

Wind and Solar Farm Inspection Program

Fact sheet

December 2018

Why are wind and solar farms important and how are they regulated?

The NSW Government supports the development of a sustainable wind and solar energy industry in NSW. This State has valuable wind and solar resources with many of the best areas located near existing electricity transmission infrastructure.

Wind and solar energy projects not only generate clean energy, but also support jobs and investment, particularly in regional areas. However, the potential impacts of wind and solar energy projects need to be managed to ensure they are accurately identified and any adverse outcomes are minimised.

As the approval authority for State significant wind and solar farms, the Department of Planning and Environment is also responsible for monitoring compliance with the conditions of approval. It is important that this developing industry constructs and operates their projects responsibly.

When do wind or solar farms become State significant developments (SSD)?

Under the State Environmental Planning Policy (State and Regional Development) 2011, wind and solar electricity generating projects are classified as an SSD when the capital investment value of the project exceeds \$30 million (or \$10 million in a prescribed environmentally sensitive area).

How many wind or solar farms have SSD approvals and what is their status?

Status (as of 1 December 2018)	Wind Farm	Solar Farm
Approved and operational	8	7
Approved and under construction	4	5
Approved and not lapsed	12	18
	24	30

What was the focus of the inspections?

Since 2017, the Department has undertaken 78 inspections of 28 wind and solar farms across NSW (which included proactive, reactive and surveillance). The Department liaised with relevant government agencies such as the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage, Environment Protection Authority, Roads and Maritime Service as well as local councils.



Department of Planning and Environment

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In addition to monitoring general compliance with conditions of approval, the Department focused on monitoring:

- Road upgrades and construction requirements;
- Construction transport routes and site access points;
- Aboriginal and European heritage and endangered vegetation protection;
- Vegetation clearing limits;
- Erosion and sediment controls and weed management; and
- To ensure that construction works had not commenced prior to meeting requirements.

What did we find?

The wind and solar farms inspected were generally found to be constructing or operating in accordance with their conditions of consent. Details of formal enforcement actions taken can be found in our monthly compliance reports (www.planning.nsw.gov.au/Assess-and-Regulate/About-compliance/Inspections-and-enforcements):

Penalty Notices (\$15,000)

- June 2017 – Parkes Solar Farm – Failure by principal contractor to comply with conditions of consent resulting in the clearing of eight mature Grey Box gum trees which were identified to be retained. In addition to the penalty notice, DPE required the proponent to remediate and plant additional trees.
- March 2018 - Bodangora Wind Farm – Failure by principal contractor to protect an identified Aboriginal heritage site, resulting in harm to the site. A remediation plan was developed by the proponent and the principal contractor in consultation with local registered Aboriginal groups.
- December 2018 – Crudine Ridge Wind Farm – Failure to comply with conditions of approval requiring the upgrade of Aaron’s Pass Road prior to the commencement of construction activities on site. Following the Department threatening legal action, construction activities were voluntarily ceased by the proponent.

Official Cautions

- June 2017 - Parkes Solar Farm – Failure by principal contractor to obtain appropriate approval to upgrade local roads prior to undertaking the works.
- September 2017 - Griffith Solar Farm – Failure by principal contractor to comply with conditions of consent by permitting trucks associated with construction to use an unauthorised site access route. A modification to the approval to allow use of the site access route has now been approved.
- February 2018 - Bodangora Wind Farm – Failure to upgrade an intersection prior to the commencement of construction as required by the conditions of approval. The intersection upgrade has since been completed.

What are the ongoing monitoring and future actions?

The Department will continue to monitor wind and solar farm developments across NSW and investigate allegations of non-compliance to ensure projects comply with their conditions of consent.



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