

Case study

# The Future of Neoen Australia Made in Sydney and NSW





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Franck Woitiez,  
Managing Director of Neoen Australia.

# Neoen lights up NSW by harnessing solar power

**Clean energy producer Neoen became an early leader when it decided to build solar power plants in New South Wales (NSW) in 2012. Seven years and \$500 million in investments later, the company has successfully built five solar farms in the state—one of which is the largest ever constructed in Australia.**

The French company has grown into a world-class provider of clean energy, less than 10 years since it was established. It owns and operates solar and wind farms across 15 countries and has developed the world's largest lithium-ion battery.

Before coming to Australia in 2012, Neoen had been looking to expand beyond Europe and considered several countries. It decided that Australia offered the most potential because of the country's attractive renewable energy environment, according to Franck Woitiez, Managing Director of Neoen Australia.

"Australia is home to an abundance of resources that we need—wind and sunlight," says Woitiez. "It also has a large infrastructure network, which meant that we could seamlessly connect our projects to the grid."

Woitiez's team visited every major Australian city to identify where the company could best develop its business through a network of partners.

"We then started looking for a location for solar farms, and we thought NSW was the state where we had the most potential for success in greenfield solar projects," says Woitiez. "So we decided to set up our office in Sydney."

## Fast facts about Neoen



**The fastest-growing, leading independent producer of exclusively renewable energy worldwide, founded in Paris in 2008**



**Operates and owns wind and solar farms in 15 countries**



**Employs around 150 people across the globe—including 45 in Australia**



**Set up its Australian head office in Sydney in 2012**



**Coleambally, NSW solar farm is the largest fully operational photovoltaic facility in Australia**

# 1.1GW

**Has 11 renewable energy projects in Australia, producing 1.1 gigawatts of power**

## Setting up in Sydney

Neoen established its Australian business with assistance from the NSW Government. The Industry, Trade & Investment team helped the company connect with potential partners and understand the domestic clean energy market.

“They helped us get started with our business and would check in on our progress,” says Woitiez.

In Sydney, the company also found all the support it needed—including lawyers, financiers, technical consultants and community members who were receptive to its projects.

“Being in Sydney has allowed us to be close to our business community, and now NSW has a third of our energy capacity,” says Woitiez.

## Developing solar farms in NSW

Neoen’s smooth start in Sydney enabled it to immediately seek land for its solar farms. It identified Dubbo, Narromine, Parkes and Griffith – all in regional NSW – as potential locations and eventually built solar farms in these areas.

The latest Neoen solar farm in Coleambally brought the company’s NSW investments to \$500 million and its energy capacity in the state to more than 300 megawatts. The farm is the largest fully operational photovoltaic facility in Australia.

It’s easy to forget today, but Neoen’s choice of NSW for its solar farms was a courageous decision in 2012. The state wasn’t known for solar energy and had only two solar projects running at the time.

“Everybody was going to Queensland because of the higher quantity of sunlight there,” says Woitiez. “We were hoping to differentiate ourselves and wanted to do business in a state where solar energy wasn’t as much of a trend as it is now.”

The decision was a smart one. When Neoen applied for funding from the Australian Renewable Energy Agency, the location of its solar plants became a key differentiating factor for the company. While many of the grant applicants had farms in Queensland, there were just a handful of companies with plants in NSW. This helped Neoen win grant funding for its Parkes, Griffith and Dubbo solar farms.

Woitiez believes the company has made a difference in NSW by helping pave the way for the further development of solar energy in the state. “And I think we have succeeded in NSW in that all our initially planned projects have been built,” he adds.



“Being in Sydney has allowed us to be close to our business community, and now NSW has a third of our energy capacity. It only makes sense for us to be here.”

Franck Woitiez,  
Managing Director of Neoen Australia.



## Supporting renewable energy

Woitiez expects the NSW renewable energy market to become more attractive as the state government brings in technologies to develop clean energy and upgrades power transmission.

In November 2018, the NSW Government announced a plan to boost the state's electricity grid capacity in three energy zones. This is part of its effort to build a network that will seek to unlock 20,000 megawatts of renewable energy capacity in the pipeline for the state.

Neoen is now looking to build not only new solar but also wind projects in NSW. It is considering New England, Culcairn and Liddell among potential locations for these new farms.

These projects will support Neoen's global target of achieving at least 5 gigawatts in total capacity by 2021.

"Australia, particularly NSW, will contribute significantly to reaching that target," says Woitiez.

## Learn more

The NSW Government assists businesses looking to establish, grow and innovate in the renewable energy and cleantech sectors by providing:

- market intelligence and information
- business case development
- assistance to identify suitable business locations and partners in NSW
- familiarisation visits to NSW
- connections with government contacts and the local business network.

The NSW Government offers a range of programs and initiatives to support businesses to grow to reach their full potential in NSW.

The NSW Government Investment Concierge provides free, comprehensive and confidential advice and services.

Contact our team today to explore the range of support we can give to your company.

## Contact us

**NSW Government Investment Concierge:**

**T: +61 2 8222 4888**

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# The Future Made Here

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The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (August 2019). However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that the information upon which they rely is up to date and to check the currency of the information with the appropriate officer of the Industry, Trade and Investment team of NSW Government or the user's independent adviser.

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