: 63 291 580 128

The planning approval allows optionality for the project to be built in stages over eight (8) years up to 2 GigaWatt, including for a 69MW DC stage with ARENA.

Since gaining the development approval in July 2015 the development has progressed through compliance with the conditions of approval. The conditions of approval required the applicant to provide to Council supporting reports and plans to mitigate the impacts of the development.

After collaborating on early drafts, the applicant has since lodged the following with Council:

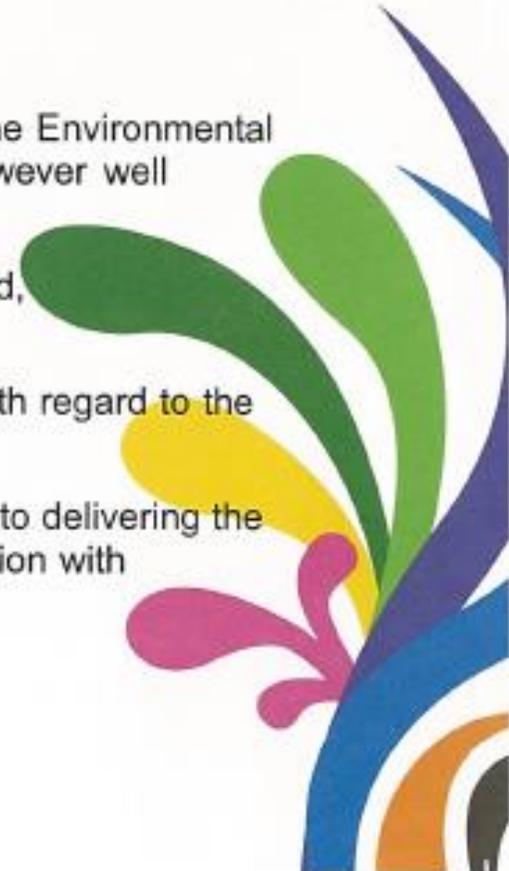
- Environmental Management Plan including Stormwater Management, Weed Management, Groundcover Management and Vegetation Screening;
- Traffic Management Plan; and
- Bushfire Management Plan.

The Traffic Management Plan has been with approved by Council, with the Environmental Management Plan and Bushfire Management Plan still under review however well advanced.

Additionally, the 69MW (DC) NEXTracker site design has been submitted, also approved by Council.

The applicant is noted to have ongoing dialogue with the Birriah people with regard to the cultural heritage of the site.

From a Council perspective the applicant has shown a strong commitment to delivering the project post approval, which has been demonstrated through the progression with the conditions of approval.



The applicant is now positioned to commence the development.

Whitsunday Regional Council therefore has no hesitation in providing this letter of support for Whitsunday Solar Farm Pty Ltd.

Should you have any further queries, please feel free to contact Council.

Yours faithfully,



**Dan Staley**  
**Director – Planning & Community**

