



## Minutes of Barneys Reef Wind Farm Community Consultative Committee

Monday 17 January 2022, Gulgong RSL Club  
Gulgong

---

Attendees	Initials	Position
Garry West	GW	Independent Chairperson
Brad Bliss	BB	Wellington Valley Wiradjuri Aboriginal Corporation
Grant Gjessing	GG	Community Representative
David Menchin	DM	Community Representative
Jack Pennell	JP	Warabinga Native Title Claimants
Peter Willis	PW	Gulgong Chamber of Commerce
Cr Dale Hogden	DH	Warrumbungle Shire Council
Leeanne Ryan	LR	Warrumbungle Shire Council
Julie Robertson	JR	Mid-Western Regional Council
Eleanor Cairns	EC	Development Project Manager, RES
Darren Chesterfield	DC	Community Engagement Manager, RES

### Meeting commenced: 5:30pm

#### 1. Welcome and Introductions

GW – Acknowledgment of Country and welcomed the committee and thanked members for their nominations. At this stage Mid-Western Regional Council (MWRC) has not appointed councillor representatives – Director of Development stepping in. This committee is only for the wind farm. If there are questions about the solar farm, we can arrange for these to be answered in due course.

Mr West advised he is appointed by the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment as the Independent Chairperson.

Described note taking process for the minutes. A draft will be circulated within 7 days of meeting for committee members to review. Final minutes issued 7 days later and uploaded to the Project website. CCC meetings usually occur every 3 months, unless there is exceptional need. CCC is not a regulatory body, we don't make decisions. This is done by the regulator. The purpose of the CCC is to provide for a forum for discussion between the proponent and representatives of the community, stakeholder groups and local councils on issues directly relating to the project.

Members provided an introduction and their interest.

2. **Apologies - NIL**
3. **Declarations of Interest – NIL**
4. **Proponents Report**

### **RES Overview**

EC – Eleanor started with RES overview. RES has 40 years of experience developing constructing and operating renewable energy assets, across the globe operating in 10 countries. Been developing in Australia since 2004. One of the oldest developers of renewable energy in Australia. RES is a family owned UK company.

Eleanor described Central West Orana REZ (CWO REZ) as one of several zones in NSW identified for renewable energy investment by government. This is essentially why RES has an interest in the area. RES is looking to connect into the new 500KV grid transmission corridor proposed between Liddell power station and Wollar. Hopefully location of the proposed transmission line will be confirmed soon. Site selected due to good wind resource, compatible land use zoning and good road access.

### **Project Location and Layout.**

Proposed 12km north of Gulgong, though turbines are further north than that, and is wholly within Mid-Western Regional Council. RES proposed Tallawang solar farm is just to the south of Barneys Reef Wind Farm and is treated as a separate project.

Preliminary social and environmental assessments are underway along with community consultation following the issue of the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) in September 2021. The turbine layout will avoid vegetation associated with the Barneys Reef formation and avoids disturbance to registered Aboriginal sites. The final project could generate up to approx. 480MW. Our battery storage size will be based on requirements of REZ. Still waiting for more information to come out on that.

RES is looking to submit the Environment Impact Statement (EIS), all going to plan, end of March 2022. Delays so far experienced have been due to COVID and weather. Tentative construction commencement date for end of 2023 or beginning of 2024, however this may change as it needs to be in line with proposed Electrical Transmission Line (ETL).

Work we have going on with turbine refinement based on field surveys. The current layout based on desktop analysis, so changes are expected. Micro-siting likely to be required post-geotechnical assessments and further wind monitoring. Turbine setback of 2km is proposed from all non-involved residences.

The wind farm project is considered a State Significant Development (SSD) for NSW. An application is also required to the Federal Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment, for assessment under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act)*.

JP – any studies completed RE Birds?

EC – 3-4 studies, impact to avifauna have not been identified as a significant issue. Some EPBC species listed bat habitat has been identified. Ecologists have mapped out this habitat, our project design has avoided those areas.

BB – Ulan Coal trapped several bats recently. Just a few kms from the study area. EC noted this point.

EC – Infrastructure avoids the physical rock formation of Barneys Reef. We have made our project boundary in line with Environmental Management zoned land. The project is completely avoiding that area to minimise land and ecology risk. It also avoids Cultural Heritage artefacts identified from our desktop studies. Turbines will be set back a minimum 2km from uninhabited residences. A lot of residences are further back than this.

EC – The Tallawang transmission line through Barneys Reef project area has been designed to minimise visual impact from neighbours

BB – Has that changed? Last week we assessed entire area.

EC – Last week you assessed the correct area

PW – What does micro-siting mean?

EC – A radius around each proposed turbine is being assessed. Siting of infrastructure within that radius is a micro-site to make the placement better based on assessment outcomes. Also, we could move the turbines to improve the generation outcomes.

BB- each one of those dots in the middle is supposed turbine location, all around that is 500m of assessed area.

### **Preliminary Studies**

**Access** – 3 potential access points. 2 Merotherie Road. 1 Gingers Lane.

BB – will Gingers be upgraded?

EC – work will be required for Gingers Lane, likely Merotherie Road as well.

Turbines and components will come into Newcastle and up the Golden Hwy. Not sure if we will use both of Merotherie road and Gingers, or just one.

GG – will workers from the south be coming in from those access points?

DM – if you use Gingers lane it will require a lot of work. Could be dangerous. Will the widening of the road form part of the planning?

EC – we will need to do work on the intersection, it's not wide enough for the blade sweep. Safety will also be considered in the analysis of access suitability.

GG – what length blade?

EC – EIS will suggest a blade length of 97.5m, this is bigger than any blade currently on the market. We are overplanning to account for improvements in technology.

GW – are these council roads?

EC – yes. Design will be in consultation with Council

BB – if you're planning for 97.5m blades, what's the hub height?

EC – Over planned hub height 182.5 and 280 metres from the ground to tip of the blade

### **Noise -**

Noise monitors are out at the moment, once they have been out for 6 weeks we can take the data and put against the noise of the turbines and wind noise to come out with a more accurate noise buffer. Where we need to, we can discuss with neighbours or move turbines

## **Heritage**

Preliminary findings indicate there are 12 registered Aboriginal sites within the project area and one active registered Native Title claim. Detailed Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment is being undertaken in consultation with the Registered Aboriginal Parties. Most artefacts identified from desktop study were limited to waterways and reef. Preliminary design excludes these areas. We may need to make these buffer zones bigger once results of field survey are in.

## **Visual**

Preliminary finding indicates the town of Gulgong and surrounds will have the potential to view the project in its entirety, although vegetation will reduce the impact. Views of the Project Area will be screened by topography from the town of Dunedoo.

Have had neighbour engagement and identified potential impacts. Photos have been taken to develop photomontages. When purely considering topography, a lot of the area will be able to see turbines, though this assumption does not consider natural or artificial barriers. We expect the visual impact will be lower than what is shown currently.

## **Biodiversity –**

Seasonal surveys started in 2020. Flora and fauna plus bird and bat surveys were undertaken. Much of the project is category one vegetation. Where high risk is identified, this have been avoided in the design. Where medium risk identified, we have avoided to the extent possible, however may traverse some of this area. The new layout is based on updated ecology data. The bat mentioned earlier is EPBC listed, as are some ecological communities.

LR - will offsets be purchased?

EC – we are discussing internally. Potentially private offsets will be purchased. We are looking at the land to see whether it contains enough offset land.

LR – do you know what council area?

EC – probably too early, but likely Mid-Western. Too early to know specifics at this point.

GW – has the federal department declared a control action?

EC – not yet but we expect it will. EPBC referral expected to go in next month.

DM – what's a controlled action?

EC – identified as impacting on federal listed species.

## **Benefit Sharing and Community Engagement**

DC – an overview of what benefit sharing means was provided. The project will include two main mechanisms for delivering meaningful benefits to the local community – a community fund program and a neighbour benefit program. Details of both are still yet to be finalised, as there are ongoing conversations between regulators (DPIE and local councils) about the suitability of VPAs to formalise these arrangements. RES will be advocating for fund designs that empower the local community to make key decisions around fund design and fund administration

DC – These initiatives go a long way to address the issue of fairness expressed by near neighbours. They are now being quite common for wind developments, but not so much for solar projects. Our Tallawang Solar Project will include a neighbour program.

## **Community Engagement (2021)**

DC – Looking back at community consultation, you can see that engagement commenced in March 2021 with landholder and project neighbours. As assessments started, feedback from relevant and interested members of the community was obtained.

DC- We are currently planning to run two in-person information sessions at the upcoming agricultural shows in February, as well as an online information session to seek further feedback on project changes and provide information about our plans to submit an EIS later in March.

DM – Will the project benefits continue if the project is extended?

DC – Yes. Whilst the terms of these programs are in draft, they do stipulate that the funds will continue for the life of the project. If the project is extended beyond the currently envisaged life, benefit sharing programs with the community with either be extended.

GW – A new application process would most likely be required with the Department of Planning.

### **5. General Business**

DM – Who has been consulted with so far?

DC - From March of last year, landholder and project neighbours, followed by local council and broader community groups, accommodation providers, and interested stakeholders in the general community.

DM – By accommodation providers do you mean hotels etc., or locals who live nearby?

EC – At this stage just accommodation providers.

DM – No decision on camps?

GG – Mid-Western council is against camps.

DM – Do you work on a quota?

EC – Will have to get back to you on the quotas we're seeking to adhere to. This may be determined by the EPC contractor.

EC – We do have a construction and asset management side of our business, so a lot of our projects do move into that space.

BB – EIS is submitted in March, there was a lot of talk in the towns (and in government) that said that it's already pretty well written. That's fast. Who is behind the studies? Umwelt?

EC – Umwelt. Correct.

JP – What's the benefit of large turbines?

EC – Increased yield. With the wind data we've found to date, the difference in turbine yield is significant.

JP – I've been talking to people down near Wallerawang. They've reduced turbines because in 30 years time they are not reusable. A 60m turbine as opposed to 280 is a lot of difference.

GG – A lot has to do with availability of cranes. I don't think they can do controlled demolitions.

DC – Bigger turbines often means fewer turbines, which is a silver lining from a visual impact perspective when talking about larger turbines.

PW – Does altitude play into neighbour benefit program amounts for neighbours?

DC – A challenge with developing a program is in establishing clear and simple eligibility criteria that can be applied fairly to all eligible neighbours. Simple seems to be better as it minimises the risk that the criteria will be interpreted differently by different neighbours, which may spark disagreement with the proponent and between neighbours. The current criteria we are considering considers chiefly the proximity to a turbine and the presence (or absence) of a house.

BB – Turbine locations - have they been truthed by an engineer? Some of those have been located by creek lines, waterways etc.

EC – Our civil engineer is located in Brisbane, but once he's available we'll get him down.

DH – The lay of the land, it's flat right?

EC – Yep, it's easier for construction.

EC – Geotech is important to get an idea of the soil types. Early this year we'll get onsite investigations.

DH – How many wind farms have you done?

EC – RES has a pipeline of wind projects across Australia. Projects that have been developed and are now in construction or operational include Taralga (NSW), Ararat (Vic), Murra Warra I (Vic), Murra Warra II (VIC) and Dulacca (Qld). In the last few years RES have been building up their construction and asset management side of the business, we currently manage Murra Warra I (operations) and Murra II (nearing the end of construction) and Dulacca (construction began Q3 2021).

DM – Are we encouraged to have the community come to us with issues?

GW – Absolutely, whatever you're comfortable with. We like to have people's names and contact details publicly on the website. Any objections? No objections were raised.

If members have issues that need to be raised before the next CCC meeting they can be directed to the Chairperson who will raise them with the Project Team.

BB – Issue: excess tracks in the project site. This needs to be reduced.

EC – We just identified any tracks that could be useable to be assessed. Once the plans and layout mature, we'll identify the final tracks.

BB – Telecommunications is poor at the project site. This will be a safety issue

EC – This will be resolved if the project proceeds.

## **6. Alternative Representatives**

The Chairperson advised that stakeholder groups or local councils could nominate an alternative representative if they are unable to attend a meeting.

## **7. Meeting Schedule**

It was agreed the next meeting to be Monday 11 April 2022 commencing at 5.30pm. Umwelt to be asked to be present to provide details on the EIS prior to submission to DPIE for exhibition and public submissions

Meeting closed 6:46pm.