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Proposal for Huge Solar Farm

April 19, 2017



The huge solar farm would be built, at left, alongside the Wide Bay Highway and adjacent to the Woolooga Substation, at top (Photo: SolarQ)



A map of the proposed layout for the solar farm (in blue) next to the Woolooga Substation (in pink)
(Photo: SolarQ)

A Queensland company is planning to build a massive solar farm next to the Woolooga high-voltage substation on the Wide Bay Highway.

SolarQ lodged a development application on Tuesday with Gympie Regional Council for the \$2 billion-plus project.

The solar farm could include up to 1.3 million solar panels as well as a battery storage facility which will put power into the grid at night or when it's not sunny.

SolarQ managing director Scott Armstrong told southburnett.com.au if all goes to plan, construction could start as early as the end of this year.

The initial output of the farm has been put forward as 350MW.

This is equivalent in size to one unit at Tarong Power Station, but not in capacity.

Mr Armstrong, a former technician at Tarong, explained that while a coal-fired generating unit could run at 100 per cent capacity, solar farms typically have a 26-30 per cent output.

Output would also depend on whether fixed or tracking panels were installed.

However, SolarQ aims to eventually more than double the capacity at the site.

Mr Armstrong said this "ultimate design" could produce 800MW.

The solar farm would be built on 572ha of already cleared grazing land which SolarQ has negotiated rights to purchase.

About 60 hectares would be set aside for transmission line easements.

"It's a magic location for quite an exciting project," Mr Armstrong said. "We have put a lot of work into the project so far."

The solar farm would create about 450 full-time jobs during its 18-month construction, and six to eight full-time jobs afterwards.

Mr Armstrong said there would be a couple of technical positions after construction, but most of the jobs would be maintenance, basically keeping the grass down from around the solar panels.

SolarQ says the solar farm will fulfil about 3 per cent of south-east Queensland's total energy demand, or 127,000 homes, and reduce carbon emissions by about 666,700 tonnes of carbon dioxide.

The panels themselves should last 30 years.

"The Lower Wonga substation connection point will allow for the provision of energy supply directly connected by high voltage transmission lines to Gin Gin, Teebar Creek, Mungar, Kilkivan region, Gympie region, Palmwoods/Sunshine Coast, and Brisbane areas," the SolarQ website states.