



Powering a Sustainable Future

**2 October 2020**

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **WINTON SOLAR FARM FOSTERS NEW TALENT**

29 new apprentices and trainees have been recruited to work on the Winton Solar Farm, in a major development for North East Victoria's growing solar industry.

The apprentices – ranging from first year apprentice to final year apprentice about to embark on their trade qualified career – are undertaking supervised work at the 85MW solar farm construction site, just outside of Benalla.

Watters Electrical, a local business subcontracted to work at the solar farm, has played a lead role in taking on apprentices to help with delivery of electrical works at the solar farm.

“The Winton Solar Farm project has enabled us to support the community through employment of local people,” Watters Electrical Chief Executive Officer, Peter Copely, said.

“This is a significant benefit, particularly considering COVID-19, as working locally, our staff get to go home every night and be with their families and friends which is vitally important for positive mental health and wellbeing.”

All Watters Electrical apprentices live within one hour of the Project site.

For fourth year apprentice Nicholas Wood, there hasn't been a better time to be gaining valuable skills in large-scale solar installations.

“It's good to be getting into the business of renewable energy. Over the next 10 years or so, I see this as a growth area of the industry,” he said.

“I'd love to specialise in solar and wind farms once I'm qualified,” he said.

Project Owner, FRV, and Principal Contractor, Gransolar, are working to ensure a minimum of 10 percent of all construction work for Winton Solar Farm is delivered by Apprentices and Trainees – as part of the Victorian Government's Major Projects Skills Guarantee.

“Winton Solar Farm will support in driving the development of new, renewable energy sources for Victorians,” FRV Managing Director, Carlo Frigerio, said.

“Projects like Winton Solar Farm have the capacity to deliver long-term regional economic growth – by providing the next generation of workers with in-demand skills and industry experience – and therefore a better prospect of ongoing work in the growing renewables sector,” he said.

Apprentices and Trainees are adding enormous value across the project including one Trainee developing project and administration skills in report writing, data analysis, community engagement, events and Occupational Health and Safety. Electrical Apprentices are involved in cable installation and one Apprentice engaged in civil works.



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Local Group Training Organisations such as The Apprenticeship Factory and Kestrel Recruitment are among the local placement organisations supporting Winton Solar Farm's training placements.

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#### **About the Winton Solar Farm**

Winton Solar Farm will provide enough clean, zero-emission electricity to power over 52,000 houses every year. It will feature the latest in large-scale solar technology to capture solar energy and convert this into electricity for use by homes and businesses.

The Project received Planning Approval in early 2018 and is currently being built on a private 250-hectare site approximately 25km south west of Wangaratta. This location is well suited to a solar farm, with very high levels of sunlight and proximity to the existing electricity grid.

The Project will also contribute to the achievement of Victoria's renewable energy target. Following a 2018 public tender process, Winton Solar Farm was also awarded a 15-year support agreement by the State Government for clean energy generated by the project. The tender was part of the Government's Victorian Renewable Energy Target (VRET) to source 25 percent of its electricity production from renewables by 2020 increasing to 50% by 2030.

Construction is expected to take around 12 months to complete. The plant will have an operating life of around 30 years.

#### **About FRV Services**

FRV has been active in Australia since 2010 and are a leader in solar development. FRV was the first company to deliver a privately financed solar farm - the Royalla Solar Farm near Canberra - that has been operating since August 2014. Since that time, FRV has grown to become a well-regarded solar developer with a portfolio of successful solar projects already operating and in construction across the ACT, QLD and NSW.

FRV's total investment in Australia is now over \$1 billion since 2012.

*For more information please contact Sarah Stent – 0418 142 173*