

Plan for Australia's largest solar farm awaits approval

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A plan for Australia's largest solar farm has been lodged to the local Council in the township of Gympie by Queensland State company Solar Q, it has been announced Wednesday.

Located 170 km north of Brisbane, the 2-billion Australian dollar (1.5-billion-U.S. dollar) proposal aims to build three million solar panels across a 17 square kilometre site, supplying 315,000 homes with power.

“To give you an idea of size, at ultimate design it will provide around 15 percent of southeast Queensland's energy requirements from both the solar panels and the 4,000 megawatt hours of

energy storage,” Solar Q Managing Director Scott Armstrong told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

At the initial stage of the four-year construction, the project’s target is to develop a 350-megawatt facility and gradually increase the output to 800 megawatts.

Nadarajah Mithulananthan, an energy expert at the University of Queensland, explained to Xinhua: “This is definitely a positive thing.”

“In the longer term, it will help ease the rising cost of power because like any other renewable sources. We are not relying on fuel or delivery, so that means fuel from the sun is free and delivery of it is at no cost.”

Expected to create 450 jobs in the area, Gympie Mayor Mick Curran said: “This project is subject to council and state approvals so there are a few hoops to go through before the sod is actually turned on this project.”

“But with the liaison that has occurred between this company and our town planners there doesn’t appear to be any great hurdles to overcome and I would certainly look forward personally to seeing all of those approvals come to fruition.”

Construction is expected to begin some time toward the end of 2017 and Mithulananthan believes Queenslanders will show overwhelming support for the development.

“People are flooded with so much information it can be difficult to know everything when you’re not an expert, but I think the community are aware of the benefits of renewables and will give a green light to the project.”