

Meeting minutes

CENTRAL-WEST ORANA REZ COMMUNITY REFERENCE GROUP

Held on: 18/11/2025 – 10:00am to 1:00pm

At: Country Universities Centre, 70 Court St, Mudgee

Chaired by: Lisa Andrews

Attendees:

Independent Chair	Lisa Andrews (Chair)
EnergyCo representatives	Alicia Rados – Central-West Orana A/Director Community & Place (AR) Rebecca Williams – Community Engagement Manager (RW) Elisabeth Sacco – Stakeholder and Engagement Manager (ES) <i>online</i> Allison Dunsdon – Transport for NSW (AD) <i>online</i>
LGA delegates	Councillor Katie Dicker - Mid-Western Regional Council (KD) Councillor Kathy Rindfleish - Mayor of Warrumbungle Shire Council (KR) <i>online</i> Cr Pat Ryan - Upper Hunter Shire Council (PR) <i>online</i> Cr Josh Black - Mayor of Dubbo Regional Council (JB) <i>online</i>
Government/MPs	Tony Fuller – Aboriginal Affairs Department delegate (TF) Jane Diffey - Snr Electorate Officer Dugald Saunder's Office (JD) <i>online</i>
Community representative	Neville Mattick - Community representative (NM)
Stakeholder groups	Mark Squires - RE-Alliance (MS) <i>online</i> Beverley Smiles - Central West Environment Council (BS) Rosemary Hadaway - Mudgee District Environment Group & Watershed Landcare (RH) Jane Hegarty - Cassilis District Development Group (JH) Aleshia Lonsdale - Mudgee Local Aboriginal Land Council (AL)
ACERZ representatives	Tung Pham - Project Wide Director (TP) <i>online</i> Kee Li - Community and Stakeholder Engagement Manager (KL) Richard McGloin - Project Construction Manager (RM) Miranda Wood - Director of Communications and Stakeholder Engagement (MW) <i>online</i> Sonja Malcolm - Workforce Development & Training Manager (SM) <i>online</i> Sharon Labi - Senior Manager Corporate Affairs (SL) Jodie Barrington - Stakeholder Engagement Manager (JB) Emily Wheeler - Communications & Stakeholder Engagement Advisor (EW) Catie Anderson - Operational Services Director (CA) <i>online</i> Duncan St Clair - General Manager, Maintenance and Lifecycle (DS) <i>online</i>

Absent	<p>Beau Kassas - Mudgee Region Tourism</p> <p>David Walker - Burrendong Botanic Garden & Arboretum</p> <p>David Thorne - NSW Farmers (Mudgee)</p>
Apologies	<p>Jock Rice-Ward - Community representative</p> <p>Colin Kilby - Community representative</p> <p>Kylie Manson - Warrabinga Wiradjuri #7 Native Title Claimants</p> <p>Yvette Lloyd - Director Community Benefits & Outcomes, EnergyCo</p> <p>Mel Manchee - Snr Electorate Officer Roy Butler's Office (Member for Barwon)</p>

AGENDA

1	Acknowledgement of Country	Chair
2	Welcome and introductions	Chair
3	Apologies	Chair
4	Governance/declarations	Chair / All
5	Business arising	Chair
6	Correspondence	Chair
7.0	ACERERZ – Construction & Project Update	RM/TP
7.1	ACERERZ – Community Engagement	JB
7.2	ACERERZ – Industry & Aboriginal Participation	SM
7.3	ACERERZ – Community Grants Program	SL
8.0	EnergyCo – Port to REZ	ES
8.1	EnergyCo – Community & Employment Benefits Program	AR
8.2	EnergyCo – Community engagement feedback	AR
9	General business	All
10	Next meeting	Chair

MEETING MINUTES

1	Acknowledgement of Country	AL	Welcome to Country by AL, Mudgee Local Aboriginal Land Council.					
2	Welcome and introductions	Chair	Meeting opened at 10:33am					
3	Apologies	Chair	As listed					
4	Business arising from last meeting (12/08/25) Minutes finalised on 30/08/25	Chair	No	Action	Responsibility	Due date	Comments / updates	Status
			1	Slide outlining timeline of management plans to be included in future CRG presentations	JF	Ongoing	Management plans being prepared	Not included. To be included at Q1 2026 CRG.
			2	Provide a copy of the Heritage Management Plan to CRG members	JF	With DPHI for approval. When available	Link included in email (also accessible via www.acerez.com.au/resources)	Closed
			3	A copy of the policy and application results will be provided when available for CEBP community grants through Regional Development NSW	JS	When available	Held over	Not yet available. To be actioned.
			4	Send online survey to members on CEBP application process	YL	When available		Not yet available. To be actioned
			5	Check whether application for CEBP funding was made by UHSC	YL	Closed	No specific application in area described confirmed	Closed
			6	Hard copies of Conservation Strategy to be made available at the Community Information Centre.	AR	ASAP	Available online now	Will be at Centre shortly.
			7	Port to REZ update at next CRG	DP	Next meeting		This presentation

5	Declarations	Chair	No changes to declarations.
6	Correspondence report	Chair	As per the meeting notice & final agenda sent 11/11/25 with the addition of the slide pack on 16/11/25.
7.0	ACEREZ Construction and Project update	RM/TP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Presentation included indicative construction timeline, construction activities at Merotherie (including works carried out in September and October), temporary workforce accommodation, transmission line (access tracks construction), works carried out in September and October at Barigan Creek, stages of Merotherie Road upgrade with advice on sequence notifications to the community. • RM informed the CRG of the 'three-month look ahead in terms of the project, energy hubs and transmission lines <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - JH enquired about the capacity for the accommodation buildings. RM advised that the temporary workforce accommodation will be built in four stages. Stages one and two will be finished before the end of 2025 and will accommodate 600 workers. Once complete the workforce accommodation will have capacity for up to 1,200 workers. - JH asked where the water was being trucked from. RM said that fresh water is coming from Dubbo. - BS enquired about the concrete batching plant and whether concrete was being sent out. RM advised that they are only using batched concrete for the site at Merotherie. - JH asked who was successful with the contract for catering. RM advised ESS is the contractor managing the temporary workforce accommodation including chefs and hospitality staff. - RH asked if the helipad would be available for emergency services. TP advised that the helipad will be built in 2027 and will be managed by ACEREZ Maintenance and Lifecycle (M&L). Requests for use of the helipad from emergency services will be considered. - BS asked about piling. RM advised that large concrete supports bored into the ground will be required for gantries and towers. Some concrete will come from the batching plant and some from other suppliers. Traffic movements for these works are included in the Traffic Management Plan. - JH asked about the replacement of trees that were removed. Action. - RH raised concerns about a dozen baby birds needing to be rescued by WIRES when the trees housing them were removed. RM advised that an onsite ecologist oversees the removal of trees and rehoming of any fauna and is managed by the project's Environment team. AR shared an example of the steps taken with identified hollows placed inside the temporary workforce accommodation and energy hub property. KL confirmed the commentary by AR and advised that there is a proposed meeting with Landcare Dunedoo and he will obtain more information from WIRES volunteers. Action.

7.1	Community Engagement	JB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - JB provided an update of community engagement sessions, including pop-ups at Dunedoo and Elong Elong, a stall at Merriwa Springtime Show, markets in Dunedoo and coffee drop-ins with EnergyCo & Transport for NSW in Cassilis, Gulgong & Coolah. - JB advised that work packages and opportunities have been shared at business briefings in Mudgee and Dubbo. - ACEREZ has sponsored a series of community events. - The Community Information Centre (CIC) in Mudgee participated in the Pink Up Mudgee fundraising and awareness month in October. The centre is open Tuesday to Thursday between 9am and 5pm. - NM asked about the number of people that have visited the CIC. AR advised that approximately 150 people have visited the CIC since it opened. JB said that facilities are available for meetings with landowners, enquiries from visitors about job and local business opportunities. - NM asked about the types of questions being asked by the community. JB said questions included the transmission line, green energy and development of generator projects. JB said a large map of the alignment and generator projects is on the wall at the CIC. - JB said a local teacher visited the CIC; her students are doing modules on electricity and energy transfer in Term 1, 2026 and would like to bring them into the CIC. JB said she would speak with project engineers to explore the opportunity to provide a presentation. - KL said ACEREZ would soon be launching a new mobile community information van to be used to supplement community engagement. The vehicle provides an interactive experience for visitors, including maps. The van will be formally launched in Q1 2026 and will be used to drive to smaller towns to provide information to residents and at pop-up sessions. - JH suggested that ACEREZ join up with other generators such as TILT, to work together in getting information to the communities at the Cassilis shopfront. - MS expressed interest in the mobile van and whether this initiative will be available in other REZs. KL advised that the van is specific to ACEREZ for this transmission project.
7.2	Industry and Aboriginal Participation	SM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation included statistical information on the project workforce, including headcount, full-time equivalent positions, gender ratio, Aboriginal employment opportunities, trades and apprentices. • There have been training programs undertaken by 382 local residents on induction, cultural awareness, first aid, safety, mobile plant operations, building skills and strengthening workforce capability. • The Kandos Pathways Expo engaged with more than 200 local primary and high school students.

- ACERZ staff attended events to increase awareness of roles and supply opportunities at The Summit NSW Indigenous Chamber of Commerce and Orange Careers Expo and Trade Centre.
- Upcoming events will include business briefings in Mudgee and Dubbo in December, and a Try a Trade event in Dubbo on 2/12/25.
 - JH asked whether the numbers provided for local suppliers included contractors. SM responded that it included only local suppliers. JH further enquired whether data included road intersection workers, trucking of water movements from Upper Hunter Shire Council, etc. SM said that it did not include this information.
 - JH suggested that ACERZ could contact the career advisors at smaller schools to run hospitality courses. TF asked whether vacant positions were online. SM responded that there is a “Work with us” tab on the ACERZ website. Positions are also advertised on SEEK and sent to various networks. **Link:** [Work with us | Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone Transmission Network | ACERZ](#)

7.3	Community Grants Program	SL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SL introduced the ACERZ Community Grants Program and provided an overview of the program which is expected to be announced in December. • There will be five rounds of grants over three years, commencing in March 2026. • Advice will be provided on how to access the information, and free grant writing support will be available to assist in applying for the grants. • SL advised BS the Wollar community will be eligible to apply. • SL stated that a Community Grants Advisory Group, comprising four members, will be established to provide local knowledge and recommendations on the applications. Recommendations from the group will be provided to ACERZ, and group members will receive a sitting fee. • Incorporated community groups, not-for-profit (NFP) groups, and those wanting to partner with councils and NFPs from four LGAs and four LALCs from within the REZ will be eligible. • An announcement will be made in December providing more information.
8	EnergyCo Update 8.0 – Port to REZ	ES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presented on Port to REZ Stage 1a, including a construction update and upcoming engagement activities. • An end-of-year update will be provided, which will include a map of the route and expected completion timeframes for each location. • More information will be provided at the Q1 2026 meeting regarding OSOM vehicles from the Port of Newcastle.

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| 8.1 Community and Employment Benefit Program Update | AR | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presented on the awarding of CEBP First Nations Fund grants (\$5.96M). Advised that the current round had been reopened and was now closed after receiving further applications. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> BS asked if there is any opportunity to change the criteria boundary to include those communities impacted by infrastructure associated with the project. AR responded that this is being considered. RH and JH supported this. NM asked what information was available to support providing information about renewables. AR raised example of recent videos presented by Dr Karl: https://www.energy.nsw.gov.au/nsw-plans-and-progress/major-state-projects/electricity-transition/stories/all-about-renewable-energy BS acknowledged the work being undertaken by RW in the Wollar community. BS advised that Wollar Solar Farm has submitted an application to expand its battery program and noted that DPHI doesn't require CCCs for solar farms, unlike other SSDs. TF enquired whether there is a current list of developers/projects via DPHI. AR responded that there is an interactive map. Link: https://caportal.com.au/energyco/rez?select=central-west-orana-rez AR said she would obtain updated list from DPHI. Action. |
| 8.2 Engagement Approach | AR | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presented on the Social Impact Management Plan – Quarterly Report, which is now available. Link: https://www.energyco.nsw.gov.au/publications/social-impact-management-plan-quarterly-monitoring-report-central-west-orana-renewable. There will be a report released every quarter. Broader conversation around how EnergyCo and ACEREZ could engage including sharing spaces with generators and keeping regular days at certain locations. |
| LUNCH | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Light lunch was passed around the room as the meeting progressed. |
| 9 General Business | LA | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LA raised a proposed amendment to the Terms of Reference (ToR) for this CRG in relation to the preparation, review and finalisation of the minutes. Moving: <div data-bbox="647 1236 1413 1348" style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px; margin: 5px 0;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> One week to prepare draft minutes One week for technical review by EnergyCo & ACEREZ One week for members to provide feedback/proposed amendments The minutes are finalised within the following week. </div> Agreed & carried. Action: LA to amend ToR |

- NM suggested that consideration be given for members to receive a sitting fee (stipendiary). LA commented on raising this matter with the establishment of the CRG's first term, without success. TF supported this suggestion by NM. AR advised that she would take the proposition on board and requested feedback from the group on the structure of the CRG for its third term. **Action.**
- PR (UHSC) asked about water mitigation around the Goulburn Solar Farm using unrestricted water licenses to access water. Concerns raised about water purchased from Merriwa, using Council bores and the impact this will have during water shortages/dry weather. **Action: AR to seek response from DPHI & DCCEW.**
- JH raised concerns with some of the project reports she has read about generator projects and inaccuracies contained within them. AR commented that the expectation is DPHI reviews the reports as part of the assessment process. LA stated that the company engaging the contractors should fact check prior to submitting to DPHI.
- AL asked if the figures contained in the Industry and Aboriginal Participation presentation could be broken down to show where the location of Aboriginal peoples working on the project is coming from. AL also stated that Mudgee LALC is not receiving any of the links discussed by SM advertising positions and businesses. **Action: Investigate whether Aboriginal groups are receiving notifications and statistics can be broken down further.**
- AL also commented on Cultural Awareness Training and how this varies depending on the area and different communities, ie Mudgee, Dubbo, Wellington, it's not just one generic training session. LA suggested to AL and TF that this matter be raised at the First Nations Working Group meeting.
- JH raised concern that bushfire management plans are being prepared by organisations outside the area and should be prepared by local brigades and not head office.
- BS asked if an update on biodiversity offsets could be provided at the Q1 2026 meeting, especially in relation to the Regent Honeyeater. AR advised that an update could be provided at the next meeting. **Action: Provide update in Q1 2026.**
- BS asked the end date for energisation. AR said that energisation will be from 2028 with current generators out to 2032.

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| 10 | Meeting Schedule for 2026 | LA | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposed that meetings continue to be held on a quarterly basis, alternatively between Mudgee and Dubbo, on Tuesdays: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 17 February 2026 (Dubbo) ○ 26 May 2026 (Mudgee) • As the second term of this CRG will end in June 2026, the CRG will be re-established then. Accordingly, meeting dates for Q3 and Q4 of 2026 will be proposed at that time. |
| 11 | Meeting close | LA | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting closed at 12:28 pm |

Postscript: Discussion after the meeting about holding a future CRG meeting at the Accommodation Camp at Merotherie. **Agreed. Proposed for Q2 2026 meeting. Buses will be organised to transport members to site.**

Actions

No	Action	Responsibility	Due date	Comments / updates	Status
1	Slide outlining timeline of management plans to be included in future CRG presentations	JF	Ongoing	Management plans being prepared	Ongoing
2	Provide a copy of the Heritage Management Plan to CRG members	CA	With DPHI for approval. When available	Link provided in email (also accessible via www.acerez.com.au/resrouces)	Link provided in email
3	A copy of the policy and application results will be provided when available for CEPB community grants through Regional Development NSW	YL	When available	Held over	To be actioned
4	Send online survey to members on CEBP application process	YL	When available		To be actioned
5	Investigate whether trees removed will be replaced	TP	Next CRG		
6	Provide breakdown of statistics for location of Aboriginal workers	SM	Next CRG		
7	Provide map of proposed projects from DPHI	AR	Next CRG		
8	Amend ToR in relation to minutes process	LA	With minutes		
9	Review structure of CRG including request for sitting fees	AR	Discussion at next CRG		

No	Action	Responsibility	Due date	Comments / updates	Status
10	Obtain advice from DPHI & DCCEW regarding use of bore water for construction of projects for UHSC	AR	Next CRG		
11	Present on Biodiversity Offsets	AR	Next CRG		

NEXT MEETING

Date: Tuesday 17 February 2026

Time: 10am morning tea 10.30am to 1pm CRG

Venue: TBC (Dubbo)