

# Maxwell solar farm will produce enough energy to supply 10,000 homes



Matthew Kelly



A solar farm capable of producing power for 10,000 homes will be established on a disused mine site outside of Muswellbrook following state government planning approval.

The 25 megawatt Maxwell Solar Farm, which will generate about 50 jobs during construction, is situated on a 130 hectare section of the old Drayton open cut mine site which closed in 2016.



The former Drayton mine site.

"When we looked at it, it made great sense to put a solar farm here," Malabar Coal chairman Wayne Seabrook said.

"The site is adjacent to the major electricity generation hub in NSW - with the Liddell and Bayswater Power Stations located nearby - and we would have access to high voltage power lines meaning a simple and low-cost connection to the grid."

The solar farm, which will consist of about 125,000 solar panels, will save more than 50,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions per year.

Construction is expected to commence within 6 months, with the project due to be completed by early 2022.

Planning and Public Spaces Minister Rob Stokes said the project was a great example of the Hunter's capacity to transition to a low emissions future.

"The approval will deliver sustainable economic and environmental benefits for the community, creating opportunities for 50 new local jobs during construction, and injecting \$39 million into the local economy," he said.

"We want NSW to be the nation's leader in large scale renewable energy projects. Since 2017, the NSW government has approved 36 major solar projects across the state creating opportunities for more than 7,000 local construction jobs and pumping \$7.5 billion into regional NSW."

"Projects like Maxwell Solar Farm show that a thriving renewable energy industry in NSW will support economic investment and jobs of the future right across the state.

An overwhelming proportion of community submissions supported the project when it was exhibited.

The project is the latest of a series of former mines to host renewables, including the Kidston gold mine in Queensland and the Stawell gold mine in Victoria.

Other mines are being suggested for pumped hydro projects.



[AGL Energy and Idemitsu Australia Resources](#) signed an agreement in 2019 to undertake an engineering feasibility study for AGL's proposed 250-megawatt pumped hydro project at Bells Mountain, near Muswellbrook.

The agreement follows on from an initial concept study which explored the viability of utilising the void on the [Muswellbrook Coal Company site](#), which is no longer being mined and is suitable for the proposed project.

The feasibility study will assess whether the project is technically feasible, provide cost estimates for both construction and operation and assess the required planning and approval processes.