

Application for an Electricity Generation Authority

Progressive Renewable Developments
Goondiwindi Pty Ltd

Information Paper

May 2024



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Contents

| | |
|--|---|
| 1. Background | 4 |
| 2. Consideration of an Application | 4 |
| 3. The Applicant | 5 |
| 4. The proposed generating plant | 5 |
| 5. Approvals for construction of the generating plant..... | 6 |
| 6. Submissions | 7 |

1. Background

Progressive Renewable Developments Goondiwindi Pty Ltd (ABN 21 629 560 621) (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 Climate (the department), being the chief executive of the department that administers the Act.

The application is for a proposed solar farm – the Gunsynd Solar Farm, located approximately 14 kilometres north of the township of Goondiwindi, within the Goondiwindi Regional Council local government area of Queensland.

The generation authority, if issued, will authorise the operation of the solar farm and its connection to Ergon Energy’s distribution network.

The solar farm will have a total nameplate rating of 122.7 megawatts (MW) and a maximum capacity of 94 MW at the connection point.

The applicant is a wholly owned subsidiary of Metis Australia Investment Pte Ltd. The applicant will be the owner and operator of the solar farm.

Subject to receipt of all necessary approvals (including this generation authority), the applicant anticipates the solar farm will be complete and operational in the third quarter of 2025.

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 is a special purpose vehicle established as a wholly owned subsidiary of Metis Australia Investment Pte Ltd, which is part of the Metis Energy Limited group of companies, based in Singapore.

Metis Energy has experience in both rooftop and utility scale solar in the Asia-Pacific region and is currently developing a large renewable energy hub near Tamworth, New South Wales.

4. The proposed generating plant

The proposed generating plant will be known as the Gunsynd Solar Farm.

The solar farm will be located within a 200-hectare lot (approx.) on the southern side of Scudamores Road, approximately 14 km north of Goondiwindi.

The solar farm will have a total nameplate rating of 122.77 MW consisting of 75 Ingeteam Ingecon Sun inverters (model no. 1640TL B630) at 1.637 MW each. The maximum export capacity at the point of connection will be 94 MW.

The applicant has a connection agreement with Ergon Energy to connect the solar farm to the distribution network via a 132 kilovolt (kV) electrical line which intersects the site.

The project includes the 122 MW solar farm, substation and Operations & Maintenance facility. The Substation is to be co-located adjacent to a new Ergon Energy Switching Station which will provide the interface to the Ergon Energy network.

The applicant is in the process of seeking generator registration with the Australia Energy Market Operator.

5. Approvals for construction of the generating plant

A generation authority issued under the Act authorises its holder to operate the Gunsynd Solar Farm 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 applicant has the responsibility to obtain all necessary approvals for construction and ongoing operation of the solar farm, including relevant environmental, cultural heritage and local government approvals.

The applicant applied to the Goondiwindi Regional Council for a Development Approval under the *Planning Act 2016*. The application was approved in full with conditions on 17 April 2019.

The applicant engaged Redleaf Environmental to produce an Environmental Assessment Report for the Gunsynd Solar Farm. The report concluded that there were no Matters of State and National Environmental Significance (MSES and MNES) associated with the construction and operation of the solar farm. The report provided a range of mitigation measures to ensure the construction phase of the project avoids, minimises, mitigates and offsets any adverse impacts to the surrounding flora and fauna.

In accordance with the *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003*, a Cultural Heritage Management Agreement is in place between the applicant and the Bigambul Native Title Aboriginal Corporation. This agreement ensures, among other things, that the applicant will take all reasonable and practicable measures to avoid harm to Aboriginal cultural heritage as a result of the project.

6. Submissions

Submissions are invited from interested persons in relation to the application for a generation authority from Progressive Renewable Developments Goondiwindi Pty Ltd.

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 Climate 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 private personal and commercial-in-confidence information will be stored at the office of the Department, and in accordance with the relevant privacy legislation.

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<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 RTI-Privacy@epw.qld.gov.au.

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

Mail

Attention: The Manager
Regulation
Department of Energy and Climate
PO Box 15456
CITY EAST QLD 4002
Phone: 13 43 87

Email

energy.regulation@epw.qld.gov.au

Closing date for submissions is 5.00pm on 10 June 2024