

Meeting minutes

Central-West Orana REZ Community Reference Group

Thursday, 28 September 2023

10:00am to 12:00pm

The Conference Room, The Exchange, 98 Macquarie Street Dubbo

Attendance

Category	Attendees
Independent Chair	Lisa Andrews (LA)
EnergyCo representatives	Mike Young, Executive Director, Planning & Communities (MY) Christopher Swann, CWO Project Director (CS) Cleo Andrews, CWO Community & Stakeholder Lead (CA) Brian Cullinane, Planning & Environment Lead (BC) Renee Ridley, CWO Community & Stakeholder Engagement (RR) Anissa Baiquni, CWO Community & Stakeholder Engagement (AB)
LGA Delegates	Mayor Matthew Dickerson, Dubbo Regional Council (MD) Deputy Mayor Cr Kathy Rindfleish, Warrumbungle Shire Council (KR)
Community representatives	Dougald Morse (DM) Sally Edwards (SE) Colin Kilby (CK)
Stakeholder groups	Kate Hook, Community Engagement Manager, RE-Alliance (KH) (online) Beverley Smiles, Central West Environment Council (BS) Grant Gjessing, Business Mudgee (GG) David Thorne, NSW Farmers (Mudgee) (DT)
Invited guests	Dugald Saunders MP, Member for Dubbo (DS) Jane Diffey, Senior Electorate Officer, Dubbo MP's office (JD)
Observers	Sharon Labi, ACE Energy (first ranked Network Operator proponent) (SL) (online) Jodie Barrington, ACE Energy (first ranked Network Operator proponent) (JB) (online)

Category	Attendees
Apologies	<p>Cr Katie Dicker, Mid-Western Regional Council (KD)</p> <p>Michael Peachey, Wellington Information Neighbourhood Services (MS)</p> <p>John Clements, Senior Advisor, Barwon MP's Office (JC)</p> <p>Mel Manchee, Senior Electorate Officer, Barwon MP's office (MM)</p> <p>Rosemary Hadaway, Mudgee District Environment Group & Watershed Landcare (RH)</p> <p>John Kelly, Community representative (JK)</p> <p>Cara Inia, EnergyCo (CI)</p> <p>Bridget Kelleher, EnergyCo (BK)</p> <p>Anna Howard, EnergyCo (AH)</p>

Agenda items

Item	Details	Responsibility
1	Acknowledgement of Country	LA
2	Welcome and introductions	LA
3	Apologies	LA
4	Purpose of meeting	LA
5	Declarations	LA
6	Business arising and correspondence	LA
7	Presentation by Sally Edwards, Coolah District Development Group	SE
8	EnergyCo presentation	BC & CA
9	General business	LA
10	Next meeting	LA

Actions from previous meeting

No.	Action	Responsibility	Update
1	Circulate CRG presentations and minutes to Candidate Foundation Generators (CFGs).	EnergyCo	Complete.
2	Provide information on what happens to the SBP scheme after the 20 years of payment ends and how the SBP will be funded.	EnergyCo	Complete.
3	Provide further clarification between the SPB scheme and the access rights scheme.	EnergyCo	Complete.

No.	Action	Responsibility	Update
4	Provide link to the Network Infrastructure Strategy with the minutes.	EnergyCo	Complete.
5	Notify CRG when consultation begins on the proposed declaration amendment.	EnergyCo	Complete.
6	Provide more information on net zero initiatives.	EnergyCo	Complete.
7	EnergyCo to inform LA and the CRG when the date of the EIS exhibition period is confirmed.	EnergyCo	Complete.
8	Provide link to the NSW planning portal with the minutes.	EnergyCo	Complete.
9	CRG supports action for LA to write to DPE on its behalf to request an exhibition extension.	LA	Complete.
10	Provide finalised CWO access rights tender guidelines once released by the Consumer Trustee.	EnergyCo	On hold: Tender has moved to Q4 2023. CRG will be updated at this time.
11	Provide response to DT's email regarding compensation, land tax and strategic benefit payments.	EnergyCo	Complete.

Meeting minutes

Item	Description	Lead	Updates
1	Acknowledgement of Country	LA	
2	Welcome and Introductions	LA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting opened at 10.07am
3	Apologies	LA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Noted above.</i>
4	Purpose of meeting		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mike Young and Christopher Swann to provide introductory comments and answer questions from the committee Presentation by Sal Edwards EnergyCo to provide an overview of EIS exhibition and answer questions.
5	Declarations	LA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No changes
6	Business arising from last meeting	LA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Refer to above table for details of actions from previous meeting. Item 10 is on hold.</i>
7	Introduction from EnergyCo leadership		
7.1	Mike Young, Executive Director Planning & Communities and Christopher Swann, CWO Project Director	MY/CS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MY provided an overview of the current status of the project, including the Environmental Impact Statement public exhibition, landowner consultation, REZ coordination and community benefit initiatives. CS noted this is his first meeting with the CRG and provided brief explanation of his role, with particular focus on coordination with generators, regulators, first ranked Network Operator proponent and other key stakeholders. DT: How is compensation calculated for acquisition? MY: Provided explanation of compensation entitlement under the Just Terms Act and the additional payments available under the NSW Government's Strategic Benefit Payment Scheme. Compensation under the Just Terms Act is provided based on the value of the land. EnergyCo has engaged a qualified valuer to help inform its assessment of compensation. CK: Is EnergyCo a proprietary limited company? MY: No, EnergyCo is a NSW Government statutory authority. DS: The 28 day exhibition period for the EIS doesn't provide enough time for the community to provide informed submissions. What is EnergyCo doing to manage consultation with landowners effectively? MY: Explained key activities including acquisition support team based in the region (Place Managers and Land Acquisition Managers). MY himself is in the region attending meetings with landowners who are impacted by acquisition. CK queried the compensation for landowners and mechanism for payment. CS: ultimately compensation comes from energy consumers and is paid via the Network Operator. A total fixed charge to consumers will be collected by the electricity retailer and landowners will receive the

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			<p>payments directly from the transmission Network Operator. Commercial arrangements will be in place with the Network Operator to ensure their entitlement is secured. If there was a breach/insolvency, the assets will go back to the NSW Government.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SE: Do landowners have the right to say no during land acquisition negotiations for the energy hub sites? MY: From the beginning, EnergyCo has sought to engage with willing sellers and this process has been going on for over a year. If landowners aren't satisfied with the negotiation outcomes, EnergyCo would then need to make a decision on whether to proceed to compulsory acquisition. The Valuer General can provide less than the NSW Government's offer so many landowners are willing to negotiate with EnergyCo to reach a mutual agreement. • SE: There is disparity between the expectations and reality of community consultation. For example, the community not being included on the CWO REZ steering committee. MY: Provided a summary of engagement to date. Further engagement to be carried out in the coming months on the community benefits program. The steering committee has been established to provide intergovernmental and council coordination. MY noted that councils are best placed to provide advice on topics such as roads, waste and other enabling infrastructure issues. EnergyCo has provided opportunities to collect diverse views, such as through community surveys, and this will continue through the development and implementation of the community investment program. • BS: Will ACEREZ be building all the energy hubs? CS: Yes. • SE: The EIS exhibition needs to be extended. MY: An extension to the EIS exhibition is a matter to be assessed and endorsed by the Minister for Planning. LA advised that she has written to the Director, on behalf of the committee, requesting an extension of at least 6-8 weeks. LA confirmed she has not received a response. Action: LA and DS to write to the Minister for Planning to request an extension. • BS commented the EIS will be overwhelming for those who are unfamiliar with a State Significant Development. • KR: Impacts are being felt now in REZ communities. • BS: Thanked EnergyCo for providing the spreadsheet identifying all renewable projects in the region, noting that only 11 of the 38 listed are associated with the REZ. The cumulative impacts are significant already. • MY: REZ coordination is in progress and there will be funding sources from VPAs and access fees from generators to address issues such as cumulative impacts. The Department of Planning and Environment will publish a clear guideline on VPAs in the near future. EnergyCo is working closely with CFGs to coordinate REZ impacts. • MD: What is the status of the REZ declaration amendment? MY: EnergyCo is developing Stage 1 of the transmission project so it can provide increased capacity beyond the initial 3 GW, assuming the REZ declaration amendment is approved by the Minister.

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MD: Is undergrounding being considered for transmission lines? MY: Provided an overview of why overhead lines are the most practical option and why EnergyCo is not considering putting lines underground for the REZ transmission project. Fundamentally, it is too costly. SE: Query about how community engagement is considered in the tender process. Action: CA to clarify the difference between AEMO Services tender for generation and storage projects and EnergyCo's tender for the transmission Network Operator.
8	Sal Edwards guest presentation		
8.1	Presentation/discussion on cumulative impacts and community consultation	SE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noted that some issues had been addressed in the prior discussion with MY and CS. Suggested that EnergyCo needs to provide a trauma-informed consultation process. Three key points to convey to EnergyCo: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EIS exhibition period needs to be extended Cumulative impact studies should have been released publicly If not released publicly, EnergyCo should commission independent studies for the benefit of the community. During roundtable forum with RE-Alliance, it was suggested that a 'community hub' be established to enable community input into REZ issues and initiatives. DS: Suggested joint organisation of councils could be leveraged as part of a community consultation process on the distribution of community benefit funding.
9	EnergyCo presentation		
9.1	Overview of EIS exhibition	BC/CA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BC provided an overview of the EIS, what's not assessed in the EIS, approval process and timelines. See slide pack for details. CA explained key activities for the EIS exhibition launch, including engagement with impacted landowners and other key stakeholders.
9.2	Questions and comments	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BS: Will there be hard copies of the full EIS hard available? CA: Hard copies will be available in the EnergyCo office and at the community information sessions. SE: It would be helpful to have them at our local library / council office in Coolah. Action: CA to investigate providing hard copy at the Warrumbungle Shire Council library at Coolah. Noted this will be the main document only and not the technical papers. BS: Will the EIS information be provided in bite-sized documents? BC: The EIS is separated into chapters on the NSW Planning Portal. SE: When will the Port to REZ consultation take place? BC: Towards the end of 2024. This will be a Review of Environmental Factors rather than an Environmental Impact Statement.

Item	Description	Lead	Updates
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DT: What is the height of transmission lines during peak load and peak temperature? BC: The standard clearance height for vehicles is 4.3 metres (this refers to the maximum height of vehicles, not the clearance between transmission lines and the ground). There may be exceptions to this for specific landowners on a case-by-case basis, depending on the equipment and machinery used. SE: What does the water studies on water quality include? BC: The study identifies water demand during construction and operation as well as the different water sources that will supply this demand. BS: Will you start construction of substations at the same time as the lines? BC: We will establish the site first before building the transmission lines first, and then the energy hubs and switching stations. The energy hub sites are the main construction compounds for the project and need to be established first. BS: Who prepared the EIS? BC: EnergyCo engaged WSP Australia to develop the EIS. DT: How long is construction? BC: It will take about four years. DT: How long until CFGs can start connecting in to the REZ transmission network? BC: First energisation is planned for the end of 2027. BS: There has been media attention on the impact of rooftop solar on energy pricing. Will the Gilgandra solar farm connect into the REZ transmission network? BC: No, it not connecting to the REZ network.
9	General business		
	Q&A and comments	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SE sought clarification on agenda item 7.2 of previous meeting (Consumer Trustee presentation). Is ACE tender guidelines the same as AEMO guidelines, particularly around meeting community engagement requirements? CA: The access rights tender is for generators (i.e. wind and solar projects) to connect to the REZ transmission network, and the process is run by the Consumer Trustee, AEMO Services. The tender to appoint the transmission Network Operator is being run by EnergyCo and ACERZ has been appointed as the first ranked proponent as part of this process. The Network Operator tender guidelines are different to AEMO guidelines. The IAP2 spectrum of public participation was addressed in each of the Network Operator proponents' tender submissions. Once the commitment deed is signed, we expect the successful Network Operator would be happy to discuss their engagement program in detail with the CRG. BS: Who is responsible for developing post approval management plans? Will it be ACERZ or EnergyCo? BC: It will be a joint effort. The project's Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will be developed by EnergyCo and the Network Operator, but the Network Operator will be responsible for implementing it. Work has already commenced on drafting post approval management plans.

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10	Next meeting	LA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer for an extraordinary CRG meeting to provide the committee with an opportunity to ask more questions after having time to read EIS materials. Committee members can pose questions as individual or on behalf of the community. • The committee agreed to meet in person at 11am Tuesday 17 October in Mudgee (venue confirmed as Club Mudgee on Mortimer Street). There will be an option to attend online. • CA requested that committee members submit their questions before the meeting if possible, so that EnergyCo can tailor responses accordingly.

New actions

No.	Action	Status
1	Action from July's meeting: Provide finalised CWO access rights tender guidelines once released by Consumer Trustee.	On hold: Tender has moved to Q4 2023. CRG will be updated at this time.
2	LA to write directly to the Minister (Paul Scully MP) on behalf of the committee, requesting to extend the EIS exhibition period.	Post Meeting: Complete, letter sent 29/9/23.
3	CA to arrange hard copy of the EIS for the Warrumbungle Shire Council library at Coolah.	In progress

Next meeting – CRG extraordinary meeting

Date: Tuesday 17 October

Time: 11am to 12pm

Topic: Environmental Impact Statement questions

Venue: Club Mudgee boardroom (99 Mortimer Street, Mudgee) and Online via Microsoft Teams – link to be circulated prior to the meeting.

Please submit questions prior to meeting if possible, so EnergyCo can tailor responses accordingly.

Future meetings

To be confirmed