

# Powering into the future

## Council's solar plan takes shape

THE first sod has been turned on Valdora's 15 megawatt solar farm on Sunshine Coast Council-owned land after Downer was awarded the tender to construct.

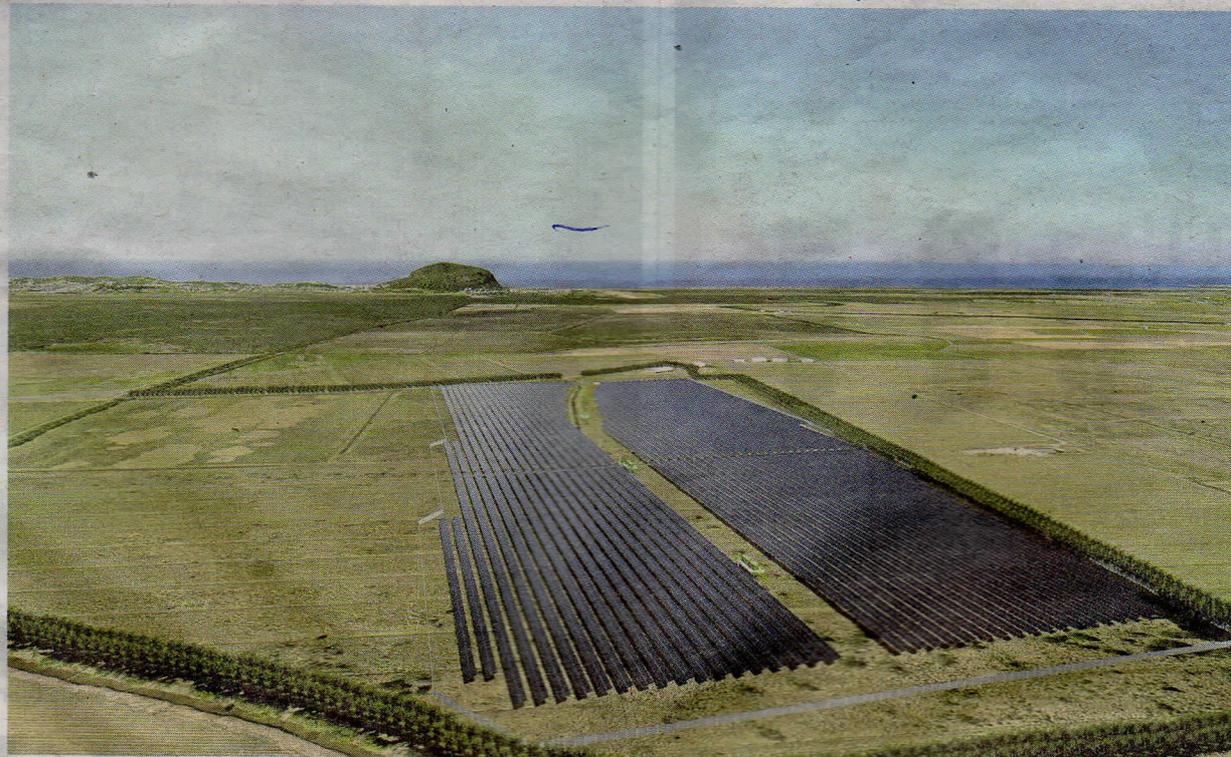
The council is determined to become Australia's first local government to offset its entire electricity consumption from green energy.

Mayor Mark Jamieson said this venture was the first part of a grand plan to become Australia's most sustainable region.

Cr Jamieson said the council would become the nation's first local government to build a utility-scale, grid-connected solar farm.

"The 15MW solar farm covering 24ha of a 49ha site at Valdora will be the biggest solar farm in Queensland – the next largest being the Gatton Solar Farm at 3.3MW – and the fifth largest solar farm in the nation," he said.

"By 2017 it will offset 100% of the organisation's electricity consumption across all its facilities



**GREEN PROMISE:** An artist's Impression of the Valdora solar farm.

PHOTO: CONTR

and operations, with solar energy going into the grid.

"That includes our administration buildings, swimming pools, performance venues and community centres, our holiday parks, libraries and art gallery, and our sport and recreation facilities.

"Most other governments are still talking about

offsetting 50% of their energy needs from renewables by 2025, so our 100% offset puts us way ahead of the game, and that's a win for our environment and our community.

"And it doesn't stop there. The solar farm is also estimated to save this council millions of dollars over a 30-year period based

on today's electricity costs, which are anticipated to increase substantially in the future.

"Every Sunshine Coast ratepayer will benefit from the certainty this project will provide in regard to council's electricity expenditure and in the context of combating rising electricity costs."

Cr Jamieson said the

project would allow the Coast to take control of electricity supply, isolate the council from increasing price risk.

"The Sunshine Coast Farm will, at its peak, generate 15,000kW of electricity from the sun," he said.

The farm will generate sufficient power for about 5000 homes.