

# **Bomen Solar Farm generating power along with \$1 million community fund**

Wagga's new Bomen Solar Farm is now transmitting power to the grid and preparing to launch one of its first community grants projects to put in up to 50,000 plants in Eunony Valley.

The \$180 million farm with 310,000 solar panels can generate 120 megawatts or enough electricity to power 36,000 homes.

Spark Infrastructure head of renewables Anthony Marriner, whose company owns the solar farm, said construction was complete expect for some tests by the national electricity market operator.

"The farm is allowed to export 100 per cent of its electricity at this point," he said.

"We're supplying it to the grid right now."

Thanks to a sunny morning on Wednesday, the panels were already generating 68 megawatts by 9am.

Mr Marriner said the solar panel frames had the ability to move on a single axis to maximise available light even in winter.

"They are basically at the angle of the sun and they will track it throughout the day," he said.

As part of a deal made last year to supply renewable energy to Westpac, Spark Infrastructure has co-established a \$1 million community fund to support projects around Wagga over the next ten years.

"We're finalising the allocation with Westpac but it is likely that a significant portion will go to a fund with Wagga City Council on greening the Eunony Valley," Mr Marriner said.

"We have other initiatives that haven't been announced yet but will have to do with schooling and universities.

"It's a great initiative and a significant amount of money to put into the community but I think you have to because you have to work alongside your neighbours and show a positive benefit for why you are here."

At Wagga City Council's June 29 meeting, councillors gave approval to enter into a funding partnership agreement with Spark Infrastructure for \$350,000 to fund a revegetation program.

"As part of the community fund Spark Infrastructure have proposed entering into a funding partnership agreement where they will provide Council \$350,000 to undertake a revegetation program to enhance biodiversity in the proximity of the Bomen precinct," a report to councillors stated.

Councillors were told the funding would cover the costs associated with the revegetation including site preparation, plants, planting, materials and watering.

"It is anticipated planting would occur during the winter months of 2021/22 and would include between 40,000 and 50,000 plants," the report stated.

Mr Marriner also said the solar farm hoped to trial grazing sheep between the solar panels as rain over the past few months had seen grass return to the bare earth created by the construction period.

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#### **Bomen's solar energy to power Sydney council from July**

As of July 1, Sydney's council-owned properties will be run entirely on renewable energy, sourcing power generated by the Bomen Solar Farm, along with another solar venture in Nowra and wind farms Glen Innes.

The plan has been in the pipeline for the past eight months after an energy retailer Flow Power purchased the Bomen supply from Spark Infrastructure.

Flow Power CEO Matthew van der Linden told *The Daily Advertiser* that already "more than 95 per cent" of the energy output from the Bomen Solar Project over the next five years will be used by the City of Sydney, and similar ventures around the state.

Additionally, Mr van der Linden said up to 82 per cent of Bomen's energy production over the next decade has been so far sold.

Up to 26 per cent of the farm's energy over the next 10 years has also been sold to Westpac to power the nationwide operations.

"The project represents a \$188 million investment in construction and employment in the region, and the opportunity to establish Wagga as a hub for renewable energy in New South Wales," Mr van der Linden said.

The 250-hectare solar farm at Bomen has the capacity to output 120 megawatts or the equivalent to power up to 36,000 homes in Australia.

Energy from the Bomen farm will combine with Sydney City's combined output from more than 6607 solar panels across 42 of its council-owned properties.

When contacted by *The Daily Advertiser*, a spokesperson for the City of Sydney said it had always intended to source power from a much larger supplier rather than generate its supply locally.

"The City of Sydney is a large scale energy user with many amenities, a large central business district and densely populated residential areas, so it is not feasible for us to rely on our rooftop solar alone," the spokesperson said.

### **Bomen Solar Farm to help power City of Sydney council under \$60 million renewable energy deal**

A new Wagga solar farm will help power Sydney Town Hall along with inner-city pools, sports fields, depots and buildings under a \$60 million deal announced on Tuesday.

Future electricity generated from a solar farm outside Wagga will help the City of Sydney council power its operations with 100 per cent renewable energy.

Electricity from the Bomen Solar Farm project, currently under construction, will be combined with output from a Glen Innes wind farm and a community-owned solar scheme near Nowra.

City of Sydney Mayor Clover Moore said the deal was the "biggest standalone renewables commitment for an Australian council" and would help support jobs in drought-affected regional areas.

The deal will allow the council to cut its emissions by 20,000 tonnes a year – equivalent to the power consumption of 8000 households – and save up to half a million dollars a year.

Solar power will make up 25 per cent of the megawatts purchased under the new deal.

The electricity was purchased through retailer Flow Power and the firm's chief executive Matthew van der Linden said the deal was an "important step in Australia's transition to a low-carbon future".

"If just 20 per cent of the market followed the City of Sydney's lead, it would drive investment in 11 gigawatts of new renewable generation – that's double the current pipeline of renewable projects," Mr van der Linden said.

The \$188 million Bomen Solar Farm project outside Wagga was acquired by Spark Infrastructure in April, with the company [moving to start construction](#) on the 250 hectares of industrial-zoned land.

The solar farm's first panel was installed [during a ceremony in August](#).

The site is located about 10 kilometres north of Wagga near the Byrnes Road and Trahairs Road intersection.

About 26 per cent of the Bomen farm's power output for 10 years has been pre-purchased by Westpac as part of the bank's goal to use 100 per cent renewable energy.

*“This news article is with courtesy of the Wagga Daily Advertiser dated July 8, 2020”*