



Big solar farm for Fortescue operation

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Byline: BRAD THOMPSON

Body

Fortescue says it will build all of renewable energy assets needed to decarbonise the company's iron ore operations in Western Australia on its own tenements over the next five years and is about to start work on a 190 megawatt solar farm at the Cloudbreak mine.

The Cloudbreak project is almost double the size of the only other solar farm built by **Fortescue**, with work expected to start before the end of March.

It is understood **Fortescue** has a number of renewables projects in the pipeline awaiting final investment decisions. The Andrew Forrest-led **Fortescue** estimates it will need an additional 2-3GW of renewable energy and battery storage under plans to stop using diesel and gas by 2030.

It has been unclear how **Fortescue** intends to reach the renewable energy target in the timeframe required, given land access and permitting issues in WA.

Fortescue applied for miscellaneous tenements covering about 150,000ha near its mining operations last year. Those applications remain pending, meaning **Fortescue** is yet to secure the tenements on a basis that would allow it to develop renewables projects under WA's Mining Act.

The tenement applications came hot on the heels of **Fortescue** quietly scrapping plans for a multibillion-dollar wind and solar farm that had been a key plank of the decarbonisation plan.

Fortescue chief operating officer Shelley Robertson said on Tuesday that the company would build all of the renewable capacity required under its own steam on its tenements.

"It will all be up and running by 2030," she said. "We're building about 2.5GW in solar and wind in the Pilbara, and also having batteries to support the downtime there. And we'll be looking at different ways to operate around that new renewable energy system that we're installing." Ms Robertson said expenditure on the wind and solar farms would come from the \$US6.2bn (\$9.6bn) set aside to reach the decarbonisation target.

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The project abandoned last year - known as Uaroo Renewable Energy Hub - involved building more than 300 wind turbines and a solar farm with a capacity of up to 5.4GW on cattle stations a south of Onslow in the Pilbara. The construction work was estimated to take seven years.

Fortescue has built one 100MW solar farm, known as North Star Junction, near its troubled Iron Bridge magnetite operations.

The 150,000ha tenement package understood to figure in its broader renewable plans is mostly covered by land-use agreements with the Nyamal and Pakyka traditional owner groups.

Fortescue intends to use renewable energy to charge its electric mining machinery. The company received \$10m from the taxpayer-funded Australian Renewable Energy Agency on Tuesday to develop a 6MW fast charger test unit for its future mining fleet.

Mr Forrest said at the **Fortescue** annual general meeting last month that the company wanted help in the form of approvals and infrastructure to reach its "real-zero" decarbonisation target. Mr Forrest said substantial land was required for solar and wind farms but traditional owners and other stakeholders were keen to become involved.

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