

# RWE

## Stakeholder Engagement Plan

### Limondale Solar Farm

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## The project

RWE is constructing a new solar farm, Limondale, with an installed capacity of 349 megawatts DC. The large-scale farm will be located in New South Wales, 14 kilometres south of Balranald, west of the intersection of Yanga Way and Balranald Road. The land where it is located is adjacent to the TransGrid electrical substation that connects the transmission line from Buronga to Darlington Point.

The solar farm will have 872,000 panels and cover an area of 900 hectares. Full commercial operation is expected mid-2020.

The site was chosen for a variety of reasons, including:

- cooperative landholder and family that has lived in the area for many years;
- reduced/minimal visual impact to the community as a result of tree line buffers between the site and public roads;
- high availability of solar irradiation;
- minimal impact on native vegetation and Aboriginal heritage;
- proximity to the Balranald substation, enabling access to the electricity transmission network while not adversely impacting on sensitive native vegetation or heritage values within the adjacent travelling stock reserve; and
- good access to the regional road network, which will allow infrastructure to be delivered to the site during construction of the project.

The project will provide a number of benefits to the local and wider community including:

- additional investment in Balranald to compliment majority dry-land farming and grazing;
- employment of up to 500 people during construction and up to ten full-time positions during operations;
- enough electricity generation to power up to 105,000 homes each year (or a regional centre the size of Mildura seven times over);
- assisting New South Wales to meet the renewable energy goals established under the NSW Government's Renewable Energy Action Plan;
- contribute to the Commonwealth Government's target of 33,000 gigawatt hours (GWh) of renewable energy generated by 2020; and
- play a role in increasing energy security by contributing to a more diverse energy mix.

The project was initially developed by Overland Sun Farming before being purchased by RWE Renewables Australia ('RWE') (previously operating in Australia as innogy Renewables Australia) in October 2018.

## The area

*The Limondale project is located in a semi-isolated rural area with low population density. It is 14 kilometres south of Balranald, which has a population of 1159<sup>1</sup> and is located in Balranald Shire, in the New South Wales Riverina district. The town is located in a semi-desert area where the Sturt Highway crosses the Murrumbidgee River. Balranald has a majority blue-collar workforce:*

- labourers 19.7%,
- machinery operators and drivers 14.1%,
- community and personal service workers 13.5%,
- technicians and trades workers 13.0%, and
- clerical and administrative workers 11.0%<sup>2</sup>.

The township has an unemployment rate of 7.9 per cent, higher than the New South Wales average of 6.3 per cent and Australian average of 6.9 per cent<sup>3</sup>.

Other renewable developments will be built in the surrounding area.

The Balranald Shire covers 21,346 square kilometres and is located 850 kilometres south-west of Sydney and 450 kilometres north of Melbourne. It has a population of 2361 and its major townships are Balranald and Euston (population 600). Agriculture is the main economic driver of the shire and this has expanded from traditional pursuits of dry land and irrigated agricultural production of grains, wool, sheep and beef to incorporate horticulture, viticulture, organic agriculture and fruit and nut trees.<sup>4</sup>

## About RWE Renewables Australia

RWE Renewables Australia is a wholly-owned subsidiary of RWE Group, Germany's leading energy company. RWE has reliably supplied people and companies with electricity for more than 120 years and has grown to become a global leader of renewable energy across more than 15 countries, including the United States, United Kingdom and Australia. RWE has over 20,000 staff and four business segments – Generation, Power, Supply & Trading and Renewables – with the renewables segment being the fourth biggest renewable energy supplier and the second biggest offshore wind company globally.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census\\_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/UCL115004](http://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/UCL115004)

<sup>2</sup> As above

<sup>3</sup> As above

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.balranald.nsw.gov.au/your-council/council-information/>



RWE is a trusted partner for electricity generation, storage systems and energy trading. Together with our partners, RWE develops innovative solutions and drives technological progress for customers globally. The company actively supports the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals, with the company's focus on affordable and clean energy for all, growing industry, innovation and infrastructure and climate change action.

In Australia, the company is a relatively new player, with the Limondale solar farm the first in its development pipeline to proceed to construction. The decades of international experience (as RWE Group) and leading stakeholder engagement philosophies have made the transition to the southern continent seamless. The Australian head office is located in Victoria's capital city – Melbourne – where a team of renewable energy professionals are working on an exciting development pipeline of solar, wind and battery storage projects.

## Community Engagement

### **Our policy**

At RWE we understand that engaging meaningfully with communities and key stakeholders around our projects is critical for building and operating successful projects.

We are committed to dedicated and thorough engagement with our project communities and engaging in a meaningful and straight-forward manner that provides key stakeholders with easy and streamlined methods of communication.

We believe consultation informs and empowers communities and results in better projects. We acknowledge and appreciate stakeholder feedback with respect and use this to shape our projects whenever possible and deliver positive outcomes.

We are committed to regular engagement with communities through all parts of the project lifecycle, from feasibility through to operation, and responding to all queries in a timely manner.

We will deliver community funds in our project communities for the duration of the operational life of our projects and are committed to minimising impact on project communities, while maximising environmental benefit for all.

### **Our objectives**

At RWE, sustainability positively contributes to the long-term economic success of the company. We believe that taking social and ecological responsibility is part of the company's identity.

Not only do our actions and operations have an impact on our success as a company, they also have consequences for people and the environment. At RWE, we are working towards making the world a better place through our actions.

This social responsibility that we take so seriously translates to our stakeholder engagement philosophy. Wherever we are located we see ourselves as part of the local society and want to contribute to the community.

Our stakeholder engagement objectives in Australia are to:

- financially support our project communities with benefit sharing programs that deliver annual funds to local community initiatives for the project’s lifetime;
- empower local communities through financial and social support to make much-needed community initiatives a reality.

## Our sponsorship

Throughout the world RWE prides itself on having strong community relationships and upholding the best standards of community engagement for their projects. Limondale will be RWE’s first venture into the Australian renewable energy market and RWE is very focussed on ensuring the standards we have set throughout the world are upheld here in Australia.

RWE will establish a Limondale Solar Farm Community Committee during construction, which will operate for the life of the project. The committee will consist of a number of community representatives. The community representatives from the committee will work with the project to distribute an annual community fund of up to \$AUD 40,000 from full operations. Funding arrangements will be governed by a detailed written Corporate Social Responsibility Concept to ensure impartiality and to avoid conflicts of interest or undue influence on any official or commercial decisions.

The community committee will develop its own charter including a meeting schedule and follow best practice guidelines in accordance with the below table 1:

<b>Project timeframe and responsible</b>	<b>Actionable item list</b>
Construction	RWE to issue applications to the community for participation on the Limondale Solar Farm Community Engagement Committee
Construction	RWE to appoint Community Engagement Committee members
Construction and Operations	Community Engagement Committee to issue invitations for funding to the local community on an annual basis
Operations	Community Engagement Committee to evaluate funding applications on an annual basis
Operations	Announcement of successful recipients for funding on an annual basis

**Table 1: Project timeframe, responsible department and actionable item list**

Once established, the local Community Engagement Committee will invite the community to apply for grants, with the recipients to be announced once a year during full operations of the solar farm.

## **Best practice guidelines**

This report has been developed in accordance with IAP2’s Public Participation Spectrum, to inform, consult, involve, collaborate and empower. We are also committed to engagement processes that are genuine, timely, relevant, transparent and inclusive<sup>5</sup>, with clear, easy-to-read documentation written in lay person’s terms and easy methods of communication between RWE and stakeholders.

This report has been developed to facilitate positive and proactive communication with the local community and key stakeholders throughout the development of the Limondale Solar Farm, throughout its lifecycle.

## **Stakeholders**

It is expected that this stakeholder database will evolve further over time. It will be subject to regular review.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Stakeholders</b>
<b>Group 1</b> Those immediately impacted by the project	Landholders Neighbours within 10 kilometres Residents on key transport routes during construction
<b>Group 2</b> Local government and other organisations that can shape the project	Balranald Shire Council Traditional owners State Emergency Services Local Country Fire Authority Brigades Balranald Airport
<b>Group 3</b> Nearby business and community groups that may have financial opportunity from and interest in the project	Project partners – construction company and smaller contracting companies Primary producers Labourers Contracting companies Food outlets Accommodation providers

<sup>5</sup> As above

	<p>Hotels General stores Post offices Schools Sporting groups Service groups (Lions, Rotary) Development/progress associations Landcare groups Cranes Rental cars services Local petrol stations Local pharmacies Local churches Local hospitals</p>
<p><b>Group 4</b> Government and other bodies</p>	<p>Planning, Industry and Environment NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service Department of Primary Industries Aboriginal Affairs Fire and Rescue NSW Rural Fire Service NSW Aeromedical Air Ambulance Bureau of Meteorology State Emergency Service Civil Aviation Safety Authority Air services Australia Department of Defence RAAF Environment Protection Authority</p>
<p><b>Group 5</b> Politicians and other political entities</p>	<p>Balranald Shire Councillors Member for Murray Federal Member for Farrer NSW Energy Minister Federal Energy Minister</p>
<p><b>Group 6</b> Key interest groups and organisations</p>	<p>Sport Aircraft Association of Australia Recreational Aviation Australia Birdlife Australia Geological Society of Australia National Trust of Australia Australian Conservation Foundation Planet Ark WWF Australia Greenpeace</p>

	Aircraft Owners & Pilots Association of Australia Aerial Agricultural Association Australia Mungo National Park Yanga National Park Murrumbidgee River Authorities
<b>Group 7</b> Other energy organisations and individuals	CEC, Clean Energy Council Nearby generators or renewable projects AEMO, Australian Energy Market Operator CER, Clean Energy Regulator TransGrid
<b>Group 8</b> Media	Swan Hill Guardian Sunraysia Daily (Mildura) 3SH Radio Hay Riverina Grazier ABC Radio WIN TV Bendigo

**Table 2: Limondale Solar Farm stakeholder classification**

## Engagement

Preconstruction, most of the engagement has been undertaken by Overland Sun Farming. This involved engagement with key stakeholders, a Community Day and development of some project information material.

The project is currently actively involved in sponsoring initiatives in the local area, including the Balranald Football Netball Club.

## Construction and operations

This engagement will continue throughout the construction, the commissioning and operations stage of the project lifecycle. Some forms of engagement may be more frequent initially, during the construction phase, and reduce over the time of operation; however, regular engagement is still expected throughout operations as specified at table 3 below.

The methodology below will be the primary responsibility of RWE or an appointed consultant as contracted by RWE.

Proposed activity	Description	Stakeholder	Timing	Level of Engagement
1800 number	The dedicated 1800 314 768 number is established to ensure all stakeholders have easy access to information and RWE at a time suitable to them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All</li> </ul>	As per the RWE Complaints Handling Procedure (CHPR-0006) during construction and operations	High
Dedicated email address	A project email address individual to each project is created and accessible: limondalesolarfarm@RWE.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All</li> </ul>	Ongoing, during construction and operations	High
Community day	An opportunity for locals and other interested parties to visit the site at specific dates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local community</li> <li>Local government</li> <li>Media</li> <li>Other key stakeholders</li> </ul>	As required during operations or when major milestones occur	High
Website updates	All project specific, contact details and public company information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All</li> </ul>	<p>During construction: once a Month</p> <p>During operations: as required or when change occurs</p>	Medium - High
Newspaper advertising	Advertising to update the local community on the development of the solar farm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local stakeholders</li> </ul>	When exceptional events occur (outside of website coverage)	Medium
Newsletters and fact sheet	Provide project updates and keep the community informed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local residents</li> <li>Bairnald Shire Council</li> <li>Other key stakeholders</li> </ul>	As required	Medium

Media releases	Distributed when there is specific news to share not listed on the Website, for example, a new sponsorship arrangement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Media, broader community</li> </ul>	As required	Medium
Council engagement	<p>Presentations to Council on the project's progression</p> <p>Either verbal or emailed, depending on needs of Council</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Balranald Shire Council</li> </ul>	<p>As requested during construction.</p> <p>During operations only if specifically requested.</p>	High
Personal meetings	Individual meetings with key stakeholders as required or requested	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stakeholders as requested – most likely to be local or key government bodies or neighbours</li> </ul>	As requested	High
Community Engagement Committee	The creation and establishment of the local committee to help administer the Community Benefit Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local community</li> </ul>	Prior to full operation of site	High
Community Benefit Fund	Project-sponsored funds to be awarded to community initiatives with help of Community Engagement Committee. Funding arrangements will be governed by a detailed written Corporate Social Responsibility Concept to ensure impartiality and to avoid conflicts of interest or undue influence on any official or commercial decisions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project senior management</li> <li>Community Engagement Committee</li> <li>Local community</li> </ul>	Once a year during operations and construction	High

**Table 3: Limondale Solar Farm accountabilities, involvement and delivery timeframe's definition**

## Decommissioning

There will be increased community engagement during the decommissioning phase. This could include more face-to-face meetings with key stakeholders such as the landholder, neighbours, Council and other relevant government or industry bodies. A more thorough framework will be established for this stage of the project lifecycle as it draws nearer.

## Community expectations

### Complaints Handling Framework

In line with our social responsibility philosophy and understanding of what we want to deliver as a good corporate citizen, our complaints management structure has a simple elevation process to ensure complaints are dealt with in a timely, efficient and effective manner. Our RWE Complaints Handling Procedure (CHPR-0006) has a four-step process:

1. Receiving
2. Responding
3. Managing
4. Closing
5. Continuous Improvement

This document, RWE Stakeholder Engagement Plan – Limondale Solar Farm (LSPL-0005), provides project-specific guidelines under the umbrella of the RWE Stakeholder Engagement Framework (SEFR-0001) and it is to be implemented within the context and ethos of RWE’s company-wide guidelines.

RWE records all instances at the RWE Internal Complaints Register (ICRE-0008) with the intent to archive, allocate, monitor, action, resolve, close and analyse all relevant enquiries throughout the lifecycle of the project. This incorporates all data obtained via phone calls, emails, personal visits, open days and other interactions.

RWE is committed to allocate all relevant enquiries to the relevant internal responsible officer and timely respond to urgent and non-urgent matters. For further information on how we process complaints including our response timeframes please refer to the official document RWE Complaints Handling Procedure (CHPR-0006).

## Potential community concerns

New projects often highlight concerns in the community. Potential community concerns related to the Limondale Solar Farm could be:

- Property values
- Visual amenity
- Height of the solar panels
- Ability to farm land while solar farm is operational
- Glint and glare
- Noise
- Increased dust
- Health effects
- Heat island effect
- Aircraft danger and pilot confusion
- Increased fire danger
- Traffic disruptions during construction
- Land use at the conclusion of the solar farm's lifespan
- Size of solar farm

## Mitigation measures

The development of detailed project information, as well as the availability of staff through the 1800 number and dedicated email address, are measures designed to alleviate community concerns. Fact sheets focusing on the issues listed above will be developed and available for download on our website. Delivering this open, honest and timely communication is critical to alleviating potential concerns in the community.

If any concerns are not adequately addressed in this document, RWE values and promotes community feedback.

## Monitoring, review and evaluation of this document

This document is intended to be an evolving document that will require regular review to ensure it is up-to-date and delivering the needs of the community.

This document will be reviewed annually, or at milestone events throughout the project's lifecycle. Stakeholder mapping will also continue throughout construction and operation. These reviews will be designed to ensure RWE continues to reflect best practice guidelines and meet the needs of the community.

At these instances RWE will review communication and engagement initiatives that have been undertaken in the previous year, identifying and analysing if the following factors are still current and relevant:

- What communication and engagement initiatives were undertaken in the last year?
- Were these effective?
- Why or why not? (How do we know this?)
- Were there any community issues related to the project?
- Any recurrent issues requiring higher focus?
- What were these?
- How we can mitigate or eliminate these?
- How did we deal with these?
- Were there potential issues that we prevented?
- How did we do this?
- What have we learnt from this analysis that we can apply for next year?



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