

## Meeting minutes

### CENTRAL-WEST ORANA REZ COMMUNITY REFERENCE GROUP

**Held on:** 20/05/2025 – 10:00am to 1:00pm

**At:** Country Universities Centre, 70 Court St, Mudgee NSW 2850

**Chaired by:** Lisa Andrews

**Attendees:**

Independent Chair	Lisa Andrews (Chair)
EnergyCo representatives	Amer Hussein, Central-West Orana Director Community and Place (AH) Jane Sayabath, Central-West Orana Community and Council Interface Manager (JS) <i>online</i> Alicia Rados – Central-West Orana Snr Manager Community & Stakeholder (AR) Damien Pfeiffer – Transport for NSW – Director Development Services. (DP) Dimitri Perdikaris – Strategic Delivery Manager (DiP) <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> Councillor Pat Ryan, Upper Hunter Shire Council delegate (PR)
Government/MPs	Jane Diffey, Snr Electorate Officer, Dubbo Electorate Office [Dugald Saunders MP] (JD) <i>online</i>
Community representatives	Jock Rice-Ward (JRW) Colin Kilby (CK) Neville Mattick (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) Kylie Manson, Warrabinga Wiradjuri #7 Native Title Claimants (KM) David Walker, Burrendong Botanic Garden & Arboretum (DW) Aleshia Lonsdale, Mudgee Local Aboriginal Land Council (AL)
ACERZ representatives	Steve Masters, CEO (SM) Duncan St Clair, General Manager Maintenance and Lifecycle (DSC) Kee Li, Community and Stakeholder Engagement Manager (KL) Tung Pham, Project Wide Director (TP) Miranda Wood, Director of Communications and Stakeholder Engagement (MW) Sonja Malcolm, Workforce Development & Training Manager (Sma) Sharon Labi, Senior Manager Corporate Affairs (SL) <i>online</i> Jodie Barrington, Stakeholder Engagement Manager (JB) <i>online</i>

	Emily Wheeler, Communications & Stakeholder Engagement Advisor (EW) Catie Anderson, Operations Services Director (CA) <i>online</i>
Absent	David Thorne, NSW Farmers (Mudgee) Beau Kassas, Mudgee Region Tourism Mayor Josh Black, Dubbo Regional Council
Apologies	Jillian Kirwan Lee, Foundation for Rural Regional Renewal Mel Manchee, Snr Electorate Officer Roy Butler's Office (Member for Barwon) Tony Fuller, Aboriginal Affairs Department delegate

## 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	ACERERZ introduction	SM
8	ACERERZ – Construction update	TP
9	ACERERZ – Industry & Aboriginal participation	SM
10	EnergyCo update	AM
11	Port to REZ update	DP/DiP
12	General business	All
13	Next meeting	Chair

## MEETING MINUTES

1	Acknowledgement of Country	Chair						
2	Welcome and introductions	Chair	Meeting opened at 10:32am					
3	Apologies	Chair	As listed					
4	Business arising from last meeting (27/02/25) Minutes finalised on 21/3/25	Chair	No	Action	Responsibility	Due date	Comments / updates	Status
			1	Provide feedback from sentiment survey when available in 2025.	AH	When available	In slide pack	Was verbally shared by AH at this meeting
			2	Slide outlining timeline of management plans to be included in future CRG presentations LINK TO MANAGEMENT PLANS: <a href="#">Resources   Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone</a> <a href="#">Transmission Network   ACEREZ</a>	JF	Ongoing	A lot of work happening behind the scenes. Some Management Plans are available on the website. Table to be included in Q3 slide pack.	To be actioned
			3	Provide update on SIA coordination between REZ projects	AH	Next Meeting	In slide pack	To be presented at Q3 meeting
			4	Provide a copy of the Heritage Management Plan to CRG members	JF	When available	Currently with DPHI	To be actioned
5	A copy of the policy and application results will be provided when available for CEBP community grants through Regional Development NSW	JS	When available		Results were provided at this meeting within the slide deck			

7	Follow-up ACEREZ in terms of fire safety requirements for onsite infrastructure and assets	YL		With DPIE, LEMC & RFS	Complete
8	Road upgrades: EIS outlines work to be carried out. Details to be confirmed	TP		Addressed by DP in presentation	Complete
9	Will intersection design cope with future deliveries of blades	AH		Addressed by DP in presentation	Complete
10	Confirm when the 35-year life of the transmission line project between EnergyCo and the government commences	MW		MW confirmed period is from Financial Close	Complete.
11	Future presentation on CEBP, evaluation process, allocation of remaining \$58M, timing, whether Local Community Small Grants Fund is ongoing or rolling on	YL	Next meeting	Held over	
12	Confirm whether Ulan Rd & Golden Highway intersection is to be upgraded	AH		Addressed by DP in presentation	Complete
13	Timeframe of movements/intervals of OSOM vehicles leaving Port	AH		Addressed by DP in presentation	Complete

5	Declarations	Chair	No changes to previous declarations
6	Correspondence report	Chair	As per the meeting notice & final agenda sent 2 May 2025 with three additional items; reminder, final agenda, slide pack & correspondence from resident, which was forwarded to ACEREZ.
7	ACEREZ CEO introduction		Introduction by Steve Masters (SM). Provided background of his experience in the industry. Explained he has spent the last six weeks getting out to meet as many people as possible. Aware of challenges and opportunities of the project and said cumulative impacts are not lost on the team.

8	ACERZ presentation	TP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presentation included indicative construction timeline, pre-construction minor works at Merotherie, Merotherie Road upgrade, Merotherie Road and Golden Highway intersection upgrade.</li> </ul>
8.1	Construction update and road upgrades	TP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Indicative construction timeline.</li> <li>Pre-construction minor works – Merotherie, work completed in the past two months and work to be carried out in May.</li> <li>Merotherie Road upgrade – Stage 1, Stage 2, Stage 3 and Stage 4.</li> <li>Merotherie Road and Golden Highway intersection upgrade. CK – do you have pull over or turning lanes at this intersection. DP advised attenuating right hand turn.</li> <li>Merotherie Road update – BS, with the proposed road widening, will there be tree removal – TP advised, yes. JH enquired whether farmers had been approached about the tree removal, so they can plant replacement trees. CK asked if wind farm developers wish to develop this area, will they have to upgrade roads to facilitate movements, etc. DP advised yes, will need to cater for blades and components.</li> </ul>
8.2	Community Engagement	KL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engagement with community, stakeholders, landowners, LGAs, community groups and organisations.</li> <li>ACERZ also attended shows, pop-ups and markets. Will launch Schools Education Program in Term 2. JH asked if Merriwa Central School is on the list. <b>KL took on notice to check. ACTION.</b> RH asked whether the program will deliver content across the curriculum for both Primary &amp; Secondary schools. KL confirmed content will be delivered to both Primary and Secondary Schools. It was confirmed that teacher &amp; student kits will be provided. RH asked whether information on electricity, batteries and panels will also be included. It was confirmed that it would. KL advised that a link will be provided to the education program once released. <b>ACTION.</b></li> <li>Status of the program of community engagement activities. BS reiterated that Wollar is outside the line on the REZ map. Has been in discussions with EnergyCo for alternate funding. Noting that the switching station and power lines start in Wollar. Looking forward to receiving formal response from EnergyCo. BS thanked representatives from ACERZ &amp; EnergyCo for attending the Wollar Progress Association meeting.</li> </ul>
8.3	Industry & Aboriginal Participation	SMA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Priorities and plans for Industry &amp; Aboriginal participation.</li> <li>Strategies and actions for industry engagement and capability development.</li> <li>Local employment and skills development.</li> <li>Strategies and actions for Aboriginal participation.</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strategies and actions for workforce diversity. JH requested a breakdown of location (suburb) for the number of local people referred to in the statistics slide. <b>SMa took on notice. ACTION.</b> KD also asked whether this could include the percentage for each LGA.</li> <li>Early outcomes for local industry and workforce engagement. KL asked whether ACERZ will work with existing Aboriginal employment providers. SMa confirmed they would. JH commented that some communities don't have employment agencies. SMa advised that they are also going through TAFE and secondary schools. JH stated that there is also an issue of transport, in terms of young people being able to get to and from work. Noted. JH advised there are problems with 'education borders'; Merriwa is in the Muswellbrook district and Coolah students go to Mudgee TAFE. JH commented that the other major problem for women returning to the workforce is the lack of childcare in the region.</li> </ul>
8.4	Maintenance Facility	DSC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information on the proposed maintenance facility in Caerleon, including location, design, FTEs, local economic benefits, etc. JH asked if the facility will be manned by permanent staff. DSC advised that it will be a transient workforce. Usually a Monday to Friday scenario.</li> <li>Process for modification of SSI to enable facility. CRG to be notified when application goes on exhibition. <b>ACTION.</b></li> <li>Indicative program of planning, design, construction and completion. KR asked how traffic from the facility to Merotherie Rd will be managed. DSC advised that a Traffic Management Plan will be developed. Regular meetings are held with Departments, Agencies and Councils. Understands the concerns of the community in terms of traffic impacts.</li> </ul>
	<b>LUNCH</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Break from 11.54am to 12.14pm</b></li> </ul>
9	EnergyCo Update	AH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advised of recent meetings with community groups, General Managers from LGAs and site visits to Merotherie.</li> <li>Contract and financial close update.</li> <li>AER Financial Close revenue determination adjustment. Link to determination: <a href="#">Determinations and access arrangements   Australian Energy Regulator (AER)</a>.</li> <li>Advised on sentiment survey outcomes including feedback from participants that the preferred ways to receive information are newsletters in letterboxes, community social media groups, website and email newsletters. EnergyCo to provide update on AER determination at next CRG. <b>ACTION</b></li> <li>Access rights announcement.</li> <li>Map of renewable energy projects in relation to transmission line. RH asked how the biodiversity offsets fit in. AH responded that</li> </ul>

EnergyCo is coordinating this with the Commonwealth as to where they are attributed. AR suggested that someone present on the biodiversity offsets at a future meeting. **ACTION.**

CK enquired whether there would be a code of conduct across all the providers. AH advised that there has been approaches to developers to increase coordination. DCCEEW is also looking at introducing a ranking system where developers receive a score ([Developer Rating Scheme](#)). NM commented on the need for transparency and referred to a recent medial release from Minister Bowen: <https://consult.dcceew.gov.au/renewable-energy-developer-rating-scheme-developer-roi-process> Discussions on interest in a representative from Energy Climate Change and Sustainability to come and share more information on:

- a) Customers facing support and/or rebate community energy programs (eg EV charging, solar and battery programs), or
- b) Generation and utility scale energy strategy – progress on NSW roadmap.

**ACTION: CRG members to provide feedback to Chair on interest.**

NM & JH met with the Renewable Energy Infrastructure Commissioner in Dubbo and referred the following website:  
<https://www.aeic.gov.au/>

9.1	Community Employment Benefit Program	AH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting Communities – community support line, mental health support program is available to all community members across the REZ with additional support for impacted landholders.</li> </ul>
9.1	Port to REZ update	DP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Port to REZ map showing upgrades, pullover bays, etc.</li> <li>Proposed commencement of work locations.</li> <li>Appointed construction contractor is BMD.</li> </ul> <p>DP (Transport for NSW) advised that it is undertaking a review of items leaving port. Hope to commence a trial in September to determine timing of transport from Port to REZ.</p> <p>JH asked if TfNSW has consulted with Council about rest areas, pull over areas, hills to allow cars through. DP confirmed.</p> <p>CK commented that this will be an enormous problem. There are currently 40,000 grain trucks, mining trucks using these roads.</p> <p>JH asked if it is known what the number of items that can be released from port will be. DP responded that this is not known yet, further that an internal 'dry run' will be carried out in the next fortnight with NSW Police escorts, etc.</p> <p>JH asked if the number of OSOM loads for mining equipment are also taken into account. DP responded, not at the moment; focusing on getting port loads out. Permits issued OSOM movements are valid for 6 months, so it's hard to determine.</p> <p>JH raised concern with the effect on commuters, school runs, medical appointments, etc impacting travel times for motorists. DP noted that TfNSW is acutely aware and this is the purpose of the trials.</p>

- Plans for road adjustments at Jerrys Plains, Birriwa, Elong Elong. RH stated that Saxa Rd had been closed for some time & asked when it would be reinstated. DP advised that Ungula (project) are currently working with Council to reopen. RH raised concern with logging trucks travelling through the Mudgee town centre. KR asked how delays will be advertised to the community so they will be aware of the impacts. DiP advised that an operational strategy is being developed. Hoped to have real time information to track movements so people can plan their travel arrangements. JH commented that there are many dead zones, so motorists will be unable to access. Noted.

10	General Business	LA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>KR raised concern with the dongas on the side of the road in Dunedoo and asked how long they will be there. DP responded that there is a condition of consent limiting the number of heavy vehicle movements per day (5), therefore causing them to be parked. Once ACERZ has the required approvals, the restrictions will be lifted, which will allow them to be moved. SM stated that this matter could have been dealt with better and hoped to have them moved soon.</li> <li>JH asked where the sub-contractors doing upgrades are living. KL advised that most current workers are local. When the temporary accommodation complex is available, they will move there.</li> <li>JH enquired about the facility on Vinegaroy Road. DP advised that it is a workforce station; it has facilities for toilets, lunch room. No one will be sleeping on site.</li> <li>MS advised that he started with RE-Alliance three months ago. He will be attending the conference in Dubbo next month and hopes to catch up with NM.</li> <li>NM commented that there appears to be aggressive land banking in the proposed Stage 2. AH unaware of this.</li> </ul>
11	Next meeting	LA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Confirmed and agreed for Tuesday 12th August 2025 in Dubbo at 10am with the venue to be confirmed</li> </ul>
12	Meeting close	LA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meeting closed at 1:21 pm</li> </ul>

**Note: Presentations on the Central-West Orana Conservation Investment Strategy and the Social Impact Management Plan (included in this slide pack) were held over to the next CRG.**



## ACTIONS

No	Action	Responsibility	Due date	Comments / updates	Status
1	Provide feedback from sentiment survey when available in 2025.	AH	Complete		Actioned
2	Slide outlining timeline of management plans to be included in future CRG presentations	JF	Ongoing	Management plans being prepared	To be actioned
3	Provide a copy of the Heritage Management Plan to CRG members	JF	With DPHI for approval. When available		To be actioned
4	A copy of the policy and application results will be provided when available for CEPB community grants through Regional Development NSW	JS	When available		To be actioned
5	Future presentation on CEBP, evaluation process, allocation of remaining \$58M, timing, whether Local Community Small Grants Fund is ongoing or rolling on	YL	Next meeting		To be actioned
6	Whether Merriwa Central School is on the School Education Program for Term 2	KL	Next meeting		To be actioned
7	Provide link to education program	KL	When released		To be actioned
8	Provide breakdown of location (suburb) & percentage for each LGA for employment of locals	SMA	Next meeting		To be actioned
9	Notify CRG when modification of SSI (maintenance facility) application goes on exhibition	DSC	When available		To be actioned

No	Action	Responsibility	Due date	Comments / updates	Status
10					
11	Biodiversity offset presentation at future meeting	AR	Future meeting		To be actioned
12	Consider future presentation by Energy Climate Change and Sustainability representative	CRG members	Future meeting		To be actioned

## NEXT MEETING

**Date:** Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> August 2025

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

**Venue:** TBC (Dubbo)