

Meeting minutes

Central-West Orana REZ Community Reference Group

Tuesday, 29 November 2022

10.06am to 12.07pm

Parklands Resort & Conference Centre, 121 Ulan Rd, Putta Bucca

Attendance

Category	Attendees
Independent Chair	Lisa Andrews (LA)
EnergyCo representatives	Cara Inia, Director Community & Place (CI) Adam Clarke, Manager Planning & Policy (AC) Cleo Andrews, CWO Community & Stakeholder Lead (CA) Peter Jones, Technical Lead (PJ) Brian Cullinane, CWO Planning & Environment Lead (BC) (online) Bridget Kelleher, Senior CWO Place Manager (BK) Lisa Clark, CWO Place Manager (LC)
LGA Delegates	Mayor Matthew Dickerson, Dubbo Regional Council (MD) Cr Kathy Rindfleish, Warrumbungle Shire Council (KR) Cr Katie Dicker, Mid-Western Regional Council (KD)
Community representatives	Dougald Morse (DM) Colin Kilby (CK) Sally Edwards (SE) John Kelly (JK)
Stakeholder groups	Kate Hook, RE-Alliance (KH) David Thorne, NSW Farmers (Mudgee) (DT) [arrived at 11:00am] Beverley Smiles, Central West Environment Council (BS) Rosemary Hadaway, Mudgee District Environment Group & Watershed Landcare (RH)
Invited guests	Michelle Holmes, Community Lead, Acciona Energia (Orana Wind Farm) (MH) Felicity Taylor Edwards, Regional Economic Development Lead, CWP Renewables (Spicers Creek Wind Farm) (FE) Maja Barnett, Project Director, Tilt Renewables (Liverpool Range Wind Farm) (MB) Darren Chesterfield, Community Engagement Manager, RES group (Barneys Reef Wind Farm & Tallawang Solar Farm) (DC)
Apologies	Grant Gjessing, Business Mudgee (GJ)

Agenda items

Item	Details	Responsibility
1	Acknowledgement of Country	LA
2	Welcome and introductions	LA
3	Apologies	LA
4	Business arising from inaugural CRG	LA
5	Declarations	LA
6	Correspondence report	LA
7	EnergyCo project update and presentation	EnergyCo
8	Questions and discussion	All
9	General business	LA
10	Next meeting	LA

EnergyCo Meeting minutes



Item	Description	Lead	Updates
1	Acknowledgement of Country	LA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A
2	Welcome and housekeeping	LA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting opened at 10:06am
3	Apologies	LA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grant Gjessing, Business Mudgee
4	Business arising from September 2022 CRG	LA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generators to be invited to future CRG meetings – closed CRG members to be added to EnergyCo CWO distribution list – closed Criteria to be circulated on Consumer Trustee’s assessment of generator access rights – closed Cumulative impacts to be addressed at next CRG – closed.
5	Declarations	LA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A
6	Correspondence report	LA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Items from Sal Edwards to be addressed in General Business.
7	EnergyCo presentation		
7.1	Project update	CI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overview of activities carried out since the last CRG meeting, including the scoping report engagement, SEARs issued by DPE, ongoing EIS development and stakeholder engagement. CI outlined the next steps for the project, including the progress of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and preparation of cumulative impact studies.
7.2	Understanding cumulative impacts	AC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AC provided an overview of the studies EnergyCo has been carrying out in recent months to understand a range of key issues in the REZ, including workforce accommodation, telecommunications, training and skills, waste and circular economy, road upgrade and social infrastructure. EnergyCo is planning to finalise the studies and identify draft recommendations in the fourth quarter of 2022, with community consultation to be carried out in early 2023 to inform the final outcomes/recommendations.
7.3	Workforce accommodation	AC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Objective: To understand the housing and accommodation context in the Central-West Orana REZ to inform government and industry planning. Findings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are significant accommodation and housing supply constraints in the Central-West Orana REZ with implications for recommended housing strategies

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The cumulative impact of the predicted incoming workforce presents challenges as well as opportunities from the scale of pipeline and avenues for collaboration. ● Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Coordination of key stakeholders to ensure workforce accommodation needs are met and social benefit to existing communities is maximised ○ Engage local councils to identify strategic locations for accommodation and address planning issues surrounding key sites including housing that meets broader social justice and productivity goals for the Central-West Orana REZ ○ Collaboration between Government, the appointed Network Operator and renewable developers to consider shared accommodation options.
7.4	Training and skills	AC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Understand the skills required for construction and operation of both network infrastructure (transmission lines and energy hubs), as well as the construction of large solar and wind farms ○ Consider the planning and strategy for training and skills opportunities in the CWO REZ. ● Key findings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There are likely to be significant labour and skills constraints in both the Central-West Orana REZ and the wider renewable energy sector and a rapid scale-up is required across the sector to prevent potential project delays and meet the infrastructure demand. ● Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increasing local labour supply in CWO REZ. There are three major pathways from within the region: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recruiting and retraining from adjacent sectors ▪ People who are unemployed, under-employed or out of the labour force ▪ New entrants (apprentices and trainees) ○ Increasing local training capacity and facilities ○ Apprentice and workforce redeployment and retention, including contractual targets.
7.5	Waste and circular economy	AC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Understand the waste management and circular economy impacts and opportunities from the development of the Central-West Orana REZ

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Review the existing waste storage and processing infrastructure in the Central-West Orana region. ● Key findings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There is sufficient landfill capacity to handle the non-recyclable waste generated by the delivery of the Central-West Orana REZ ○ There is no current need to upgrade existing facilities to manage additional waste if the appointed Network Operator and suppliers sort waste onsite and minimise the use of non-recyclables. ● Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Onsite sorting and recycling infrastructure ○ Investigate opportunities to attract businesses to establish long-term recycling practices ○ Adopt and implement Waste Management Guidelines that target high recycling rates during construction.
7.6	Telecommunications	AC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Objective: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Review the current state of telecommunications in the region and understand how telecommunications can be provided to support local communities, farms, businesses, renewable generators and industry. ● Key findings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There are multiple black spots for mobile coverage in the CWO region ○ NBN is predominantly Fibre to the Node in towns and NBN Fixed Wireless and satellite outside main townships ○ Consultation with councils and power generators indicated that actual mobile coverage is not as reliable as the maps show ○ Poor mobile coverage is a hazard for worker safety. ● Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Telecommunication upgrades have been included in the scope for the Network Operator tender ○ Engagement with participants in the NSW Active Sharing Partnership program ○ These providers are specialists in rural mobile coverage and have access to State and Federal funding for mobile blackspots.

Item	Description	Lead	Updates
7.7	Next steps	CA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A project update will be released in January and a series of community meetings planned which will include a presentation followed by Q&A sessions. • Feedback will be collected via an online survey and a community feedback report will be released in Q2 2023.
7.8	Questions and discussion	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BS asked if a report would be released on the findings of the cumulative impact studies prior to the community consultation. AC explained that a draft document is in development, but this is planned to be released prior to the EIS. Community feedback will be used to inform the final document. • RH asked if collaboration is being carried out with developers in the context of cumulative impacts. AC advised that the key purpose of the studies is to obtain input from developers to produce baseline data for expected impacts across the REZ as a whole. Once the data is collated, this will assist EnergyCo in identifying opportunities to coordinate and manage impacts. • CK asked if the study focused on the builder of the transmission network or if it includes other projects. AC explained that while EnergyCo's focus is on the engagement of a Network Operator to build the transmission lines, we are taking a coordinating role across the REZ and we are therefore considering the cumulative impacts of generation projects in addition to the transmission project. • CK asked for clarification on Umwelt's role. AC explained that Umwelt has been engaged by EnergyCo for the workforce accommodation study and they have been carrying out stakeholder consultation to seek the baseline data for the study, such as workforce numbers. It will be up to EnergyCo to deliver on any recommendations and outcomes. • CI provided an overview of the role of EnergyCo as Infrastructure Planner for the REZ as a whole and explained that the Central-West Orana REZ project team is responsible for overseeing the transmission project. • BS asked about Transgrid's involvement in the project at Wollar. PJ explained Transgrid will carry out work to connect their infrastructure to the REZ network at Wollar. • SE asked if the REZs overlap in their construction timeframes. AC said the next would be Hunter Central Coast REZ which has some crossover in the delivery schedule. After this, it would be the connection from Bayswater to New England REZ. • CK asked about the status of the report on the studies. AC confirmed that several studies were being carried out and EnergyCo is bringing them together into a consolidated set of data and opportunities. This would be shared with developers and other stakeholders to inform their planning. • KH requested clarification on what waste management includes. AC confirmed the study focuses on landfill waste and does not include water or sewerage.

Item	Description	Lead	Updates
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RH asked if there were opportunities for recycling industries. AC confirmed EnergyCo is looking at waste from a cumulative perspective to understand if there are opportunities for recycling businesses. • JK requested to discuss the impact of solar panels on prime agricultural land. LA advised that it would be raised in general business. • MD commented that telecommunication improvements provide a good opportunity for legacy infrastructure, noting that the impact of large events on mobile signal should be taken into consideration rather than just looking at black spot maps. • BS commented that it would be difficult for communities to provide feedback when they haven't been given the studies to review in advance. • CI advised that a proper update on road upgrades and social infrastructure would be given as part of engagement in quarter one 2023 (as it is not covered in the CRG presentation). PJ noted that further detail on road upgrades would be available at the time of the next CRG as the Network Operator tender submissions will have been received. • KR asked if it will be possible for road upgrades to be delivered prior to the start of construction in 2024. CI confirmed this is what EnergyCo is currently investigating, i.e. ways to front end the costs. Conversations are currently being had with councils. • MD advised that Dubbo Regional Council has proposed to start upgrading roads immediately subject to the funds being repaid either by developers or EnergyCo. Agreement will be sought from EnergyCo prior to the work being carried out. • CK asked for clarification on the funding arrangements for the transmission project. AC explained that transmission costs are ultimately recovered through consumer energy bills. The Network Operator will finance the construction of the transmission network. The Consumer Trustee reviews the proposed costs to ensure they are prudent and efficient to be charged back to energy consumers. • KH asked what would be included in the January project update. CA explained the purpose of the update would be to publicise the upcoming engagement activities. • DT asked if people can build worker accommodation camps on their land. KD said it depends on the DA as to what the planning and policy requirements are for the development. CI noted this was a theme that has come through quite strongly during the consultation carried out to date and it provides an opportunity for us to investigate in conjunction with councils.
8	General business	LA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SE requested an update on EnergyCo's stakeholder listening survey. CA provided a high level overview. Action: CA to provide a further update on the survey results at the next CRG meeting.

Item	Description	Lead	Updates
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SE requested to set up a dedicated Facebook page in her capacity as CRG community representative. CA requested that the page not have EnergyCo in the name so as to avoid community confusion about who maintains the page. • SE provided feedback that EnergyCo’s advertising in local papers is too small and difficult for readers to notice. CA noted that we would look at improving the artwork for the next round of advertising. • RH provided feedback that EnergyCo should follow up with publications after media release distribution to help ensure journalists pick up the stories. CA provided context that EnergyCo publishes media releases to coincide with project announcements and that these are distributed to all local and regional publications, however it is at the discretion of the publication if they choose to publish an article. • LA noted that the General Manager of Midwestern Council was invited to the CRG meeting at the request of RH, however he declined the invitation. • RH noted that projects need to establish social licence at the start of the development. CI explained that EnergyCo is carrying out engagement with generators on a range of issues, including community engagement and social licence. CI encouraged CRG members to send through any matters that they would like raised with the generators in these coordination meetings. • CK asked if there is a set rate of payment to landowners for hosting renewable infrastructure. AC explained that those types of commercial agreements aren’t within EnergyCo’s remit. • DM asked if there are solicitors that specialise in property access agreements with generators. DT advised he had a contact he could provide. BK explained EnergyCo is unable to provide recommendations for solicitors however it is suggested that landowners ring around to find providers who specialise in this area. • DT noted that the Deputy Premier is not satisfied with the Strategic Benefit Payment Scheme announced by the Treasurer and Minister for Energy, and asked if EnergyCo is working on an alternative. AC said that the scheme was finalised following the cabinet review process. The project team is not aware of any proposed changes to the scheme. Action: CA to provide details of the scheme with the meeting minutes. • CK asked if the whole property can be purchased instead of hosting a transmission easement on part of the property. CI advised we are looking at transmission easements rather than acquiring the whole property but we are currently working to avoid impacts to areas where landowners are not supportive of hosting transmission infrastructure. • JK read paper outlining objections to occupying prime agricultural land for solar projects. Action: LA to circulate paper with the minutes.

Item	Description	Lead	Updates
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KR asked when it would be appropriate to inform the community what workforce accommodation requirements will be needed in the REZ. CI advised that EnergyCo will provide an update in January with further details on this topic. • SE asked why there is a requirement for 1500 acres of land for the Merotherie energy hub. PJ explained that the energy hub itself would be around 90 hectares however a larger area of land is under investigation due to the need to facilitate transmission lines coming in and out of the hub. By contrast, a simple switchyard would be about 10 hectares. • SE noted the lack of certainty for energy hub neighbours on how they will be impacted by the infrastructure. CA explained that discussions are still being carried out with potential host landowners to confirm the hub sites, which means we are currently unable to provide certainty to adjacent landowners. The final layout and design of the hubs will be detailed in the EIS. • KH asked when the community benefit fund would be activated. AC explained generator access fees commence when they connect to the REZ network, but EnergyCo is investigating opportunities to bring forward those fees to provide community benefits earlier.
8	Next meeting	LA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Next meeting proposed for Monday 30 January at 11am. No objections raised by members. • CRG nominated Dubbo as the next location. Western Plains Cultural Centre was identified for the meeting venue.
9	Meeting close		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting closed at 12.07pm with LA thanking all for their attendance and contribution.

Action items

No	Action	Responsibility	Due date	Comments/updates	Status
1	Provide update on the Listening Survey at the next meeting	CA	30/01/2023		To be actioned
2	Update advertising artwork for local papers to make it larger and more noticeable to readers	CA	30/01/2023		In progress
3	CRG members to send through any issues they would like EnergyCo to raise with developers of generation projects. These can be sent to LA who will forward to EnergyCo for action.	CRG members	N/A		Ongoing
4	Provide information about Strategic Benefit Payment Scheme for circulation with the meeting minutes	CA	30/01/2023		To be actioned

No	Action	Responsibility	Due date	Comments/updates	Status
5	JK's paper to be circulated with the meeting minutes	LA	30/01/2023		To be actioned

Next meeting

Date: Monday 30 January 2023

Time: 11am to 1pm

Venue: Western Plains Cultural Centre, Dubbo