



Minutes of Barneys Reef Wind Farm Community Consultative Committee

Monday 11 April 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
Peter Willis	PW	Gulgong Chamber of Commerce
Eleanor Cairns	EC	Development Project Manager, RES
Darren Chesterfield	DC	Community Engagement Manager, RES
Matthew Sprott	MS	Director Planning & Policy, Energy Corporation (NSW)

Meeting commenced: 5.30pm

1. Welcome & Introductions

GW: Acknowledgement of Country and welcomed attendees. Advised that Mid Western Regional Council has appointed Cr Paul Cavalier as their representative.

2. Apologies

Cr Dale Hogden (Warrumbungle Shire Council), Leanne Ryan (Warrumbungle Shire Council), Jack Pennell (Warabinga Native Title Claimants), Cr Paul Cavalier (Mid Western Regional Council)

3. Declarations of Pecuniary / Conflict of Interest

Cr Dale Hogden advised via the Chairperson that RES has sponsored Arts Unlimited in Dunedoo and he is the Chair.

4. Central West Orana Renewable Energy Zone Update.

Matthew Sprott, provided an overview of the REZ, and how the Barneys Reef Wind Farm interacts. MS Described makeup of EnergyCo as it relates to NSW Gov. Energy system in NSW is changing dramatically. 4/5 coal fired power stations scheduled to close in 10 years. We need to start process now to provide power by mid-2020s. Defined Energy Infrastructure Roadmap.

MS: How do REZs work? Modern day power station, though decentralised, bringing in energy from different sources (mostly wind/solar, though gas also). Underpinned by pumped hydro and battery storage (dispatchable storage). This allows us to ensure system strength in the transmission.

MS: How private developers fit in, such as RES, they propose the projects within the zones. Where they benefit is by having greater commercial certainty via the REZ access scheme.

MS: These new transmission lines that are being developed to unlock these areas need to connect into current network. Transgrid has been doing work for over a year now on this. EnergyCo as infrastructure planner will continue to work with Transgrid and Essential Energy to make sure the transmission line links in with existing lines in an effective way.

MS: History of REZs – Central West Orana (CWO) first of several NSW proposed REZs. Hunter REZ to follow South West REZ. Illawara REZ towards the end of this year. Coastal REZs are different in their load use. Looking for opportunities to supply energy from REZs locally.

MS: EnergyCo oversees delivery of the 5 REZs. We work with all stakeholders including community, also working with developers to facilitate connection. Work continues from Transgrid to ensure existing infrastructure is ready for REZ.

MS: EnergyCo also runs access scheme. Unlike anywhere else in NSW, you will not be able to connect without approval. Hub locations will be set within REZs where developers will need to connect.

MS: EnergyCo also manages benefit sharing programs. These have been enshrined in legislation. In process of developing those protocols and how we would administer that funding. Also promoting local employment and supply opportunities – in particular for First Nations People.

MS: CWO REZ has a 3 Gigawatt (GW) capacity but a 27GW subscribed interest. This means there's vast opportunity to make sure that the projects that are able to connect are the most competitive – not just from price – but also making sure that the projects have good site selection, community support and provide better outcomes on the whole from that strategic planning perspective.

MS: Access fees. In order to connect, developers will be charged an access fee. This covers paying in part for the transmission, but also around community and employment purposes. Many may have dealt with VPAs? Similarly to that, what we have required is that all developers connecting to our assets need to pay a fee. These fees are put toward programs to provide ongoing benefit to communities. Some of the things we've heard from were things like telecommunications programs, reliable internet etc.. Other aspects around training and employment.

MS: Currently running modelling to work out how we would administer community benefit. We've heard from the community that they would like to be involved. We'll be coming out in the second half of this year to work out how we will administer these programs. Importantly, all proposed projects still need to go through the same enviro planning and assessment acts. No

special treatment from that merit perspective. This is an important process and to ensure that community feedback is reflected.

GG: Is there any way of expediting the planning process?

MS: The transmission line that we are developing has been recognised as Critical State Significant Infrastructure. This elevates its status, though it still needs to go through the EIS process. The benefit of this classification is that the DPE needs to pay attention and can't let that project slip, given its critical status for NSW. This is specific for the transmission project. It saves time, but not a significant amount of time. What it does more so is emphasise the importance of the project. What we're also doing is, EnergyCo has an existing relationship with DPE. We are working with DPE to seek to make sure that they are affording appropriate resourcing that is needed to make sure that the projects are being assessed in a timely manner. They have cut down the assessment timeframe drastically over the years. This is challenging, but we are working closely with DPE to make sure that this is positioned well. We're also developing the Waratah Super Battery in the lower Hunter. It's a battery that provides a backup for the transmission network. It allows us to have a little bit of time to account for unexpected delay in the planning process.

MS: Note: not all projects proposed within the REZ will come online at once. If we make our transmission line available in 2025, it may still take time for all projects to meet the capacity of the line. We need to strike a balance. We don't want speed to undermine quality.

MS: Recently released an updated study corridor and identified EnergyCo taking carriage of the transmission line development. Three hubs have been identified. They are very large substations where the proponents in the zone will need to connect. We're working to make sure that the hubs are in the correct spots, and would look to ensure that we could co-locate infrastructure where needed. The benefit is that we can convert power at a single point, rate the power up, and travel in an efficient way. There has been a few changes from previously proposed Transgrid corridor. The current study corridor is quite wide and will be refined as we speak with community.

PW: Why is Gulgong not shown on the map? Other towns are much smaller but still shown. I think that would please residents if Gulgong gets on that map, to acknowledge that we are uniquely affected by the development.

MS: We've had similar feedback from other localities. We'll provide this feedback to the appropriate team. I appreciate that Gulgong is in close proximity. A number of towns have been missing from the map, we'll pass on the feedback to make sure they are aware of that.

MS: EnergyCo has undertaken a range of community engagement in March. We've started to engage with community members within the study corridor. We hope to provide a scoping report mid-year to provide high-level overview of the project. EIS scheduled for midway through 2023.

MS: We are looking to construct large 500kV towers. Suspect RES would be constructing smaller lines north of the Barneys Reef Structure. These would be smaller lines that would connect to the hub location.

DM: Above ground line?

EC: For the project, the turbines will be linked up underground, then overground to the hub.

DM: any idea where that will be?

EC: We are waiting for the location of the Hub from EnergyCo before we can plan that.

MS: The hubs are proposed on a fairly wide area of land so that developers can start to plan. We need to secure options over land and make sure there's no perverse outcomes by releasing a particular block that developers can't access. We are just working through to make sure we have the right land and right place. Once that's confirmed we will share with the community.

DM: I've been contacted by a landholder who's heard about the above ground lines. When will they find out about how they are impacted?

MS: We've written to all the landholders who are within the study corridor. We've employed a number of individual landholder contact points. We have officers that are allocated to regions to provide direct access for community to specific people. These officers will provide information for landholders who may be involved in the transmission line development. Some landholders are very keen to host infrastructure, others less than thrilled. We are working with individual landholders to understand what works for them. There's some flexibility in placement. If the person you know hasn't been contacted, I'd be happy for the IC to take some details and forward the contact information to the right team.

DM: That'd be good.

GG: Will one renewable energy zone be completed before a new one starts, or is it all going to be combined?

MS: It'll all be combined. One important clarification. EnergyCo is responsible for coordinating the 5 REZ. To a degree, we help to manage the access program. But there is an independent body called the consumer trustee, who will ultimately run the bidding process to determine which projects will connect to the line. They will continue to assess each individual project as they come. Not all of those projects will proceed to being built if they don't get access. All 5 REZs will be developed concurrently. CWO REZ has capacity to be expanded if required. New England REZ has capacity of 8GW. SW REZ initial capacity of 2.5GW.

EC: When you say initial, do you mean first round of auctions?

MS: the auction rounds will be smaller amounts, most likely 6-monthly. The CWO REZ needs to deliver at least 3GW. There is potential to expand the REZ in future. This effectively means additional infrastructure. It won't be overbuilt, but it needs to be capable of being augmented to provide further transmission.

MS: There are a lot of factors that go into this – hydrogen, offshore wind – these would all come in as considerations in the expansion of a REZ. It is not something that is proposed at this stage. Any future expansion will be similarly coordinated.

5. Correspondence

GW: Tabled correspondence from SOS (Dennis Armstrong) with a series of questions for RES. Request RES compile a response which will be circulated to CCC members and Dennis Armstrong and tabled at a subsequent meeting. This will be recirculated.

EC: They have put together a number of questions in the past, which we've answered. We've tried to engage with SOS more directly but have not been able to. We will respond as suggested.

6. Proponents Report

EC: We'll now go through some of the project update. At the end Darren will go through our February info sessions, as well as what consultation we have ongoing.

EC: We've had some project refinement. Some project landholders have declined to participate in the project. We've excluded them from the time being. Reduced turbines. We've updated the access points. These are still from the Castlereagh Highway and Merotherie Road. Castlereagh was originally from Gingers Lane – no longer the case. The final position is not determined. Similarly, access is moving as a result of community consultation. There will still be some impact, but hopefully this has been minimised.

Cultural heritage results have also caused us to move turbines slightly. Tracks have also changed slightly.

EC: RE land rights, we are close to securing all land.

EC: RE wind monitoring, there is now a Met Mast, SoDARs and additional LiDARs monitoring wind speed on site.

GW: At this stage, how many turbines?

EC: 60. Last meeting we were talking about 68. We've had to remove 8. The project is now 420MW. Our substation will still be at the middle of the project. Overhead line will go from there to EnergyCo Hub.

EC: Also proposing a battery – 700MWh. EnergyCo are after firming opportunities.

GW: Is this being done to enhance the project for assessment to connect to the REZ?

EC: Yes, it often makes more sense to have a battery more with solar, because solar will only ever generate at one time in the day. For wind, because it generates throughout the day, batteries don't work so well.

BB: those turbines that were removed during Cultural Heritage, where are they?

EC: we haven't taken out, we've moved. It was turbine 28. This was within an exclusion zone near a burial ground. Other turbine was either T58 or T33.

EC: in terms of timeline, it has shifted a little bit. Due to layout changes, wet weather, we've had to push that back. Planning date end of June. Construction and operations will be in line with timing of EnergyCo infrastructure.

EC: A few updates from assessments. RE Cultural Heritage, there were areas of significance found, which are now avoided. Some further studies required.

BB: That's just a series of test pitting. That's an easy job.

EC: I think there's a bit of work ongoing to see if this needs to be done pre or post submission. If we need to do it before submission, it may push back our submission date.

BB: It's easier to do it pre than post.

EC: RE Noise, 6 weeks of noise monitoring completed. All at uninvolved residences. Noise contour based on current layout, but does not yet take into account background noise monitoring. 3 uninvolved currently residences within 35db noise level. We expect that will change as background noise is considered. If there is still a compliance issue, we may look at changing turbine location, curtailment or other. Once we have run background noise data, we will consider measures and propose.

DM: in relation to infrasound, is this part of it?

EC: Methodology is in line with what NSW Gov. expects us to do. Unsure if this measures infrasound.

EC: RE route, intending on bringing in all components into Port of Newcastle. Blades all the way to site along main access route will fit within road reserve. No third-party consents needed until Merotherie Rd though upgrade work will be required. Potentially we'd need to remove vegetation as well. Denman bridge height limit may mean we'll need to utilise local roads in Muswellbrook Council.

PW: How do you work out how much money to spend on Merotherie road as opposed to going via Dunedoo?

EC: We'd like to keep flexibility. We don't have costs for either upgrade, but will work out with both councils to which is best. Post approval we'll look to get agreements with council.

PW: It'd be expensive to upgrade Merotherie Road to what's needed.

EC: There would be clearing and straightening, as well as additional upgrades to water ways etc.

GG: Any additional funds getting thrown at the Denman Bridge?

EC: Unsure.

EC: RE aviation. There are 2 landing areas close to the project. One has not been operational for 30-40 years. If it becomes operational again there may be some impact. We'll do some consultation with them pre-assessment so they are aware of potential limitations if they were to start using the run way again.

EC: LVIA – photo montages produced. A number of houses will have high visual impact. 15 houses identified as such, based on old layout (with more turbines). Two of those are host landholders, at least one of them doesn't permanently live there. Currently working through that and contacting each of those neighbours, what we can do to mitigate that. Our LVIA consultants have come up with best locations to screen with tree planting. As with turbines of this height, we can't remove impact entirely.

DM: what trees would you plant too?

EC: happy to take some feedback. We'd want to include what's right in the local area.

DM: Will the turbines have navigation lights on them?

EC: not at this stage. Assessments have not concluded however.

GW: you are predicting that you want to lodge your EIS for public exhibition for June? Will adequacy be done before that?

EC: We haven't done the timeline exactly, likely to be for adequacy at the end of June. We're waiting to find out what we have to do with test pitting.

GW: This will work well with our timing for July 11 CCC.

EC: Once we firm up the timelines, I'll let you know and we can organise.

PW: will that mean we'll have that information to give the community before the next CCC?

GW: probably at the same time.

EC: you'll probably see in the next few weeks, Tallawang solar going into planning. I don't work on the solar side, but that will be coming up soon.

PW: if people have concerns about that, who do they talk to?

agreed to be Darren

DC: Provided overview of information sessions conducted in February, with slides showing data collected on issues raised across the sessions.

DC: Indicated planned future community engagement, including ongoing updates about assessment outcomes, shared info sessions where possible with EnergyCo, the ongoing CCC and one on one meetings with key stakeholders.

DC: identified that understanding benefit opportunities for the project will be a focus of future engagement.

7. General Business

DM: Raised issues concerning a particular stakeholder and detail of communications. General discussion occurred providing feedback. Discussion also about devaluation of property due to the project and a report by Urbis. [ACTION] EC to send report to GW for circulation to CCC members.

DC: described the extent of discussion with neighbours around benefit through the proposed neighbour program and apologised if this had been misrepresented at earlier meetings. Confirmed that eligibility criteria and associated benefits had been discussed with some neighbours in general terms, though there had been no confirmation of extent of eligibility for any neighbours and the benefit they'd be eligible to receive as a result. Confirmed that the neighbour benefit program terms and conditions are in development.

GG: If RES sees a more popular commercial opportunity in other REZs, will RES drop this project and go elsewhere?

EC: No. RES is well resourced to pursue multiple projects at a time.

8. Actions Required

Circulation of Urbis report on property valuation.

9. Next Meeting

Next meeting scheduled for Monday 11 July.

7:35pm Meeting Close