

New England Renewable Energy Zone (REZ)

Community Reference Group (CRG) North - Meeting 2

Held on: Thursday 1 May 2025 – 11am to 2:30pm

At: Walcha Vet Supplies, 6 Aberbaldie Road, Walcha

Chaired by: Margaret Harvie

Attended

Chairperson	Margaret Harvie
Community Representatives	Alex Hunter Annette Kilarr Tony Lashlie Bruce McMullen James Reilly Damien Timbs – Voice for Walcha
LALC Representatives	Glen Innes Local Aboriginal Land Council – Elena Weatherall*
LGA delegates	Walcha Council - Councillor Rachael Greig Armidale Regional Council - Councillor Dorothy Robinson* Uralla Shire Council – Councillor Sarah Burrows Glen Innes Severn Council – Mayor Margot Davis*
EnergyCo Representatives	Julian Watson, New England Deputy Project Director Cleo Andrews, New England Communications and Engagement Lead Sara Crowe, New England Community Engagement Manager Melissa Maurer, New England Place Manager
Note taker	Kate McGrath
*Online attendance	

Apologies

Diane Gray

Declarations of interest

Member	Details
Dorothy Robinson	Pecuniary interest. Investor in Sapphire Windfarm.
Kate Dight	Non-pecuniary interest. Personal relationship with project developer.
Sarah Burrows	Pecuniary interest. Landholder of property in proposed transmission line corridor.

Kate McGrath	Non-pecuniary interest. Kate is the Employment Facilitator for the New England North West Local Jobs Program which provides funding and support for workforce development in the renewables sector. Pecuniary interest. Investor in Sapphire Windfarm.
Margaret Harvie	Non-pecuniary interest. Margaret has advised generators on community engagement and delivers a community engagement training course which generators participate in.

Agenda item discussion and actions

Item 1. Acknowledgement of Country

- The Chair acknowledged that we are meeting on Aboriginal land, paid respects to Elders past, present and emerging. Energy Corporation of NSW acknowledgement was on the PPT presentation.
- Introductions around the room

Item 2. Welcome and housekeeping

- Chair welcomed members and outlined structure of meeting

Item 3. Review previous actions

While some of the actions were just points of communication, there was discussion in the meeting on a number of topics and this is covered, where relevant, in a text box below the actions.

#	Action	Responsible	Status
1	Next meeting to be held in Uralla or Walcha	Chair	Complete. North CRG meeting 2 booked in Walcha on Thursday 1 May at Walcha Vet Supplies.
2	Link for North and South meeting notes on EnergyCo site to be sent to all members when they are finalised	Chair	Complete. Sent via email on 19/02/2025.
3	Clarify process for publishing and publicly sharing presentations	Melissa Maurer	Complete. All CRG presentations to be shared on EnergyCo's website.
4	New accepted Terms of Reference to be distributed with meeting notes	Chair	Complete. Sent via email on 30/01/2025.

#	Action	Responsible	Status
5	Members to sign updated Code of Conduct document	CRG Members	Complete. Signed at the meeting.
6	Members that have not done so need to sign Declaration of Interest form	Melissa Maurer/ Chair	Ongoing. To be completed by 1 May 2025.
7	Share image renders of hub and towers included in Central West Orana REZ EIS document	Mim Balcombe	Complete. Shared in meeting notes: https://www.energyco.nsw.gov.au/cwo/environmental-impact-statement
<p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Question regarding images of hub and towers, asking if towers may be four tiers despite rendered images being three tiers and what the visual amenity would be <p>Action: Energy Co to clarify if four tier towers rather than three tier towers are being proposed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Question requesting information about what central south hub will look like, such as height and size, given it is proposed to be 120 hectares in its footprint <p>Response: The technical layout of hubs isn't finalised and will be dependent on detailed final design as part of the network procurement process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultation will happen with directly impacted landholders who will be hosting hubs before information is published. Detailed information will be included in EIS. <p>Action: Energy Co to provide images of similar 500KV hubs to give an indication of what they look like</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Question regarding the study corridor map and two co-located lines being shown. 			
8	Confirm with relevant EnergyCo team members if international examples of monopoles are suitable for NEREZ	Julian Watson	Response to be provided at CRG meeting on 1 May 2025.
<p>EnergyCo team have provided technical notes about monopoles, usage is the exception rather than the norm, long distance project requires lattice towers for performance and cost. Monopoles have trouble supporting lines in steep and undulating terrain and would require increased number of towers. Larger diameter foundations are difficult in rocky terrain, and larger piling rigs would create accessibility issues. Monopoles are heavier and less modular which impacts logistic capability, such as transport and larger cranes. Financial implications due to more expense to fabricate and install on a per tower basis and increased number of towers.</p>			

#	Action	Responsible	Status
	<p>UK example of monopoles created complexity and delay at Hinkley site. Larger site disturbance from deep foundation and longer build time. Subjectivity about the visual impact of monopoles, smaller but quite bulky. Lattice towers are industry standard for 330KV and above, provide longer spans and less construction activity required. Modular lattice towers are easier to deliver and transport, reduce construction time and cost, and less property impact, adaptable for different configurations.</p> <p>Action: EnergyCo to share images of monopoles with CRG members.</p>		
9	Confirm current rate of build across Australia, and projected build rate	Julian Watson	Response to be provided at CRG meeting on 1 May 2025.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrated System Plan identified need for 4600km of new transmission lines by 2030 to support the energy transition, which equates to 760km per year over six years. A suite of large projects is underway to meet this target, including Energy Connect and Humelink, however the build rate is tracking below the required rate to stay on target. Published operational times for New England REZ are Stage 1: 2032 and Stage 2: 2034. Accelerating transmission delivery is a challenge and comes across many issues. There is a suite of state and federal government approaches to help accelerate and support build time. Request for current build rate to be provided. EnergyCo advised a number of projects would contribute to the build rate and are not all EnergyCo led projects however, EnergyCo would try to provide a current build rate if available. <p>Action: If information is available EnergyCo will provide rate of build for approved, commissioned, under construction and rate completed in NSW for 2024</p>		
10	Follow up on potential information session in Walcha	Melissa Maurer	<p>Complete. Community pop-up scheduled at Walcha Farmers Market on 17 May 2025.</p> <p>In addition to the above, Walcha venue to be considered for upcoming community information sessions.</p>
11	Include agenda item discussing better ways to engage and share information	Chair	Complete. Included in agenda for CRG meetings on 30 April and 1 May - Engagement and sharing information.
12	Email suggestions for how communication can be improved	CRG Members	Complete. Summary of recommendations to be provided in next CRG meeting - agenda item: Engagement and sharing information.

#	Action	Responsible	Status
13	Share link for Legislative Assembly inquiry into the impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZs) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales to members	Chair	Complete. Sent via email on 24/01/2025.
14	Group email thread to be established as all emails will be shared by Chairperson in distribution of the meeting notes and other relevant emails to the group.	Chair	Complete. Sent via email on 24/01/2025.
15	Share guide to submissions from Nature Conservation Council with all members	Chair	Complete. Sent via email on 24/01/2025.
16	Agenda item for EnergyCo to give update on REZ coordination and community benefit	Melissa Maurer	Complete. Update will be provided in 'Other project updates' at next CRG meeting. Regular updates will be provided in following CRG meetings.
17	CRG to include agenda item to look at cumulative impact of hubs, projects and REZ	All	Complete. Update will be provided in 'Other project updates' at next CRG meeting. Regular updates will be provided in following CRG meetings.

Mayor Margot Davis unable to hear meeting due to audio issues – left meeting

Item 4. Around the room

- Held over until end of meeting – see Item 14

Item 5. Network Operator update

- Presented by Julian Watson, New England Deputy Project Director
- Initiated network operator procurement process. Held an industry briefing and released general information in mid-March.
- Outlined to industry the technical overview of project and the requirement for a consortium that can put forward a view of a long-term operator, signalling to market that construction and design are important, but we want long term operators. Interested parties need to be a

good network operator with a long-term view accounting for community, landowners, technical interactions with Transgrid, etc.

- Recently went through Registrations of Interest process.
- 20 registrants have indicated they would like to be party to this; some are consortia, others have specific skill sets.
- Expression of interest stage due to commence in May 2025.
- Aim to shortlist and progress to RFP in October, with submission in April 2026. Two - three bidders will be invited to participate in design process to ensure competitive process and value for money for NSW.
- Question requesting clarification of network operator package stating a “whole of life relationship with communities.”

Response: This refers to both the infrastructure but also refers to the contract period for the Network Operator, which is likely to be 30-35 years.

- Question about when the transmission lines are expected to be completed.

Response: Stage 1 will be completed in 2032 and Stage 2 in 2034, with the construction period from 2027-28.

- Mobilisation period for network operator to be organised before financial close. Ancillary sites will start construction first, followed by staggered access developments, road improvements, then staged tower construction and stringing and hub sites, then commissioning. Varying timeline due to bidder’s preferred approach.
- Question asking if registrants have flexibility in design, such as Syncline Energy undergrounding in Victoria.

Response: If a bidder wants to propose undergrounding it will be considered but is unlikely due to comparative project having a third of the transfer capacity. Design and construction projects are based on concept design (proof of concept) for EIS, bidders asked to come back with detailed design for approval and construction, which allows for uptake of innovations and advantageous variations.

- Challenge is that environmental impact requirements and available property form the parameter, and proponent must lead modification requests for significant variation and must still deliver what is required.
- Question as to why Central South Hub Stage 1 would be 330KV and upgraded to 500KV in Stage 2.

Response: That the goal is for 2.4GW of transfer capacity in Stage 1, and 6GW combined in Stage 2, and this ensures that there is some flexibility in delivery and construction.

- Comment from CRG member that uptake in New England has been slow, South Western REZ is 3GW and has had higher uptake.

Response: EnergyCo is looking across the state, the South Western area doesn't have the same transfer capacity, 8GW is still legislated at Stage 3, which is not part of the current planning application.

- EnergyCo updates generators to assist them in understanding their project success potential and works to understand the progress of their projects.
- Question about expected date of connections.

Response: that this is part of discussion with generators, currently finalising New England REZ access scheme to put out for consultation and then applications from 2027.

- Comment from CRG member that if EnergyCo is in charge of the entire REZ, with the indication that first connections will occur in 2032, there are significant concerns about water and roads and impacts to small communities.

Response: These impacts are currently being assessed as part of the REZ-wide cumulative impact studies.

- Question from CRG member about EnergyCo's responsibility for staging construction of generators to avoid influx of workers and social impact on small communities.

Response: EnergyCo is the infrastructure planner and has a focus on delivery of transmission. Regarding stages of individual project generator rollout, EnergyCo does not control this. Generators have their own projects and timelines. EnergyCo will discuss proposed timing, size and workforce with generators to forecast impact on roads and infrastructure and take a whole of government approach to responding. Measure baseline use, predict impact, forecast peak, and work with relevant agencies to resolve these challenges.

- Health services may require additional staff, EnergyCo won't deliver but will provide advice and cooperate with key agencies to support communities.
- Comment from CRG member that water is a key concern.
- Allowing projects to come online requires projects being built alongside transmission lines and there will be a cumulative impact.
- Projects planning to connect to existing Transgrid projects outside of EnergyCo remit. Looking to understand adjacent large projects that are likely to contribute to cumulative impact, such as Baiada expansion. There will be an ebb and flow of projects, need to identify peaks, trough and pinch points in workforce availability, sensitivities for consideration.
- Request for Michael Burden to do his presentation as a video to be shared.

Response: Michael and his team often do presentations, and would likely be willing, there was discussion at South CRG meeting about online targeted presentations and perhaps Michael may be willing to be the pilot for that approach.

- Comment from CRG member that there was a suggestion to record the meetings from the Southern CRG meeting. Chair responded that meetings will not be recorded.
- Question from CRG member asking why lines and hubs must be built together.

Response: Ideally, in 2032, Stage 1 will be online, and Stage 2 will be ready to connect in 2034, and energy can flow to the grid. This can happen in a range of ways, the more the timeline is signalled to the market the better prepared it can be.

- Part of the opportunity provided by the REZ infrastructure is better understanding potential curtailment levels for generators.
- Comment from CRG member that Mid-Western region has 16 projects with villages and accommodation, and no plans to manage water and waste, and a huge influx of population.
- Question from CRG member asking about cumulative impact of New England REZ and how learnings will be applied to prevent negative impact for New England.

Response: Part of preventing and resolving these issues is understanding the nature and timing of the impacts. It would be premature to say there are solutions because initially we need to understand. Workforce spread over 400km with key locations within that, there will be work camps. Ideal is to have a positive impact on regional communities, aiming to have an understanding and recommendations. Note that Central West Orana REZ Community and Employment Benefit Program has been released and to note that grant recipients are a mix of community groups, local government infrastructure upgrades, and feedback from this approach will inform future approaches. There will be clarity and transparency around any competitive grants process.

- Comment from CRG member that Central West Orana REZ is 3GW, compared to 8GW in New England REZ, and thousands of people are moving through those towns.
- Comment from CRG member that hubs are concentrated near Walcha and Uralla.
- Comment from CRG member Winterbourne has lost major funder (Copenhagen Infrastructure Partners), and EnergyCo should listen to market and consider placement of infrastructure.
- Comment from CRG member that work has been done regarding likely placement of accommodation villages, and sweet spot is about 40km from site. Uralla Housing Strategy is on exhibition currently to ensure they are prepared.

Action: Michael Burden to attend next session to talk about cumulative impact and share information from studies and get feedback and identify gaps

Action: Need to have deeper discussion about workforce accommodation

- Comment from CRG member that there is effort to get generators on board, and they need to be here for the long term and take a whole of community approach, and there must be accountability. Communities must be pushing to ensure the developers are good ones. Discussion about Rating scheme that developers can opt into.
- Comment from CRG member that developers should be aware of communities. Chair commented that the access rights application triggers questions for developers around community engagement and benefits.
- Comment from CRG member that developer project EIS states they will use existing housing stock which doesn't exist. Housing is a major issue and is a whole of government issue.

- Comment from CRG member that corporate developers will run it their way, and workforce villages and shortage of accommodation might encourage corporates to utilise and invest in housing.
- EnergyCo reps indicated that they could provide information on Central West Orana REZ (CWO), which includes the delivery of legacy housing initiatives to be handed back to community after project is complete - this can give some context to the broader thinking.
- Comment that accommodation for CWO REZ will be built at Dunedoo as a temporary housing measure.
- Comment from CRG member that discussion with council has been around good legacy projects, so Council isn't responsible for cleaning up a mess, and it provides positive impact on community.

Item 6. Central South Hub

- Presented by Julian Watson, New England Deputy Project Director
- Purpose is to support the efficient connection of multiple renewable projects. Dependent on long term future viability of projects in the area and is part of a suite of network architecture.
- No interest in building things that aren't required. Immediate, mid-term and long-term need and potential in the area will dictate the size, time and need of the hub.
- Comment from CRG member that there is only one project planned at this stage to connect to this Hub.
- Comment from CRG member that Origin is looking to divest renewable projects and not to reinvest.
- Comment from CRG member that Winterbourne indicates high probability that EnergyCo scoping doesn't match what is being seen on the ground.

Response: Network architecture is designed to spread load across hubs and take advantage of resources for wind and solar - keen for New England to utilise winds.

- If individual generators are having challenges, that is not for EnergyCo to comment on.
- Comment that from CRG member that commercial realities of the market indicate there isn't viability in New England.

Response: EnergyCo is trying to understand the need and not build something on speculation. The project must be justified to the consumer trustee, including cost and need, and the design is still in flux.

- Market is changing rapidly, and confidence in coal will also influence capability to sell renewable power.
- Only building infrastructure suitable for what is expected to be needed from the market. Assurance that EnergyCo aren't building to satisfy a previous planning decision.

- Comment from CRG member that we hope they have moved past desktop studies and consider the community and the access.
- Comment from CRG member that it is reassuring to know there is some room to move, and that it's a relief to hear if the demand isn't there the hub project won't be built.

Response: That it is dynamic, and final network design and architecture is to be finalised.

- Comment from CRG member that the Central South hub is better suited for Stage 2 or 3 once demand has been confirmed.

Response: EnergyCo has a dual role to provide infrastructure and to satisfy commercial demand, and to facilitate that infrastructure coming along.

- Comment that members are here because they want to support the REZ and share insights to ensure it is delivered in the best way possible.
- South Central hub remains part of the current design. Commitment to the CRG that EnergyCo will take into account the need, and if that effects either the sizing, the design or the staging, it will be assessed and adjusted. The hubs are a significant cost and have a high impact, and if it can be structured to remove unnecessary components, then that will be considered.

Item 7. Lunch

- Break from 12.55pm to 1.10pm

Item 8. Port to REZ

- Presented by Julian Watson, New England Deputy Project Director
- EnergyCo has been investigating a suitable low-impact route to enable over-size over-mass movements through Muswellbrook into New England REZ, to move large infrastructure from Port of Newcastle into REZ.
- Acknowledgement that there needs to be a very basic overview, and that too much detail can be jargon to the community.
- EnergyCo planning role also dovetails into whole of government approach to support energy roadmap.
- Individual generators planning routes won't provide a consistent, coordinated and efficient approach, and will negatively impact communities and transport networks. EnergyCo tasked with identifying and coordinating areas where the road network can be adjusted to facilitate movement of blades. Not entirely future proofed, but based on current broad utilisation and restrictions, and what will be appropriate.
- Announcements made for Central West Orana REZ upgrades, contracts have been awarded to undertake a coordinated approach to raise powerlines, widen corners, relocate utilities to create a viable route from port to REZ.
- Responsibility of generator to manage themselves outside of shared route.

- Working closely with Transport for NSW to use state road network, with some deviation into regional or local road network. Bridge carrying capacity and overbridge height most common reason for using non-state roads.
- Shared route with Central West Orana until turning north.
- Environmental impact and work needed will be considered, subject to future funding.
- Trying to understand what this transport movement means for landholders and communities.
- Timing to align with early movers and will liaise with generators to understand that.
- Question from CRG member to clarify if the route will be as far as Tamworth or to the hub.

Response that route will be north of Tamworth, and work is currently being undertaken.

Action: EnergyCo to confirm how far OSOM (Oversize Over-mass) route extends

- Question from CRG member about rail capacity.

Response that rail has been considered, but curves and tunnels made it challenging.

- Question from CRG member regarding volume of traffic from Queensland.

Response: This may need to be clarified, the opportunity is to guide generators through effective routes, which may enable or require planning to condition the route, if a way is easier and utilised then that's what will be used.

- Comment from CRG member regarding feedback from community requesting consideration also for "port to hubs" given that hubs are the major infrastructure, and as Walcha has limited access, this should be a consideration.
- Comment from CRG member that access is an important topic for this CRG, as well as housing.
- Comment from CRG member that Walcha and Uralla councils are in discussion with Transport NSW about access via Thunderbolts Way, and there is agreement that it's important to ensure access is available.
- Comment from CRG member that it doesn't make sense to only plan as far as Tamworth, given they are less impacted.
- Comment from CRG member that hub is being built to support and not drive generators means there will be a massive amount of OSOM vehicles to area without access.

Item 9. CRG Purpose

- Presented by Melissa Maurer, New England Place Manager
- CRG is an open forum of discussion between stakeholders and EnergyCo. It is important to EnergyCo to hear the voices of the communities.
- Members understand what matters most to people in the region, including current and potential issues and opportunities. Members have strong networks and connections which can help EnergyCo understand the communities better.

- First meeting was providing a baseline of information, and more information will be provided moving forward but focus will shift to feedback.
- Feedback and input are shared with project team, leadership team and board. Assessment and decision-making processes are informed by feedback and local insights. Changes that have occurred with corridor and infrastructure has been because of community led changes, and for technical reasons.
- Comment thanking EnergyCo for organising the CRG and congratulations to EnergyCo for their efforts to answer all the questions.
- Suggestion to submit all questions and feedback to a central point of contact and identify repeat questions and issues to identify key priorities. Response that this is a possibility and would be helpful in shaping the agenda and identifying key themes.
- Dedicated online sessions can be held in addition to these meetings.
- Guidance on the best way for information to be delivered is valuable, and questions can be sent to the chair at any time.
- Comment from CRG member that communication with the whole group can be a reply all email thread if members are comfortable with that. Response that keeping track of questions responded to and proactively making information available to other stakeholders may be beneficial. Requests for information and questions to be added to action register.

Action: Members to submit questions directly to Chair or reply all to group and EnergyCo will ensure that these are part of a register.

- Request from Chair for questions (that are to be answered as part of that meeting) to be submitted well ahead of time to enable timely responses and planning of agenda items.
- Comment from CRG member that most questions arise while the information is fresh, others can simply be answered when the team is able, and can be ad hoc, and that questions and answers being provided to the group is crucial for transparency.
- Comment from CRG member that there should be an online register of questions to help stimulate people's thinking and make the meetings more efficient.

Response that this may not be convenient for people as it is yet another log in, but the viability of online register will be investigated.

Action: EnergyCo to investigate establishing an online register for CRG members to submit their questions

- Question from CRG member asking how this all translates back to communities.

Response: feedback is needed as to how best to facilitate that, beyond current approach of members sharing information and providing a point of connection. Meeting notes and presentations are available online, open to suggestions for improvement. Example provided of the request from the South CRG for information shared in jpeg and QR code format to facilitate sharing of information on social media.

- Comment from CRG member that information being mailed out has had issues, with people receiving multiple copies or none, Energy Co will look into this.
- Comment from CRG member that Armidale EnergyCo office isn't staffed and often isn't open.

Response that the office was being renovated, and field staff are generally in the field and not in the office, so phoning to make a booking to meet with someone would be best.

- Question from CRG member asking if members should be encouraging the community to engage through the office.

Response: Yes, that is appropriate, but with the caveat that it would be best to arrange to meet a staff member there as staff are regularly in the field for site investigations or engagement activities.

- Question from CRG member asking if EnergyCo plan to attend the May Farmers Markets in Walcha, and if so that it should be advertised.

Response that EnergyCo has selected locations with high foot traffic for information and knowledge sharing with people not informed. Requested suggestions from the CRG on best ways to promote these sessions in the region.

- Comment from CRG member that presentations need to be made direct to the community.

Item 10. First Nations engagement

- Presented by Melissa Maurer, New England Place Manager
- Dedicated focus on Aboriginal employment – Leanne Thompson has been appointed as First Nations Advisor
- Leanne has been meeting with First Nations representatives and LALCs and supporting development of First Nations guidelines for engagement, which is being developed with Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water. Leanne will attend the next meeting in person to provide more updates.
- Comment from CRG member that Walcha Land Council weren't aware of CRG or First Nations working group.
- Comment from CRG member that it would be great if First Nations representatives had the opportunity to be at the table as community representatives.
- Comment from CRG member that there needs to be very clear communication delineating that the CRG and First Nations Working Group are different entities (even though there is a standing invitation to the CRG for the LALCs).

Item 11. Engagement and sharing information

- Keen to understand better ways to engage with local communities.

Action: EnergyCo to share list of events EnergyCo intend to attend

- Comment from CRG member that pop-ups and events are great, but there needs to be information in every local newspaper, because people aren't going to search for information on the website.
- Comment from CRG member that cumulative impact also means that there is community consultation fatigue.
- Comment from CRG member that 12-18 May Z-NET have the Uralla Street Stall and offered to share EnergyCo information on their stall.
- Comment that councils and community groups can put information on their socials.
- Community pop-ups are designed to help raise awareness of the project and provide an option for people seeking face-to-face engagement. They are an addition to formal consultation processes for project milestones.
- Comment from CRG member that if EnergyCo is going to be in the community, they need to advertise their presence in local papers and online.
- Comment from CRG member that EnergyCo shouldn't be referring people back to the website, and should utilise local papers, noticeboards, such as using Armidale Regional Council events page to advertise pop-ups.
- Comment from CRG member that it is also the job of the CRG to share information. This was encouraged by EnergyCo.
- Question from CRG member who will be at the Walcha Farmers Market.

Response: That this is to be confirmed.

- EnergyCo has dedicated team of place managers to work closely with landholders and act as conduit to project team. Property managers look at access for field studies, compensation and other property-related matters.
- Online and printed resources are available. In response to feedback about people not getting email project updates, they are also being provided via hardcopy. Dedicated phone line is available and answered.
- More presentations planned for local community groups, interested parties, environmental groups, and charity clubs.
- Question from CRG member as to whether there is a standard community presentation that can be shared. Response that it is very similar to the presentation in the first meeting, with the addition of project updates as they occur.

Action: Share standard community presentation

- Request from EnergyCo for members to send through any suggestions for engagement and communications improvements.

- Comment from CRG member that communities are frustrated by the lack of clarity and need a clear timeline. Discussion regarding both EnergyCo and generators having timelines that are publicly available. Comment that timelines are not adhered to and there isn't certainty.

Response: That funding, approvals, market conditions, resource availability all impact timelines and it's difficult to manage that, to provide any more certainty in the timeline.

- Comment from CRG member that Oxley Solar has been in the pipeline for six years without being signed off. It is being reviewed by the Foreign Investment Review Board, and as it (Oxley Solar) is owned by a Chinese company (Megawatt), and decisions being made at those high levels impact its certainty. Response that Foreign Investment Review Board is part of the process to provide some certainty and quality control by verifying the entity.

- Comment from CRG member that there is the need for a developer accreditation process.

Response: The National Rating Scheme that developers can opt into is by all accounts progressing.

- Comment from CRG member that every community has council and community pages that can be utilised
- Comment from CRG member that landholder must report every time someone enters the land for biosecurity accreditation processes and LLS obligations, but EnergyCo has not been notifying landholders that they have entered the property, where they went, how many people, and cleanliness of vehicle. EnergyCo have not been complying with these biosecurity requirements.

Response: Asking if a monthly or quarterly summary would be helpful, which was agreed to as being suitable and necessary. Comment that Essential Energy are also not compliant with notification and reporting of land entry. Comment that African Lovegrass is easily spread and EnergyCo not observing compliance with biosecurity legislation creates significant risk to land. Communities can help by advising EnergyCo of the locations of wash bays.

Action: EnergyCo to investigate developing a post-event summary to meet land holders' biosecurity needs

Item 12. Other project updates

- Coordinating the Delivery of the REZ. Huge amount of work and collaboration between EnergyCo, councils and communities. Will ensure information is provided.
- Comment from CRG member that the environment should be captured in the REZ wide studies (noted as missing on the PPT slide).
- First suite of Community Employment Benefit Program for Central West Orana has been awarded across three streams, broad spread of projects. Seeking indication of the appetite to make New England REZ Community Employment Benefit Program suitable for New England, invite feedback about where funding should be focused and what the mechanism should look like.

Action: Update on the Central West Orana Community Employment Benefit Program to be provided for information

- Megawatt based benefits, should result in higher benefits for Armidale. Request from CRG members for a session focused on Community Employment Benefit Program.
- Comment from CRG member regarding experience of Walcha Council and issues regarding VPA (Voluntary Planning Agreement).

Response: Suggestion to have a Community Employment Benefit Program as a targeted online session with the two CRG groups combined. At this stage there is further work to do on the structure and delivery on the Community Employment Benefit Program.

Action: Community Employment Benefit Program targeted session will be delivered later in the year

- Community Employment Benefit Program paid for by generators through access scheme.
- View from CRG member that Community Employment Benefit Program (CEBP) needs to be recognised as opportunity for investment into communities and legacy projects such as building and electrical trades, and that contributing to design of CBEP would be great.

Response: Energy Co have a dedicated team considering how the community benefits program will be structured, and we will seek input and feedback from CRG members.

- Refinement to corridor based on landholders' feedback and technical requirements. Groups of landholders and community members have come together to propose route refinement and small realignment, which have been accommodated where possible. Encourage landholders to inform EnergyCo if they are not happy with location of infrastructure on their property
- Question from CRG member how many landholders will be affected by the corridor and how many have signed access agreement.

Response: There are approximately 260 landowners in the study corridor.

Action: Confirm number of affected landowners, how many have signed access agreements and property agreements, and provide information to the CRG

- Comment from CRG member that landholders should speak to their neighbours and work together to find better solutions and better outcomes, that it's important that the landholders stick together and aren't isolated from each other.
- Inquiry into the Impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales underway. Submissions have closed, and hearing scheduled for 13th May in Sydney, regional hearing scheduled too. 147 submissions received and there is no clear timeline for a substantive finding.
- NSW Farmers and EnergyCo have published the NSW Renewable Energy and Transmission Landholder Guide, which provides clear information about the process and the steps involved. Comment that several groups wrote to NSW Farmers to object to their document.

Item 13. Around the Room

- Annette sent detailed information to the group about 2 projects she is involved with, which may have some synergies. Nature and Conservation Council have put together a joint ask for First Nations people to be put at the centre and environment to be considered earlier in planning and community to be key. Her group went to Parliament and met with parliamentarians.
- James would like to thank the Chair and EnergyCo for the information
- Damien said thank you
- Rachael wants the learnings from the Central west to be considered
- Sarah - thank you all
- Tony thanked the chair
- Bruce thanked the notetaker and asked if the Federal election is likely to have an impact on the REZ
- Alex said thanks and let's keep poking along, good stuff is coming out of these meetings.

Action: Alex Hunter will send through link to water documents for inclusion in the meeting notes

Item 14. General business and questions

- Comment that Walcha council had over 400 submissions for their Community Strategic Plan, reflecting the vibrancy of the town

Item 15. Next meeting

To be Wednesday 2 July- 12.30pm- 3.00pm in Armidale.

#	Action	Responsible	Status
1	EnergyCo to clarify if four tier towers rather than three tier towers are being proposed	Julian Watson	
2	EnergyCo to provide images of similar 500KV hubs to give an indication of what they look like	Melissa Maurer	
3	EnergyCo to share images of monopoles with CRG members.	Melissa Maurer	
4	If information is available Energy Co will provide rate of build for approved, commissioned, under construction and rate completed in NSW for 2024	Julian Watson	
5	Michael Burden to attend next session to talk about cumulative impact and share information from studies and get the feedback and identify gaps	Michael Burden	

#	Action	Responsible	Status
6	Need to have deeper discussion about workforce accommodation	Chair	
7	EnergyCo to confirm how far OSOM route extends	Michael Burden	
8	Members to submit questions directly to Chair or reply all to group and EnergyCo will ensure that these are part of a register.	CRG	
9	EnergyCo to investigate establishing an online register for CRG members to submit their questions.	Melissa Maurer	
10	EnergyCo to share list of events EnergyCo intend to attend.	Melissa Maurer	
11	Share standard community presentation.	Melissa Maurer	
12	EnergyCo to investigate developing a post-event summary to meet landholders' biosecurity needs.	Julian Watson	
13	Update on Central West Orana Community Employment Benefit Program to be provided for information.	Julian Watson	
14	Community Employment Benefit Program targeted session will be delivered later in the year.	Julian Watson	
15	Confirm number of affected landowners within the study corridor, how many have signed access agreements and property agreements, and provide information to the CRG.	Julian Watson	
16	Send through water information documents for inclusion in meeting notes.	Alex Hunter	

Upcoming meetings

June/July

September

November

Meeting closed