

## MEDIA RELEASE

### **2,000 solar grazing merinos flock back to New England Solar**

- More than 2,000 sheep and lambs are now grazing around the solar panels at ACEN Australia's New England Solar Stage 1 project.
- Around one million solar panels have been installed on site and the project has just hit its 400 MW peak generating capacity.
- The 400 MW (520MW DC) project is one of the largest operating solar farms in Australia.
- Up to 6,000 sheep are expected to be grazing amongst the solar panels early in 2024.

**12 DECEMBER 2023, NSW** – More than 2,000 merino sheep are now grazing across the New England Solar Stage 1 site, in addition to producing energy the solar panels provide shelter for the sheep from the sun and rain.

The 720 MW New England Solar project is being developed by ACEN Australia across 2,000 hectares of cleared grazing land leased from local landholders.

It will provide enough clean renewable power for around 300,000 homes.

Construction of the first 400 MW (520MW DC) stage was completed recently, making it one of the largest operating solar PV generators in Australia.

Around one million solar panels have been installed across 1,200 hectares of the Stage 1 project site, with production from the solar farm reaching its 400 MW capacity over the past few days.

The practice of sheep and solar farms coexisting is known as solar grazing, with a number of trials both in Australia and overseas showing that solar panels improve the local conditions through shade and moisture and hence leads to better pasture.

Robyn Doyle is a Workplace Health and Safety Adviser at New England Solar, and she has been tasked with overseeing the release of sheep across the solar farm site.

Robyn grew up on a large sheep farm in western NSW, learning shearing as a teenager. She is happy to be blending her new career on the solar farm, with her old love of sheep farming.

"The sheep are on site for about six weeks at a time and they have made themselves perfectly at home," she said.

"The panels rotate as they track the sun and this balance between light and shade is great for new grass growth. It's just heaven for hungry sheep.

"The panels offer shade from the hot sun and rain for the sheep and protection from aerial predators for their young lambs.

"It just seems like a really good match – the sheep stay protected and well fed, and they help reduce vegetation and fire risks on site."

Drinking water for the sheep is provided by natural dams on part of the site, while in other locations pipes bring water to site from bores on neighbouring farms.

The sheep generally look after themselves, and its suspected ewes have given birth to young lambs under the panels on at least two occasions.

There are plans to introduce more sheep on site from other landholders, taking the solar grazing mob to more than 6,000 sheep in total.

ACEN Australia Managing Director David Pollington said the New England Solar project was now generating clean renewable energy into the National Electricity Market.

“From the first day, the local community, businesses and our First Nations partners have supported and guided us on this project,” Mr Pollington said.

“It started with our development and approvals more than six years ago and continued through to construction and now into operations.

“It’s a great sight to now see agriculture co-existing with renewable energy in such a positive way.

“The project will provide enough clean renewable energy to power around 300,000 homes, but it’s also providing a really productive space where sheep can graze, protected from the harsh elements, particularly during hot conditions.”

“We’re extremely pleased to celebrate another important milestone for the project, the farming community and the energy transition underway across the country.”

The 720 MW New England Solar project is being developed in two stages by ACEN Australia, with the first stage commencing construction in 2021.

- More than 400 workers have been on site during the peak of Stage 1 construction
- Around one million solar panels installed
- 115,000 support piles driven; and
- Hundreds of kilometres of electrical cables laid.

Around 80% of the construction workforce has come from the New England region, who have upgraded and maintained roads, constructed and connected tracking systems, built supporting infrastructure and installed solar PV modules.

New England Solar Stage 2 includes a 320 MW solar development and a 200 MW two hour battery storage system.

The battery energy storage system will provide enough on demand energy to power 175,000 homes. Work is expected to begin on the Stage 2 development in 2024.

[Download images and footage of New England Solar and solar grazing](#)

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## About ACEN Australia

ACEN Australia has 400MW capacity in construction, 400MW in operation and more than 8GW capacity in the development pipeline. Its renewable energy assets include solar, wind, battery and pumped hydro and energy storage projects across Australia. ACEN Australia's first operational project is New England Solar which commenced construction in 2021. It is one of Australia's largest solar projects in the National Electricity Market and is the largest solar project in Australia to be financed on a fully merchant basis. Stubbo Solar in the NSW Central Orana Renewable Energy Zone is ACEN Australia's second project which commenced construction in late 2022. Other ACEN Australia projects include New England Battery (NSW), Birriwa Solar (NSW), Valley of the Winds (NSW), Aquila Wind (NSW), Phoenix Pumped Hydro (NSW), Robbins Island and Jim's Plain Wind (TAS) and North East Wind (TAS).

ACEN Australia is a wholly owned subsidiary of ACEN (PSE: ACEN), the listed energy platform of the Ayala group. The company has ~5,000 MW of attributable capacity from owned facilities in the Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, India, and Australia, with a renewable share of 98%, which is among the highest in the region. ACEN's aspiration is to be the largest listed renewables platform in Southeast Asia, with a goal of reaching 20 GW of renewables capacity by 2030. ACEN is committed to transition the company's generation portfolio to 100% renewable energy by 2025 and to become a Net Zero greenhouse gas emissions company by 2050.

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