

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Aboriginal groups and solar project work together to protect and share cultural knowledge of the New England region in documentary film**

- A film and cultural items identified on the solar project site have been provided to the Armidale and Region Aboriginal Cultural Centre and Keeping Place
- The film captures stories from Aboriginal representatives and was produced to share knowledge and raise awareness of Aboriginal cultural values in the region
- When the solar project is operational, access to a significant cultural site will be accessible by Aboriginal groups

25 June 2022, NSW – A short documentary film capturing Aboriginal cultural values of the Ooralla region where the New England Solar and Battery project is located has been released.

The documentary is named *Ooralla: A collection of stories from First Nations* and was shown for the first time last night at the Armidale and Region Aboriginal Cultural Centre and Keeping Place (ACCKP).

It was produced as a way to help share knowledge and raise awareness of local Aboriginal culture as part of a broader program of video stories, *Sharing cultural knowledge: A collection of stories from Anaiwan and Gumbaynggirr First Nations* which will be provided to the ACCKP as a publicly available resource.

The region is known as Ooralla by local Aboriginal people, a place where Aboriginal people came from surrounding areas to meet, trade items and take part in ceremonial practices.

The film itself centres on a specific meeting place at a small rocky outcrop that was identified as part of field surveys around four years ago as part of the assessment and approvals for the solar and battery project.

The site includes a significant grinding groove site where it is believed Aboriginal people gathered to learn, celebrate events and trade, while other significant items such as scar trees and stone artefacts are also featured.

New England Solar Farm Construction Director Tim Greenaway said the documentary project had been requested and guided by representatives from local Aboriginal people.

“The early field surveys for the solar farm and battery project uncovered a number of significant Aboriginal cultural and historical items on the project site,” Mr Greenaway said.

“It showed us that the site had this incredible history and we hope that through this film the stories are shared and become a valuable source of knowledge and understanding for all people in the region.

“It’s been an incredible journey of learning and experience about the local heritage and the history of the grinding groove site, which has ultimately helped guide us through the design of the solar project”.

“We’re very proud of the work that has been achieved by all. We’re also very cognisant that this is the start of a long journey of working with our Aboriginal partners”.

Work is now taking place to establish access tracks to the Grinding Groove site so that Aboriginal groups can access the site once the solar project is operational from next year.

A number of other cultural items identified on the solar project site have been protected on site or re-located to the Armidale and Region Aboriginal Cultural Centre and Keeping Place.

Les Ahoy, Anaiwan Elder commented on the importance of the work being done to protect and share the cultural history of the New England region.

“To us, we have the spiritual side, which is a lot harder to prove in scientific terms. The grinding grooves are our direct link to our past. We just needed access to these places and with the partnership with the solar project we are able to do that, which is great”.

“The Keeping Place gives us an opportunity to teach everybody, not just Aboriginal people. It gives our elders an opportunity to go to a central place with artifacts and with stories that put context to what those items actually meant in the landscape”.

*Ooralla: A collection of stories from First Nations* is available on the New England Solar website [www.newenglandsolarfarm.com.au/community/](http://www.newenglandsolarfarm.com.au/community/) or Facebook page [www.facebook.com/newenglandsolarfarm](https://www.facebook.com/newenglandsolarfarm)

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### **About ACEN (Formerly AC Energy)**

ACEN is the listed energy platform of the Ayala Group. The company has ~3,800 MW of attributable capacity in the Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, India, and Australia. The company’s renewable share of capacity is at 87%, 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 5,000 MW of renewables capacity by 2025. In October 2021, ACEN announced its commitment to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

ACEN has been a partner of UPC Renewables in Australia since 2018. In 2021, ACEN began a transaction to eventually own 100% of UPC\AC Renewables by early 2023; with this transaction, the company is now called ACEN Australia. This marks a strategic pivot for ACEN as it embarks on its first wholly owned development and operations platform outside of the Philippines.

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