

# Punchs Creek Solar Farm

Application Number: **02290**Commencement Date:  
**05/03/2024**Status: **Locked**

## 1. About the project

### 1.1 Project details

#### 1.1.1 Project title \*

Punchs Creek Solar Farm

#### 1.1.2 Project industry type \*

Energy Generation and Supply (renewable)

#### 1.1.3 Project industry sub-type

Solar Farm

#### 1.1.4 Estimated start date \*

01/01/2025

#### 1.1.4 Estimated end date \*

31/12/2055

### 1.2 Proposed Action details

#### 1.2.1 Provide an overview of the proposed action, including all proposed activities. \*

Punchs Creek Renewable Energy Pty Ltd (PCRE) propose to construct and operate a large-scale solar photovoltaic facility (solar farm) with a capacity of up to 800 MWac alongside a 250 MW battery energy storage system (BESS) within a Project Area of 1,456.4 ha, comprising a 1,349.63 ha Disturbance Footprint and a 106.77 ha Avoidance Area.

The Project Area is located within the rural locality Punchs Creek approximately 64 km south-west of Toowoomba and approximately 13 km south-east of the township of Millmerran in south-east Queensland. It consists primarily of existing cleared agricultural land traversed by several vegetated watercourses/drainage lines and bordered by vegetated roadsides.

The built form on the site will consist of the following:

- Photo Voltaic (PV) panels mounted on single axis trackers to follow the sun from east to west, typically arranged in 'array blocks' of around 3MVA and 6MVA. The panels are expected to be of a maximum height in the order of between 3m to 4.2m
- Battery energy storage system (BESS) units comprising sealed lithium ion or flow mediums. The batteries would be contained in cabinets with a height of up to 3.0m (or 6m if cabinets are double stacked, should technological advances allow for that design)
- Power Conversion Units (PCUs) which would consist of batteries coupled with up to two PV Inverters and integrated transformers in each PCU. It should be noted that the proposed project will be a 'decentralised' PCU layout design
- Central 33 kV switchboard (ring main unit)
- High voltage (HV) substation
- Prefabricated operations and maintenance (O&M) building
- Gravel car parking area for construction and then operational staff parking
- Internal access tracks (approximately 4.0m wide)
- Perimeter security fencing, with CCTV.

The Project will connect to the existing Powerlink 330kV electricity transmission line which traverses the proposed Project Area (generally east to west). Additionally, up to four crossings associated with access tracks are proposed over two waterways for waterway barrier works. One of the crossings, over Punchs Creek (the locality's namesake), is an existing farm track while the remaining three are new crossings.

Apart from proposed access track/s that cross mapped drainage lines and potential minor clearing in roadside vegetation bordering the Project Area for access/entry point, the Project Footprint avoids all mapped sensitive areas (overlays and State mapping) to minimise impact. An asset protection zone between 10-20 m will be established between solar infrastructure and the perimeter of the Project Area to avoid impacts to roadside vegetation. A minimum of 20 m clearance from surrounding vegetation (including regulated vegetation) will be observed and the Project Footprint will be set back a minimum of 100 m buffer from the centreline of the riparian corridor of Punchs Creek.

The final size and layout of the facility will be determined during a later detailed design phase.

A detailed description of the Project is presented in Att\_1\_PCRE\_Proposed\_Activity\_Description.pdf, Section 1, pg 3-6.

### **1.2.2 Is the project action part of a staged development or related to other actions or proposals in the region?**

No

### **1.2.6 What Commonwealth or state legislation, planning frameworks or policy documents are relevant to the proposed action, and how are they relevant? \***

#### ***Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999***

The proposed action is being referred under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. Att\_2\_PCRE\_Ecological Assessment Report.pdf describes targeted surveys, likelihood of occurrence assessments and discussions of impacts related to conservation significant fauna, flora species

and threatened ecological communities that are matters of national environmental significance under the EPBC.

### ***Planning Act 2016***

A Development Application for Material Change of Use for a Renewable Energy Facility (Impact assessable) was submitted to Toowoomba Regional Council on 9 March 2023 and is currently being assessed.

### ***Nature Conservation Act 1992***

Att\_2\_PCRES\_Ecological Assessment Report.pdf describes targeted surveys, likelihood of occurrence assessments and discussions of impacts related to conservation significant fauna and flora species that are matters of state environmental significance under the Nature Conservation Act.

### ***Fisheries Act 1994***

Under the Fisheries Act 1994, there are three mapped waterways for waterway barrier works (WWBW) in the referral area, two of which are proposed to be traversed by new/upgraded crossings. Waterway barriers are regulated under the *Fisheries Act 1994* and the *Planning Act 2016*. Waterway crossings and culverts should be designed to comply with Department of Agriculture and Fisheries' Accepted development requirements for operational work that is constructing or raising waterway barrier works. If the works are unable to comply with these requirements, the works will be assessable development and will require a development application under the *Planning Act 2016*.

### ***Vegetation Management Act 1999***

Remnant vegetation communities comprising regional ecosystems as gazetted under the *Vegetation Management Act 1999* are present within and nearby the referral area. The regional ecosystem mapping was ground-truthed during field surveys of the Project Area (Att\_2\_PCRES\_Ecological Assessment Report.pdf) which contains 0.12 ha of remnant vegetation comprising 0.095 ha of the heterogeneous least concern RE 11.5.1/11.5.20 and 0.025 ha of the least concern RE 11.3.25 in the Disturbance Footprint. The remaining area of the Disturbance Footprint consisted of non-remnant areas (1,347.4 ha).

## **1.2.7 Describe any public consultation that has been, is being or will be undertaken regarding the project area, including with Indigenous stakeholders. Attach any completed consultation documentations, if relevant. \***

There has been consultation, communication and engagement undertaken with multiple stakeholders including the landowner, Toowoomba Regional Council (TRC) officers and representatives, relevant state agencies for referral activities, many specialist consultants, neighbouring property owners, and nearest neighbouring residents regarding the project since commencement of early project activities in 2022. This has involved registered mail, phone conversations, numerous site visits, emails, newspaper notifications and social media platforms.

A Community Information Drop-In session was held in Millmerran on 24 January 2024. The timing of the community engagement coincided with the planning application Public Notification period which occurred between 15 January and 5 February 2024. The community session was held at the Millmerran Community and Cultural Centre between 5.30-7.30pm and was well attended (more than twenty people, though many did not sign in on the register form). Topics discussed in the session included land values, road access (not wanting Owens Scrub Road to be used), overland water flow during flood events and where the workers would be accommodated. Follow-up correspondence was shared with attendees who requested more information.

Public consultation was undertaken during the Development Application Process in accordance with the approaches and timeframes stipulated by the Qld *Planning Regulation 2017*. Responses were given for six properly made submissions about the application.

Punchs Creek Renewable Energy has also been engaging with Millmerran Commerce and Progress Inc. (MCP) to better understand the business community and to seek deeper connections with members and locals. MCP assisted the project to share information through their network about the project and to advertise the Community Information Drop-In session in Millmerran.

At this stage, the project has not commenced engagement with the Aboriginal Traditional Owners (Cultural Heritage Party) as the Indigenous stakeholders associated with the Project lands.

Further targeted engagement with neighbours, key business and community stakeholders and Aboriginal traditional owner party is expected in coming months as the proposed project progresses through milestones and as further project-specific activities evolve.

## 1.3.1 Identity: Referring party

### Privacy Notice:

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**Confirm that you have read and understand this Privacy Notice \***

### 1.3.1.1 Is Referring party an organisation or business? \*

Yes

## Referring party organisation details

**ABN/ACN** 94652464983

**Organisation name** TERRA SOLUTIONS PTY LTD

**Organisation address** 2/28 French Street, Pimlico QLD, 4812

## Referring party details

**Name** Anton Fitzgerald

**Job title** Director

**Phone** 0435 752 239

**Email** admin@terrasolutions.com.au

**Address** 2/28 French St, Pimlico QLD 4812

## 1.3.2 Identity: Person proposing to take the action

### 1.3.2.1 Are the Person proposing to take the action details the same as the Referring party details? \*

No

### 1.3.2.2 Is Person proposing to take the action an organisation or business? \*

Yes

## Person proposing to take the action organisation details

**ABN/ACN** 67657894767

**Organisation name** PUNCH'S CREEK RENEWABLE ENERGY PTY LTD

**Organisation address** 4500 QLD

## Person proposing to take the action details

<b>Name</b>	Claire Driessen
<b>Job title</b>	Planner
<b>Phone</b>	0408 084 900
<b>Email</b>	claire@echoconsultants.com.au
<b>Address</b>	16 Duntroon Street, Brendale Qld 4500

**1.3.2.14 Are you proposing the action as part of a Joint Venture? \***

No

**1.3.2.15 Are you proposing the action as part of a Trust? \***

No

**1.3.2.17 Describe the Person proposing the action's history of responsible environmental management including details of any proceedings under a Commonwealth, State or Territory law for the protection of the environment or the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources against the Person proposing to take the action. \***

PUNCH'S CREEK RENEWABLE ENERGY PTY LTD (PCRE) has a satisfactory record of responsible environmental management. This is the first EPBC Action taken by PCRE and PCRE is not involved in or the subject of any past or ongoing proceedings under a Commonwealth, State or Territory law for any matter including for the protection of the environment or the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources.

PCRE has complied with all relevant planning, environment and heritage legislative obligations and processes throughout the early development phase of the Project. PCRE or its Agents will establish project specific environmental policies, procedures, management plans and other related governance for implementation during the construction, operation and maintenance and decommissioning phases of the project.

**1.3.2.18 If the person proposing to take the action is a corporation, provide details of the corporation's environmental policy and planning framework**

PCRE does not have an Environmental Policy and Planning framework at this stage.

PCRE or its Agents will establish project specific environmental policies, procedures, management plans and other related governance for implementation during the construction, operation and maintenance and decommissioning phases of the project.

## 1.3.3 Identity: Proposed designated proponent

### 1.3.3.1 Are the Proposed designated proponent details the same as the Person proposing to take the action? \*

Yes

#### Proposed designated proponent organisation details

<b>ABN/ACN</b>	67657894767
<b>Organisation name</b>	PUNCH'S CREEK RENEWABLE ENERGY PTY LTD
<b>Organisation address</b>	4500 QLD

#### Proposed designated proponent details

<b>Name</b>	Claire Driessen
<b>Job title</b>	Planner
<b>Phone</b>	0408 084 900
<b>Email</b>	claire@echoconsultants.com.au
<b>Address</b>	16 Duntroon Street, Brendale Qld 4500

## 1.3.4 Identity: Summary of allocation

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## ✔ Confirmed Referring party's identity

The Referring party is the person preparing the information in this referral.

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ABN/ACN	94652464983
Organisation name	TERRA SOLUTIONS PTY LTD
Organisation address	2/28 French Street, Pimlico QLD, 4812
Representative's name	Anton Fitzgerald
Representative's job title	Director
Phone	0435 752 239
Email	admin@terrasolutions.com.au
Address	2/28 French St, Pimlico QLD 4812

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## ✔ Confirmed Person proposing to take the action's identity

The Person proposing to take the action is the individual, business, government agency or trustee that will be responsible for the proposed action.

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ABN/ACN	67657894767
Organisation name	PUNCH'S CREEK RENEWABLE ENERGY PTY LTD
Organisation address	4500 QLD
Representative's name	Claire Driessen
Representative's job title	Planner
Phone	0408 084 900
Email	claire@echoconsultants.com.au
Address	16 Duntroon Street, Brendale Qld 4500

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## ✔ Confirmed Proposed designated proponent's identity

The Person proposing to take the action is the individual or organisation proposed to be responsible for meeting the requirements of the EPBC Act during the assessment process, if the Minister decides that this project is a controlled action.

Same as Person proposing to take the action information.

## 1.4 Payment details: Payment exemption and fee waiver

**1.4.1 Do you qualify for an exemption from fees under EPBC Regulation 5.23 (1) (a)? \***

No

**1.4.3 Have you applied for or been granted a waiver for full or partial fees under Regulation 5.21A? \***

No

**1.4.5 Are you going to apply for a waiver of full or partial fees under EPBC Regulation 5.21A?**

No

**1.4.7 Has the department issued you with a credit note? \***

No

**1.4.9 Would you like to add a purchase order number to your invoice? \***

No

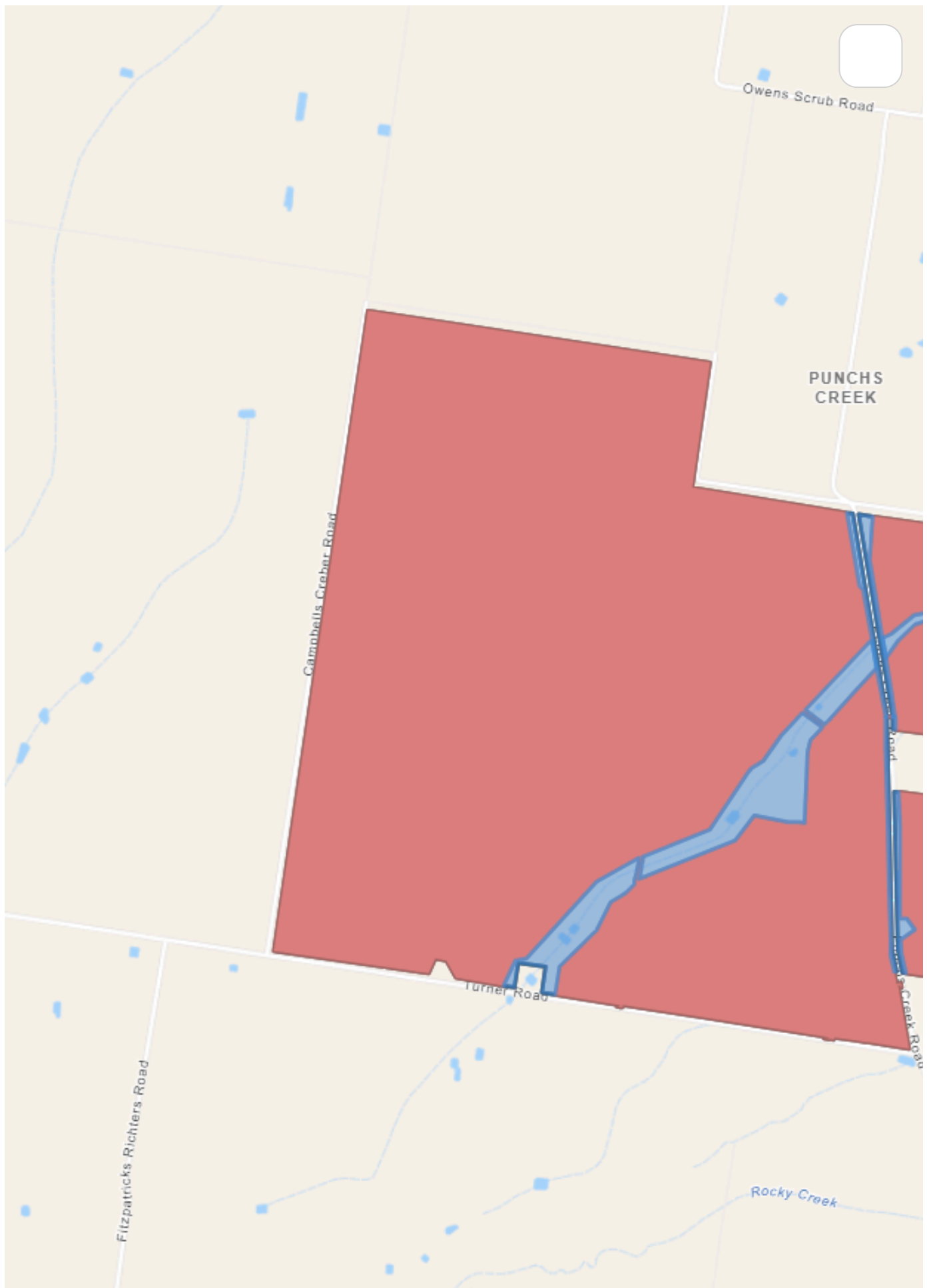
## 1.4 Payment details: Payment allocation

**1.4.11 Who would you like to allocate as the entity responsible for payment? \***

Person proposing to take the action

## 2. Location

## 2.1 Project footprint



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**Project Area:** 1456.40 Ha **Disturbance Footprint:** 1349.63 Ha **Avoidance Area:** 106.78 Ha

## 2.2 Footprint details

### 2.2.1 What is the address of the proposed action? \*

328 Punchs Creek Road, Punchs Creek, Queensland, 4357

### 2.2.2 Where is the primary jurisdiction of the proposed action? \*

Queensland

### 2.2.3 Is there a secondary jurisdiction for this proposed action? \*

No

### 2.2.5 What is the tenure of the action area relevant to the project area? \*

The Project is planned over eight freehold land parcels:

- Lot 39 on N25188
- Lot 2 on RP60015
- Lot 1 on RP22800
  - Overlapped by the easement P on SP162209
- Lot 2 on RP22800
- Lot 11 on ML72
  - Overlapped by the easement Q on SP162210
- Lot 144 on ML72
  - Overlapped by the easement Q on SP162210
- Lot 145 on ML72
- Lot 149 ML412
  - Overlapped by the easement R on SP162210

## 3. Existing environment

### 3.1 Physical description

### 3.1.1 Describe the current condition of the project area's environment.

The Project Area is composed predominantly of highly modified, cropped land with some areas of grazing land. The Disturbance Footprint contains approximately 0.12 ha of remnant vegetation with the remaining area being non-remnant. Trees occur in the Project Area in non-remnant areas, albeit sparsely, being present along tracks and mapped drainage features/watercourses. The majority of vegetation is present outside of the Project Area within road reserves along its boundary. Three watercourses are mapped traversing the Project Area, one of which was confirmed via field surveys not to be present.

The cropped and grazed areas within the Disturbance Footprint were unsuitable for all threatened fauna and flora species. Ground cover was poor in grazed areas. Deep soil cracks were absent but were present in adjacent areas outside of the Project Area.

Recent clearing undertaken by the landholder in 2023 removed approximately 5 ha of treed vegetation communities from the Project Area.

### 3.1.2 Describe any existing or proposed uses for the project area.

The Project Area is currently used for wheat and cotton cropping with most of the area comprising fields of crops and tilled land. Relatively smaller areas are used for grazing cattle. A residential building and farm infrastructure are present as well as several farm tracks. Punchs Creek Road traverses the middle of the Project Area but does not form part of the Project Area. A Powerlink 330kV electricity transmission line also traverses the proposed Project Area (generally east to west).

The proposed use of the Project Area is renewable energy generation and storage via a photovoltaic solar farm and battery energy storage system (BESS).

### 3.1.3 Describe any outstanding natural features and/or any other important or unique values that applies to the project area.

There are no outstanding natural features or important/unique values present within the Project Area.

### 3.1.4 Describe the gradient (or depth range if action is to be taken in a marine area) relevant to the project area.

Elevation lowers gently from 410 – 400 m AHD towards the northeast of the Project Area.

## 3.2 Flora and fauna

### 3.2.1 Describe the flora and fauna within the affected area and attach any investigations of surveys if applicable.

Two surveys were undertaken in the Project Area. The survey extent included vegetated road corridors that are present outside, but adjacent, to the Project Area. The majority of flora and fauna species recorded during surveys were present outside the Project Area within the vegetated roadside corridors.

Four koalas, the only EVNT fauna species detected, were recorded in the vegetated road corridors. No koalas or signs of their presence (i.e. scratches and scats) were detected within the Disturbance Footprint. Signs of koala activity (i.e. scratches) were found in a remnant patch in the Avoidance Area at the southern end of the Project Area.

A further nine EVNT species were considered to possibly occur in the habitat adjacent to the Project Area or in remnant vegetation in the Avoidance Area:

- Curlew sandpiper (*Calidris acuminata*)
- Glossy black cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus lathami lathami*)
- Brown treecreeper (south-eastern) (*Climacteris picumnus victoriae*)
- Squatter pigeon (southern) (*Geophaps scripta scripta*)
- Painted honeyeater (*Grantiella picta*)
- White-throated needletail (*Hirundapus caudacatus*)
- Pink cockatoo (*Lophochroa leadbeateri leadbeateri*)
- Diamond firetail (*Stagonopleura guttata*)
- Corben's long-eared bat (*Nyctophilus corbeni*)

The Disturbance Footprint contained approximately 0.12 ha of remnant vegetation estimated to consist of five trees via analysis of aerial imagery.

No migratory species were detected in surveys. Three listed migratory species were considered likely to occur in the airspace above the Project Area or in vegetated road corridors outside the Project Area:

- White-throated needletail (*Hirundapus caudacatus*)
- Fork-tailed swift (*Apus pacificus*)
- Satin flycatcher (*Myiagra cyanoleuca*)

A further six migratory species may occur, four of which are waders, may occur due to the presence of wetlands and dams within road reserves outside the Project Area and dams within and nearby the Project Area:

- Common sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*)
- Sharp-tailed sandpiper (*Calidris acuminatus*)
- Curlew sandpiper (*Callidris ferruginea*)
- Oriental cuckoo (*Cuculus optatus*)
- Latham's snipe (*Gallinago hardwickii*)
- Rufous fantail (*Rhipidura rufifrons*)

A total of 151 flora species were recorded across 43 families, including 54 exotic species. Two exotic species recorded in the Project Area were Restricted biosecurity matters under the *Biosecurity act 2014*. No threatened flora species were detected. The habitat present in the Project Area was not deemed suitable for any threatened flora species.

A total of 131 fauna species were recorded during surveys, including 18 amphibians, 81 birds, 25 mammals (11 microbats and 14 non-flying mammals), and 23 reptiles.

Four invasive fauna species that are Restricted under the *Biosecurity Act 2014* were recorded:

- Feral dog (*Canis lupus familiaris*)
- Feral cat (*Felis catus*)
- Feral pig (*Sus scrofa*)
- Red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*)

Additionally, the following introduced fauna that are not listed as Restricted or Prohibited invasive animals were also recorded:

- Cane toad (*Rhinella marina*)
- Common myna (*Acridotheres tristis*)
- European brown hare (*Lepus europaeus*)
- European cattle (*Bos taurus*)

Noticeable absences from expected species were apparent, namely flying foxes, nocturnal herpetofauna (particularly geckos), diurnal skinks and diurnal raptors. What influenced this result was unclear but may have included temporary (e.g. cooler evening temperature for herpetofauna, prolonged dry conditions preceding survey), permanent (e.g. lack of critical habitat or food resource) or seasonal influences (e.g. seasonal movements of animals for breeding or resource availability). A combination of these influences may be possible. A second field survey was undertaken in more favourable conditions to supplement the initial survey, resulting in the detection of more herpetofauna species.

### 3.2.2 Describe the vegetation (including the status of native vegetation and soil) within the project area.

#### Vegetation

Four regional ecosystems were present in roadside vegetation outside of, but bordering the Project Area. These were:

- 11.3.25 - *Eucalyptus tereticornis* or *E. camaldulensis* woodland fringing drainage lines.
- 11.4.3 - *Acacia harpophylla* and/or *Casuarina cristata* shrubby open forest on Cainozoic clay plains
- 11.5.1 - *Eucalyptus crebra* and/or *E. populnea*, *Callitris glaucophylla*, *Angophora leiocarpa*, *Allocasuarina luehmannii* woodland on Cainozoic sand plains and/or remnant surfaces
- 11.5.20 - *Eucalyptus moluccana* and/or *E. microcarpa* and/or *E. woollisiana* +/- *E. crebra* woodland on Cainozoic sand plains.

The RE 11.4.3 is listed as endangered under the *Vegetation Management Act 1999*. The other communities present are least concern.

The Disturbance Footprint contained no remnant native vegetation apart from approximately 0.12 ha of 11.3.25 and a heterogenous community of (11.5.1/11.5.20).

The breakdown of areas of vegetation communities in the Project Area is as follows:

- 11.3.25
  - 0.015 ha in the Disturbance Footprint
  - 0.34 ha in the Avoidance Area
- 11.4.3
  - 0.01 ha in the Avoidance Area
- 11.5.1/11.5.29
  - 0.107 ha in the Disturbance Footprint
  - 1.5 ha in the Avoidance Area
- Non-remnant
  - 1,347.41 ha in the Disturbance Footprint
  - 104.75 ha in the Avoidance Area

### Soil

Deep cracking clays and some gilgai were present in vegetated road reserves adjacent to the Project Area. Soil in the Project Area outside of cropped areas was compacted and weakly cracking at the time of the survey likely due to heavy grazing regimes. Outside of grazed areas, the soil was heavily modified by cropping activities.

## 3.3 Heritage

### 3.3.1 Describe any Commonwealth heritage places overseas or other places recognised as having heritage values that apply to the project area.

There are no places of heritage value within or nearby the Project Area.

### 3.3.2 Describe any Indigenous heritage values that apply to the project area.

The development area is not a Cultural Heritage Place and does not adjoin a Heritage Place. The Queensland Heritage Register Map (maintained by the Department of Environment and Science) shows the nearest heritage place is in the town of Millmerran (see Att\_5\_PCRE\_Cultural Heritage Places).

Searches of the DATSIP Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage Database and Register under the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003 were completed with results showing that no Cultural Records occur with the Development Footprint. The search results are provided in Attachment 5 Cultural Heritage Places (Att\_5\_PCRE\_Cultural Heritage Places) for information to the Department, however it will not be made publicly available due to cultural sensitivity reasons.

## 3.4 Hydrology

### 3.4.1 Describe the hydrology characteristics that apply to the project area and attach any hydrological investigations or surveys if applicable. \*

The Project Area is situated in the southern Condamine catchment within the Condamine River drainage sub-basin. To the east of Punched Creek Road, the Project Area is intersected by Punched Creek, which follows a north-northwest direction and joins Grass Tree Creek approximately 6 km north of the Project Area. Grass Tree Creek then flows into the Condamine River approximately 14 km north of the Assessment Area.

To the west of Punched Creek Road, the Project Area is traversed by two non-perennial, minor watercourses flowing north-eastward into Punched Creek in the northern end of the Project Area. One of these watercourses is located within the Avoidance Area, consisting of a degraded, heavily grazed swale. The other appears to have been previously filled for cropping or may have been incorrectly mapped. Several surface ditches designed for agricultural drainage traverse the Project Area, directing drainage into nearby watercourses and Punched Creek.

The location of the mapped watercourses is shown in Figure 2 of Att\_2\_PCRE\_Ecological Assessment Report.pdf, Section 1.4, pg 10.

The following description is based on observations of the two mapped minor watercourses that traverse the Project Area that were made during the field surveys.

The first watercourse is situated in the western Avoidance area and flows into Punched Creek. It is characterized by a deteriorated, extensively grazed, relict drainage line, forming a wide depression with intermittent water pools. Small, disconnected channels occurred throughout the swale, which was absent of natural features apart from a small number of trees. The other mapped watercourse (located between the Avoidance Areas) appeared to have been previously filled for cropping, indicating this watercourse no

longer exists or was incorrectly mapped. Several surface ditches designed for agricultural drainage traverse the Project Area, directing runoff into nearby watercourses and Punch Creek, however these are not present in watercourse mapping.

Within the Project Area, Punch Creek exists as a heavily degraded and grazed, sparsely vegetated swale containing small pools and channels.

A thorough assessment of the hydrological characteristics of the site is provided (see Att\_4\_PCRE\_Concept Surface Water Impact Assessment, Sections 2-3, pg. 8-24).

## 4. Impacts and mitigation

### 4.1 Impact details

**Potential Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES) relevant to your proposed action area.**

EPBC Act section	Controlling provision	Impacted	Reviewed
S12	World Heritage	No	Yes
S15B	National Heritage	No	Yes
S16	Ramsar Wetland	No	Yes
S18	Threatened Species and Ecological Communities	Yes	Yes
S20	Migratory Species	No	Yes
S21	Nuclear	No	Yes
S23	Commonwealth Marine Area	No	Yes
S24B	Great Barrier Reef	No	Yes
S24D	Water resource in relation to large coal mining development or coal seam gas	No	Yes
S26	Commonwealth Land	No	Yes
S27B	Commonwealth Heritage Places Overseas	No	Yes
S28	Commonwealth or Commonwealth Agency	No	Yes

#### 4.1.1 World Heritage

You have identified your proposed action will likely directly and/or indirectly impact the following protected matters.

A direct impact is a direct consequence of an action taken – for example, clearing of habitat for a threatened species or permanent shading on an ecological community as the result of installing solar panels.

An indirect impact is an 'indirect consequence' such as a downstream impact or a facilitated third-party action.

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**4.1.1.1 Is the proposed action likely to have any direct and/or indirect impact on any of these protected matters? \***

No

**4.1.1.3 Briefly describe why your action is unlikely to have a direct and/or indirect impact.**

\*

The Project is not located within or nearby a World Heritage place or area.

## 4.1.2 National Heritage

You have identified your proposed action will likely directly and/or indirectly impact the following protected matters.

A direct impact is a direct consequence of an action taken – for example, clearing of habitat for a threatened species or permanent shading on an ecological community as the result of installing solar panels.

An indirect impact is an 'indirect consequence' such as a downstream impact or a facilitated third-party action.

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**4.1.2.1 Is the proposed action likely to have any direct and/or indirect impact on any of these protected matters? \***

No

**4.1.2.3 Briefly describe why your action is unlikely to have a direct and/or indirect impact.**

\*

The Project is not located within or nearby a National Heritage place or area.

### 4.1.3 Ramsar Wetland

You have identified your proposed action will likely directly and/or indirectly impact the following protected matters.

A direct impact is a direct consequence of an action taken – for example, clearing of habitat for a threatened species or permanent shading on an ecological community as the result of installing solar panels.

An indirect impact is an 'indirect consequence' such as a downstream impact or a facilitated third-party action.

Direct impact	Indirect impact	Ramsar wetland
No	No	Banrock Station Wetland Complex
No	No	Narran Lake Nature Reserve
No	No	Riverland
No	No	The Coorong, and Lakes Alexandrina and Albert Wetland

#### 4.1.3.1 Is the proposed action likely to have any direct and/or indirect impact on any of these protected matters? \*

No

#### 4.1.3.3 Briefly describe why your action is unlikely to have a direct and/or indirect impact.

\*

The Project is not located within 150 km of a Ramsar wetland. Given the small scale of vegetation clearing and the history of disturbance at the site, the Project is unlikely to indirectly impact a Ramsar wetland.

#### 4.1.4 Threatened Species and Ecological Communities

You have identified your proposed action will likely directly and/or indirectly impact the following protected matters.

A direct impact is a direct consequence of an action taken – for example, clearing of habitat for a threatened species or permanent shading on an ecological community as the result of installing solar panels.

An indirect impact is an 'indirect consequence' such as a downstream impact or a facilitated third-party action.

##### Threatened species

Direct impact	Indirect impact	Species
No	No	<i>Adclarkia cameroni</i>
No	No	<i>Anomalopus mackayi</i>
No	No	<i>Anthochaera phrygia</i>
No	No	<i>Aphelocephala leucopsis</i>
No	No	<i>Cadellia pentastylis</i>
No	No	<i>Calidris acuminata</i>
No	No	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>
No	No	<i>Calyptorhynchus lathami lathami</i>
No	No	<i>Chalinolobus dwyeri</i>
Yes	No	<i>Climacteris picumnus victoriae</i>
No	No	<i>Dasyurus maculatus maculatus</i> (SE mainland population)
No	No	<i>Delma torquata</i>
No	No	<i>Dichanthium setosum</i>
No	No	<i>Egernia rugosa</i>
No	No	<i>Erythrorchis radiatus</i>
No	No	<i>Falco hypoleucos</i>
Yes	No	<i>Furina dunmalli</i>
No	No	<i>Gallinago hardwickii</i>

<b>Direct impact</b>	<b>Indirect impact</b>	<b>Species</b>
No	No	Geophaps scripta scripta
Yes	No	Grantiella picta
Yes	No	Hemiaspis damelii
No	No	Hirundapus caudacutus
No	No	Homopholis belsonii
No	No	Hypochrysops piceatus
No	No	Lathamus discolor
No	No	Lepidium monoplocoides
No	No	Lophochroa leadbeateri leadbeateri
No	No	Neophema chrysostoma
Yes	No	Nyctophilus corbeni
No	No	Petauroides volans
No	No	Petaurus australis australis
Yes	No	Phascolarctos cinereus (combined populations of Qld, NSW and the ACT)
No	No	Picris evae
No	No	Pteropus poliocephalus
No	No	Rhaponticum australe
No	No	Rostratula australis
No	No	Stagonopleura guttata
No	No	Thesium australe
No	No	Tympanocryptis condaminensis

### Ecological communities

<b>Direct impact</b>	<b>Indirect impact</b>	<b>Ecological community</b>
No	No	Brigalow (Acacia harpophylla dominant and co-dominant)

Direct impact	Indirect impact	Ecological community
No	No	Coolibah - Black Box Woodlands of the Darling Riverine Plains and the Brigalow Belt South Bioregions
No	No	Natural grasslands on basalt and fine-textured alluvial plains of northern New South Wales and southern Queensland
No	No	Poplar Box Grassy Woodland on Alluvial Plains
No	No	Weeping Myall Woodlands
No	No	White Box-Yellow Box-Blakely's Red Gum Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland

**4.1.4.1 Is the proposed action likely to have any direct and/or indirect impact on any of these protected matters? \***

Yes

**4.1.4.2 Briefly describe why your action has a direct and/or indirect impact on these protected matters. \***

One threatened species (koala) was confirmed to occur in the vegetated road corridors outside the Project Area along its boundaries. Potentially suitable habitat is present in those areas for 10 threatened fauna species (including koala). Approximately 0.12 ha of remnant vegetation comprising an estimate of five trees is proposed to be cleared. The 0.12 ha of remnant vegetation proposed to be cleared may contain suitable habitat for four threatened species.

Possible impacts may include:

- Clearing of a tree occupied by an animal (i.e. hollow-bearing trees)
- Loss of foraging and shelter habitat
- Vehicle strikes associated with increased construction traffic
- Injury to animals entering the Disturbance Footprint during construction

Direct impacts on six threatened fauna species have potential to occur and comprise the following:

- **Brown Treecreeper (south-eastern)**
  - Direct impacts to this species comprise the clearing of approximately 0.12 ha of vegetation that is potentially suitable as habitat, albeit suboptimal. Visual analysis of aerial imagery indicates this area contains approximately five trees. Due to the small scale of clearing and the likelihood that any brown treecreepers in the area are transitory, the impact on this species is likely to be minor to negligible.
- **Corben's long-eared bat**
  - Approximately 0.12 ha of vegetation (comprising approximately five trees) is proposed to be cleared. Impacts may include the loss of 0.12 ha of foraging habitat. Clearing of hollow-bearing trees may have a more substantial impact if occupied by a maternity roost. No hollow-bearing trees were recorded in the areas proposed to be cleared along Turner Road, however they may be present in the Punchs Creek Road access point/gate (labelled with '3' in Figure 2 of Att\_2\_PCRE\_Ecological Assessment Report.pdf, section 1.4, pp 10). Impacts can be mitigated by retaining hollow-bearing trees where feasible, avoiding clearing during the breeding season,

or having a requirement for fauna spotter catchers to be present during clearing operations. The impact to this species is likely to be minor to negligible.

- **Dunmall's Snake**

- As no suitable habitat was present in the Disturbance Footprint, impacts to this species' habitat are unlikely to occur. If animals were present in habitat nearby the Project Area, it is possible vehicle strikes may occur. Prohibiting or restricting works at night when this species is active would mitigate the increased risk of vehicle strikes occurring during elevated construction traffic.

- **Grey snake**

- As no suitable habitat was present in the Disturbance Footprint, impacts to this species' habitat are unlikely to occur. If animals were present in habitat nearby the Project Area, it is possible vehicle strikes may occur. Prohibiting or restricting works at night when this species is active would mitigate the increased risk of vehicle strikes occurring during elevated construction traffic.

- **Koala**

- Four koalas were recorded in road reserves adjacent to the northwest boundary of the Project Area on The Turkey Road, and Turner Road (record locations shown in Figure 9 of Att\_2\_PCRE\_Ecological Assessment Report.pdf, section 3.10.4.7, pp 38. ). Additionally, fresh koala scats were found on Campbells Road. All records were made within habitat within road reserves adjacent to the Project Area boundaries and not within the Disturbance Footprint.
- Impacts to this species comprise the loss of 0.12 ha of potentially suitable habitat (estimated to contain five trees via analysis of aerial imagery), a potential increase in vehicle strikes due to elevated construction traffic and minor disturbance associated with elevated noise levels during construction.
- It is recommended that suitable speed limits, signage and awareness initiatives (i.e. discussion of koalas in inductions) are employed. Additionally, it is recommended to limit or exclude works at night when koala activity is highest and to employ standard noise reduction measures during construction.
- The impact to the koala is likely to be minor to negligible.

- **Painted honeyeater**

- Direct impacts to this species comprise the clearing of approximately 0.12 ha of vegetation (containing an estimated five trees) that has the potential to support suitable mistletoe species. Due to the small scale of clearing, the impact on this species is likely to be minor to negligible.
- Where feasible, mature trees hosting mistletoe species should be retained to reduce loss of food resources for the species. Pre-clearance surveys should be conducted to detect any nests that may be present.

Impacts to threatened species are discussed in further detail in Att\_2\_PCRE\_Ecological Assessment Report.pdf, section 3.10.4, pp 35-40.

#### 4.1.4.4 Do you consider this likely direct and/or indirect impact to be a Significant Impact?

\*

No

#### 4.1.4.6 Describe why you do not consider this to be a Significant Impact. \*

The Project requires minimal clearing of potential habitat (up to 0.12 ha). No threatened fauna or flora or signs of their presence were detected in the Project Area. Minor impacts are possible but unlikely to occur due to the avoidance and mitigation proposed in Att\_3\_PCRE\_Site\_Based EMP.pdf. The combination of the relatively small area of habitat occurring in proximity to the Project Area, limited habitat clearing and the

retention of connectivity along road reserves will result in minor impacts to threatened species habitat. A significant impact to threatened species that occur, or potentially occur near the Project Area is considered unlikely.

**4.1.4.7 Do you think your proposed action is a controlled action? \***

No

**4.1.4.9 Please elaborate why you do not think your proposed action is a controlled action.**

\*

Impacts are likely to be minor or negligible.

**4.1.4.10 Please describe any avoidance or mitigation measures proposed for this action and attach any supporting documentation for these avoidance and mitigation measures. \***

Proposed mitigation measures include:

- Set back the Disturbance Footprint 10-20 m from vegetated road corridors to avoid disturbance.
- Use exclusion fencing around the Disturbance Footprint.
- Undertake pre-clearance surveys by qualified fauna spotter catchers prior to any vegetation clearing.
- Prepare and implement a high-risk Species Management Program for least concern colonial breeders in the event colonial microbats are found utilising hollow-bearing trees in the clearing area.
- Install nest boxes or bat boxes suitable for the species present to mitigate impacts resulting from the loss of tree hollows.
- Employ signage, speed limits and awareness measures to reduce the likelihood of road strikes on koalas during construction. Additionally, it is recommended to limit or exclude works at night when koala, Dunmall's snake and grey snake activity is highest.
- Hierarchical clearing approach to be employed (e.g. understorey, then shrubs then trees as a last resort)
- The option to trim branches will be favoured over clearing of the entire tree
- Microsite access points to avoid impacts

- Develop and implement an environmental management plan (attached as Att\_3\_PCRE\_Site\_Based EMP.pdf).

#### 4.1.4.11 Please describe any proposed offsets and attach any supporting documentation relevant to these measures. \*

No offsets are proposed.

#### 4.1.5 Migratory Species

You have identified your proposed action will likely directly and/or indirectly impact the following protected matters.

A direct impact is a direct consequence of an action taken – for example, clearing of habitat for a threatened species or permanent shading on an ecological community as the result of installing solar panels.

An indirect impact is an 'indirect consequence' such as a downstream impact or a facilitated third-party action.

Direct impact	Indirect impact	Species
No	No	Actitis hypoleucos
No	No	Apus pacificus
No	No	Calidris acuminata
No	No	Calidris ferruginea
No	No	Calidris melanotos
No	No	Cuculus optatus
No	No	Gallinago hardwickii
No	No	Hirundapus caudacutus
No	No	Motacilla flava
No	No	Myiagra cyanoleuca
No	No	Rhipidura rufifrons

**4.1.5.1 Is the proposed action likely to have any direct and/or indirect impact on any of these protected matters? \***

No

**4.1.5.3 Briefly describe why your action is unlikely to have a direct and/or indirect impact.**

\*

Impacts to white-throated needletail and fork-tailed swift are unlikely as they are non-breeding visitors that are almost exclusively aerial while in Australia. The change in land use from cropping/grazing to a solar farm is unlikely to impact insect prey abundance in the airspace above the Project Area.

Impacts to insectivorous migratory species (rufous fantail, satin flycatcher and oriental cuckoo) are unlikely as potentially suitable habitat is present only in the vegetated road corridors adjacent to the Project Area. These areas are likely to have low suitability as the understory development was poor, and lizards and small insectivorous birds were noticeably absent or in low numbers.

Impacts to wading migratory birds are unlikely as suitable habitat occurs outside the Project Areas comprising large dams and some wetlands. Several dams are present within the Project Area; however they are small, surrounded by cropped fields, and have recently been cleared of vegetation. As such are unlikely to be suitable for waders.

**4.1.6 Nuclear****4.1.6.1 Is the proposed action likely to have any direct and/or indirect impact on this protected matter? \***

No

**4.1.6.3 Briefly describe why your action is unlikely to have a direct and/or indirect impact.**

\*

The Project is not involved with or nearby a nuclear action or matter.

**4.1.7 Commonwealth Marine Area**

You have identified your proposed action will likely directly and/or indirectly impact the following protected matters.

A direct impact is a direct consequence of an action taken – for example, clearing of habitat for a threatened species or permanent shading on an ecological community as the result of installing solar panels.

An indirect impact is an 'indirect consequence' such as a downstream impact or a facilitated third-party action.

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**4.1.7.1 Is the proposed action likely to have any direct and/or indirect impact on any of these protected matters? \***

No

**4.1.7.3 Briefly describe why your action is unlikely to have a direct and/or indirect impact.**

\*

The Project Area is approximately 198 km from the Queensland coastline at its closest point. Given the distance, the limited amount of clearing proposed and relatively small size of the Project Area, any impact to a Commonwealth Marine Area is unlikely.

**4.1.8 Great Barrier Reef**

**4.1.8.1 Is the proposed action likely to have any direct and/or indirect impact on this protected matter? \***

No

**4.1.8.3 Briefly describe why your action is unlikely to have a direct and/or indirect impact.**

\*

The Great Barrer Reef is located approximately 425 km northeast of the Project Area. Given this distance, the limited amount of clearing proposed, and the relatively small size of the Project Area, any impact is unlikely.

#### **4.1.9 Water resource in relation to large coal mining development or coal seam gas**

**4.1.9.1 Is the proposed action likely to have any direct and/or indirect impact on this protected matter? \***

No

**4.1.9.3 Briefly describe why your action is unlikely to have a direct and/or indirect impact.**

\*

The Project is not a coal seam gas development or a large coal mining development.

#### **4.1.10 Commonwealth Land**

You have identified your proposed action will likely directly and/or indirectly impact the following protected matters.

A direct impact is a direct consequence of an action taken – for example, clearing of habitat for a threatened species or permanent shading on an ecological community as the result of installing solar panels.

An indirect impact is an 'indirect consequence' such as a downstream impact or a facilitated third-party action.

—

**4.1.10.1 Is the proposed action likely to have any direct and/or indirect impact on any of these protected matters? \***

No

**4.1.10.3 Briefly describe why your action is unlikely to have a direct and/or indirect impact.**

\*

There is no Commonwealth land within 60 km of the Project's Disturbance Footprint.

#### **4.1.11 Commonwealth Heritage Places Overseas**

You have identified your proposed action will likely directly and/or indirectly impact the following protected matters.

A direct impact is a direct consequence of an action taken – for example, clearing of habitat for a threatened species or permanent shading on an ecological community as the result of installing solar panels.

An indirect impact is an 'indirect consequence' such as a downstream impact or a facilitated third-party action.

—

##### **4.1.11.1 Is the proposed action likely to have any direct and/or indirect impact on any of these protected matters? \***

No

##### **4.1.11.3 Briefly describe why your action is unlikely to have a direct and/or indirect impact.**

\*

The Project is located on mainland Australia. Commonwealth Heritage Places overseas occur in Australian territories in Australian waters or in other countries and will not be impacted by the Project.

#### **4.1.12 Commonwealth or Commonwealth Agency**

#### 4.1.12.1 Is the proposed action to be taken by the Commonwealth or a Commonwealth Agency? \*

No

## 4.2 Impact summary

### Conclusion on the likelihood of significant impacts

You have indicated that the proposed action will likely have a significant impact on the following Matters of National Environmental Significance:

*None*

### Conclusion on the likelihood of unlikely significant impacts

You have indicated that the proposed action will unlikely have a significant impact on the following Matters of National Environmental Significance:

- World Heritage (S12)
- National Heritage (S15B)
- Ramsar Wetland (S16)
- Threatened Species and Ecological Communities (S18)
- Migratory Species (S20)
- Nuclear (S21)
- Commonwealth Marine Area (S23)
- Great Barrier Reef (S24B)
- Water resource in relation to large coal mining development or coal seam gas (S24D)
- Commonwealth Land (S26)
- Commonwealth Heritage Places Overseas (S27B)
- Commonwealth or Commonwealth Agency (S28)

## 4.3 Alternatives

#### 4.3.1 Do you have any possible alternatives for your proposed action to be considered as part of your referral? \*

No

### 4.3.8 Describe why alternatives for your proposed action were not possible. \*

A constraints and opportunities analysis process was undertaken to identify potential development sites for projects in the host region. For this proposed Project, this process has included consideration of factors such as:

- Access to existing transmission assets to accept energy from the renewable facility, i.e. with no new transmission line required.
- Access to, and capacity of, existing energy grids.
- Generation/storage capacity.
- Potential for land acquisition.
- Land suitability (e.g. topography, existing land use, flood risk, zoning).
- Need to minimise environmental and social impacts (e.g. avoiding sensitive environments, areas of cultural heritage value, residential/population centres).

The site selection process undertaken included consideration of factors such as the availability and extent of land for housing solar arrays and associated components, the consequent potential capacity for generation, the capacity of the grid to receive the generated electricity, the capital and operational costs of the project, and anticipated market conditions.

The Punched Creek Renewable Energy site was chosen because it provides the optimal combination of:

- Access to the 330kV Millmerran to Middle Ridge Transmission Line
- High levels of available capacity on the grid transmission system
- High quality solar resource
- Low environmental sensitivity and absence of locational constraints due to:
  - the project area comprising predominantly cleared cropping land, with little remaining native vegetation
  - the flat terrain of the site, for cost effective construction
  - an acceptably low flood risk
  - the low density of the surrounding population and limited number of neighbouring properties
  - the suitable planning context of the site including an absence of zoning issues or restrictive planning overlays
  - the access of the site to a suitable road network.
- Secured access to the host land via agreements with the landowner

Access to host land and proximity to the transmission grid are critical factors that affect timeframes for viable renewable projects. No alternative sites that can achieve the timeframe trajectory that this proposed project has are viable to pursue at this time.

## 5. Lodgement

### 5.1 Attachments

#### 1.2.1 Overview of the proposed action

Type	Name	Date	Sensitivity	Confidence
#1.	Document Att_1_PCRE_Proposed_Activity_Description.pdf Description of the Project and activities	19/02/2024	High	

## 1.2.6 Commonwealth or state legislation, planning frameworks or policy documents that are relevant to the proposed action

Type	Name	Date	Sensitivity	Confidence
#1.	Document Att_2_PCRE_Ecological Assessment Report.pdf An ecological assessment report prepared by Terra Solution that assess the Punch Creek Project Area and surrounding habitat.	06/03/2024	No	High

## 3.3.2 Indigenous heritage values that apply to the project area

Type	Name	Date	Sensitivity	Confidence
#1.	Document Att_5_PCRE_Cultural Heritage Places.pdf Cultural Heritage Database and Register Search Report identifying known Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander cultural site points, polygons, Cultural Heritage Parties, Cultural Heritage Bodies, Cultural Heritage Management Plans, Designated Landscape Areas, Cultural Heritage Study Areas and National Heritage Areas (Indigenous values) recorded in a specific search area.	03/02/2023	No	High

## 3.4.1 Hydrology characteristics that apply to the project area

Type	Name	Date	Sensitivity	Confidence
#1.	Document Att_2_PCRE_Ecological Assessment Report.pdf An ecological assessment report prepared by Terra Solution that assess the Punch Creek Project Area and surrounding habitat.	05/03/2024	No	High
#2.	Document Att_4_PCRE_Concept Surface Water Impact Assessment.pdf A Concept Surface Water Impact Assessment that evaluates key drainage features across the Project catchment, develops hydrologic and hydraulic models, calculates potential flood impacts for the site at 1% AEP flood even and develops concept water sensitive urban design requirements for the PCREP Development Footprint	27/11/2020	No	High

## 4.1.4.2 (Threatened Species and Ecological Communities) Why your action has a direct and/or indirect impact on the identified protected matters

Type	Name	Date	Sensitivity	Confidence
#1.	Document Att_2_PCRE_Ecological Assessment Report.pdf An ecological assessment report prepared by Terra Solution that assess the Punch Creek Project Area and surrounding habitat.	05/03/2024	No	High

## 4.1.4.10 (Threatened Species and Ecological Communities) Avoidance or mitigation measures proposed for this action

Type	Name	Date	Sensitivity	Confidence
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#1.	Document Att_3_PCRE_Site_Based EMP.pdf	01/03/2024	High
	A site-based environmental management plan for the Punchs Creek Renewable Energy Project		

## 5.2 Declarations

### Completed Referring party's declaration

The Referring party is the person preparing the information in this referral.

ABN/ACN	94652464983
Organisation name	TERRA SOLUTIONS PTY LTD
Organisation address	2/28 French Street, Pimlico QLD, 4812
Representative's name	Anton Fitzgerald
Representative's job title	Director
Phone	0435 752 239
Email	admin@terrasolutions.com.au
Address	2/28 French St, Pimlico QLD 4812

Check this box to indicate you have read the referral form. \*

I would like to receive notifications and track the referral progress through the EPBC portal. \*

By checking this box, I, **Anton Fitzgerald of TERRA SOLUTIONS PTY LTD**, declare that to the best of my knowledge the information I have given on, or attached to this EPBC Act Referral is complete, current and correct. I understand that giving false or misleading information is a serious offence. \*

I would like to receive notifications and track the referral progress through the EPBC portal. \*

### Completed Person proposing to take the action's declaration

The Person proposing to take the action is the individual, business, government agency or trustee that will be responsible for the proposed action.

ABN/ACN	67657894767
Organisation name	PUNCH'S CREEK RENEWABLE ENERGY PTY LTD
Organisation address	4500 QLD
Representative's name	Claire Driessen
Representative's job title	Planner
Phone	0408 084 900
Email	claire@echoconsultants.com.au
Address	16 Duntroon Street, Brendale Qld 4500

Check this box to indicate you have read the referral form. \*

I would like to receive notifications and track the referral progress through the EPBC portal. \*

I, **Claire Driessen of PUNCH'S CREEK RENEWABLE ENERGY PTY LTD**, declare that to the best of my knowledge the information I have given on, or attached to the EPBC Act Referral is complete, current and correct. I understand that giving false or misleading information is a serious offence. I declare that I am not taking the action on behalf or for the benefit of any other person or entity. \*

I would like to receive notifications and track the referral progress through the EPBC portal. \*

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### Completed Proposed designated proponent's declaration

The Proposed designated proponent is the individual or organisation proposed to be responsible for meeting the requirements of the EPBC Act during the assessment process, if the Minister decides that this project is a controlled action.

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Same as Person proposing to take the action information.

Check this box to indicate you have read the referral form. \*

I would like to receive notifications and track the referral progress through the EPBC portal. \*

I, **Claire Driessen of PUNCH'S CREEK RENEWABLE ENERGY PTY LTD**, the Proposed designated proponent, consent to the designation of myself as the Proposed designated proponent for the purposes of the action described in this EPBC Act Referral. \*

I would like to receive notifications and track the referral progress through the EPBC portal. \*