

Meeting minutes

CENTRAL-WEST ORANA REZ COMMUNITY REFERENCE GROUP

Held on: 12/08/2025 – 10:00am to 1:00pm

At: Dubbo Regional Theatre and Convention Centre, 155 Darling Street, Dubbo

Chaired by: Lisa Andrews

Attendees:

Independent Chair	Lisa Andrews (Chair)
EnergyCo representatives	Amer Hussein – Community & Place Director (AH) Darren Clarke – Director of Regional Development (DC) Yvette Lloyd – Director Community Benefits & Outcomes (YL) Alicia Rados – Central-West Orana Snr Manager Community & Stakeholder (AR) Damien Pfeiffer – Transport for NSW – Director Development Services. (DP) <i>online</i> Rebecca Williams – Community Engagement Manager (RW)
LGA delegates	Councillor Katie Dicker, Mid-Western Regional Council (KD) <i>online</i> Councillor Kathy Rindfleish, Mayor of Warrumbungle Shire Council (KR) <i>online</i> Cr Pat Ryan, Upper Hunter Shire Council (PR) <i>online</i>
Government/MPs	Tony Fuller – Aboriginal Affairs Department delegate (TF)
Community representatives	Colin Kilby (CK)
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) Aleshia Lonsdale, Mudgee Local Aboriginal Land Council (AL) <i>online</i> David Thorne, NSW Farmers (Mudgee) Jillian Kirwan Lee, Foundation for Rural Regional Renewal (JKL)
ACERERZ representatives	Tung Pham, Project Wide Director (TP) Miranda Wood, Director of Communications and Stakeholder Engagement (MW) <i>online</i> Sonja Malcolm, Workforce Development & Training Manager (Sma) <i>online</i> Sharon Labi, Senior Manager Corporate Affairs (SL) Jodie Barrington, Stakeholder Engagement Manager (JB) <i>online</i> Emily Wheeler, Communications & Stakeholder Engagement Advisor (EW) Catie Anderson, Operations Services Director (CA) Juliano Santos – M&L Maintenance Director (JS)

	Frazer Hill – M&L Commercial Director (FH) Lyndon Frearson – GIC Director (LF) Jane Sullivan – Place Manager (JSu) Matthew Moon – Safety Manager (MM) Marlene Marquest – Health, Safety & Quality Director (MMA)
Absent	Beau Kassas, Mudgee Region Tourism Mayor Josh Black, Dubbo Regional Council David Walker, Burrendong Botanic Garden & Arboretum Neville Mattick, Community representative
Apologies	Jock Rice-Ward, Community representative Mel Manchee, Snr Electorate Officer Roy Butler's Office (Member for Barwon) Jane Diffey, Snr Electorate Officer Dugald Saunder's Office

AGENDA

1	Acknowledgement of Country	Chair
2	Welcome and introductions	Chair
3	Apologies	Chair
4	Governance/declarations	Chair / All
5	Business arising	Chair
6	Correspondence	Chair
7.0	ACEREZ – Construction & Road Upgrades	TP
7.1	ACEREZ – Community Engagement	JB
7.2	ACEREZ – Industry & Aboriginal Participation	SM
7.3	ACEREZ – Engagement with Emergency Services	MM
7.4	ACEREZ – Maintenance Facility	FH
7.5	ACEREZ – Generator Interface	LF
Break for lunch		
8.0	EnergyCo – Community & Employment Benefits Program	YL
8.1	EnergyCo - Strategic Offsets Delivery Agreement	DC
8.2	EnergyCo – Project Cost Update	AH
8.3	EnergyCo – Port to REZ	DP
9	General business	All
10	Next meeting	Chair

MEETING MINUTES

1	Acknowledgement of Country	Chair						
2	Welcome and introductions	Chair	Meeting opened at 10:30am					
3	Apologies	Chair	As listed					
4	Business arising from last meeting (20/05/25) Minutes finalised on 10/06/25	Chair	No	Action	Responsibility	Due date	Comments / updates	Status
			1	Provide feedback from sentiment survey when available in 2025.	AH	Complete		Complete.
			2	Slide outlining timeline of management plans to be included in future CRG presentations	JF	Ongoing	Management plans being prepared	Ongoing.
			3	Provide a copy of the Heritage Management Plan to CRG members	JF	With DPHI for approval. When available	Held over.	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	YL	When available	Held over.	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	In presentation.	Complete.
			6	Whether Merriwa Central School is on the School Education Program for Term 2	KL	Next meeting	Presentations held at Merriwa Central School on Tuesday 24 th June (primary school at 9.15am & 2 to the secondary school at 11am and 12.15pm.	Complete.

7	Provide link to education program	KL	When released	https://www.rezourceforce.com.au/	Complete.
8	Provide breakdown of location (suburb) & percentage for each LGA for employment of locals	SMA	Next meeting	In presentation.	Complete.
9	Notify CRG when modification of SSI (maintenance facility) application goes on exhibition	DSC	When available	On exhibition to 14/8/25: https://www.planningportals.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/mod-2-mudgee-maintenance-facility	Complete
10	Biodiversity offset presentation at future meeting	AR	Future meeting	In presentation.	Complete
11	Consider future presentation by Energy Climate Change and Sustainability representative	CRG members	Future meeting	No interest at this stage.	Complete.

Business Arising (cont).

CK enquired when the 35-year life of the transmission would start. Confirmed that it started from financial close, which commenced on 4/4/25 (SL).

CK enquired how the trial run of OSOM from Port to REZ went. Advised that DP would provide information today.

5	Declarations	Chair	DT advised of change in declarations. New governance form completed & submitted to chair.		
6	Correspondence report	Chair	As per the meeting notice & final agenda sent 08/08/25 with three additional items; email from RH with questions about agenda (responded), email from RH with feedback on presentation* and reminder with final agenda. *LA read out RH's email, with her permission. Following consideration of this matter it was agreed that, moving forward: - To avoid duplication of information presented to the CRG, project newsletters sent via the subscribed distribution list and emails sent by the Chair will be assumed as read. - Members invited to submit any questions on the content of these documents and chair will co-ordinate responses in between the CRG scheduled meetings. - RH stipulated that she did not wish to impose a greater workload on volunteer members.		
7.0	ACERZ Construction & Road Upgrades update	TP	Presentation included Indicative construction timeline, construction update, Merotherie Road upgrade and three-month lookahead. JH asked when people will be living at the accommodation camp. TP advised workforce will live offsite until October, when people will then move into the accommodation facilities. BS enquired whether the biodiversity offsets are in place. TP said the team completed all surveying work before starting construction.		

CA advised the Biodiversity Management Plan has been completed/approved and explained some micro-siting will occur.

DC stated there is a deferred Biodiversity Agreement to 26/6/26 approved.

BS asked if the clearing at the Merotherie Road upgrade was subject to biodiversity offsets. CA confirmed yes.

CK asked whether access tracks between Merotherie Road and Elong Elong would be all-weather and if the area will be fenced. TP - confirmed the EIS allows for the delivery of tower components, access tracks will be fit-for-purpose (may need to import some material) and fencing will be erected, but not all around.

7.1	Community Engagement	JB	• Presentation included a list of community engagement undertaken between June and August 2025 as well as involvement in community events and sponsorships. • Advised of the opening of the ACERZ Community Information Centre in Mudgee, 30-32 Church Street, Mudgee. All members invited to attend an afternoon tea on 18 August. • MS asked how many people have already attended the centre. JB advised a few people had come specifically and others happened to visit the facility opportunistically.
7.2	Industry & Aboriginal Participation	SM	• Presentation included advice that the Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone Industry and Aboriginal Participation Plan is now available on the website. The document sets out targets for workforce diversity, supply chain and learning works. • Data was reported for Action Item 8 – providing a breakdown of location and percentage for each LGA for employment of locals. • Discussions regarding calculating locals, those living on site, sub-contractors and local businesses, including supply chains.
7.3	Engagement with Emergency Services	MM	• Engagement with emergency services including stakeholder meetings. Key topics of discussion have been: - Fire & flooding - Existing emergency services - First Aid and triage capacity; and - Security. • Identification of emergency water. • Reducing impact on existing emergency services and self-sufficiency. • Designated shelter-in-place locations, shelter-in-place and safer places triggers. • JH raised concerns with communication difficulties and not being able to contact personnel on the ground. MM advised that a lot of work has been done in this area and they are aware of the mobile phone reception black spots. Other methods will be used, including but not limited to UHF, Starlink and mobile repeater stations, etc. • BS asked about the 'hot works permits' and whether this takes into account 'total fire ban' days. MM confirmed that hot works will not be conducted on these declared days. MM explained that a 24-hour monitoring system of local fires will occur. If there is any

risk, the workforce will not be sent to the area. Testing and implementation of management plans will be undertaken.

- DT raised concerned with the mitigation of Barney's Reef, which hasn't burnt for 40 years. MM explained that Asset Protection Zones around camp and major compounds are in place and will work with farmers regarding fuel loads.
- BS asked about flooding / extreme weather events. MM advised that modelling has been done; they are aware of flood heights and have been working with the Design team. Causeways have been identified and included in road designs, and discussions have occurred with Councils at a high level to ensure infrastructure and road networks are managed.
- CK enquired why paramedics will not treat local residents. MM explained that medical personnel are for the workforce so the workforce do not put additional load, where possible, on the local medical system.
- Discussions on the emergency water on site, dams and bores to assist with firefighting activities. TP confirmed DT's question that sufficient water is available.

7.4	Maintenance Facility	LF	• Provided an update on the SSI application currently with Department of Planning for the Maintenance Facility at 1 Marsh Ave, Caerleon. • The application is on exhibition until 14/08/2025.
7.5	Interface with Generators	LF	• Presentation explained how ACEREZ is working with developers who have secured access rights from EnergyCo to connect to the transmission network. • Explained the Generator Integration Centre, its missions and values. • Provided information on generator engagement framework. • KM asked if there is a list of Access Right Holders. LF advised that this information is available on the website: Central-West Orana Access Scheme EnergyCo • JKL enquired about the number of projects currently in the development/application stage and whether there was one centralised area where the projects were listed. AH responded that through EnergyCo's interaction with the Department of Planning they are aware of 47 potential projects in the declared area. All are at various stages and available on the Major Planning Portal link: Major Projects Planning Portal - Department of Planning and Environment • LF explained that ACEREZ is working with all the access rights holders and noted of all the proposed developments, only 1 in 4 will likely proceed. • CK raised concern with some access rights holders and their interaction with landowners/farmers and whether there is a Code of Conduct in place. LF explained the guidelines, which outline the requirements. Companies risk being removed for inappropriate behavior. AH invited members to provide information to EnergyCo if they are aware of any concerns.

- 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.
- MS enquired whether there was any pushback from Councils, anti-groups, etc. AH responded that the sentiment has remained relatively neutral. There are pockets of locals that are in opposition, however EnergyCo is working through to try and resolve any concerns. Further explained that members of the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry had recently visited the site and held a public hearing involving landowners and community groups.

LUNCH

• Break from 12.08pm to 12.22pm

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| 8 | EnergyCo Update
8.1 – Community
Employment Benefits | YL | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presented on Round 1 of the CWO REZ CEBP that has been announced to date. Of the \$128M, \$60M has been allocated. • An online survey will be undertaken to gain feedback on the process. Action: Send survey when available. YL sought feedback from members at the meeting. JKL provided feedback on the small grants fund; there was no form on the website for groups to apply, which caused confusion. YL explained the intention of this process. JH advised of similar issues, stating that an EOI should have been available on the website to assist those wishing to apply. • Explained how these benefits were distributed with graphs showing LGA for each delivery stream. • JH stated that she was under the impression that UHSC had applied for a grant, however, it didn't show in the graph. YL to check. Action. • Informed of the allocation of further funding informed by evaluation outcomes. • CK wanted it noted that in the workshop attended by CRG members, there was firm opinion that the Small Community Benefits Program should be lifted from \$10k to \$100k to assist the communities most impacted by the project. • KM asked if the First Nations Groups applications have been allocated. YL advised that the announcements have not been released, however, hope to soon. • JH commented that the workshop held in Cassilis three weeks prior to the applications closing, stated that application forms would be available on the website, yet they weren't for the SCBP. • JKL stated that it should be an open process, not by invitation to selected groups. Asked if there is a Road Map process for the remaining \$50M in terms of areas (education, environment, childcare, etc). YL responded that the team is currently looking at moving into the strategic space to map out a different process. • JH commented that roads are a huge issue but were excluded from infrastructure funding with the LGAs. This should be reconsidered. |
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8.1 Strategic Offsets Delivery Agreement	DC	- Presented on: - the expectation of EnergyCo in partnership with DCCEEW, delivering all offset obligations for the project. - the Conservation Investment Strategy that was published by DCCEEW last month. - the enhanced biodiversity conservation outcomes and SODAs providing additional financial and compliance certainty. - supporting landowners, so opportunities are not lost. - JH requested that hard copies of the Conservation Strategy be made available at the Community Information Centre. AH agreed. Action. - JH asked DC for an example of probity checks. DC explained process where specific species are identified and proactively procured.
8.2 Project Cost Update	AH	- Presented on the AER financial close revenue determination adjustment. - Explained the original proposal – transmission link and how the conceptual proposal differs greatly to the current project, including increased power generation and life of the project. - AER has determined NER-equivalent (consumer-funded) project costs at \$5.526B, which is calculated on development, construction, property acquisition, etc.
8.3 Port to REZ	DP	- Presented on the Port of Newcastle to Elong Elong program with the appointment of the contractor (BMD), the site office in Birriwa and the 12-month construction program. Stated that most intersections will be complete by late 2025. - Advised of the locations of the eight new pullover bays for OSOM vehicles to let other vehicles pass. - JH enquired about the proposed “dry run” of OSOM vehicle from Port to REZ mentioned at the previous CRG. DP responded that the exercise was complete and had opened up issues that need to be addressed, including current restrictions on the Golden Highway. DP advised that risk workshops will be undertaken to see if the restrictions can be adjusted. A professional logistics expert has been engaged. - JH asked about the cumulative impacts study that she thought was going to be available from Minister Sharpe’s office. AH responded that the government steering committee met last month, and it is proposed there will be a staged release to Council and the committee. - Discussions regarding the bridges that will require widening to allow for components, however, these won’t allow for other vehicles to pass. DP advised that trucks will be escorted by Police to manage road users. - BS enquired about the status of the Traffic Management Plan (TMP) and how it would interface with the individual projects being built to connect to the grid and their TMPs. DC advised there won’t be an overall TMP as it doesn’t make sense to deal with

temporary arrangements.

- CK raised concern with the number of passing bays, stating it won't be enough, given the number of truck movements from other sources, including the grain industry, mining industry, etc and asked whether night\time movements will be considered. DP explained this will be considered as part of the risk workshops.

9	General Business	LA	• KP asked if consultation with landowners can be advertised more. DP explained that consultation had already occurred. • JH asked if DP could present at the next CRG an update on the Port to REZ. Action. • BS explained the importance of compliance with the various management plans by workers/sub-contractors, the importance of inductions/tool box talks and a Code of Conduct to ensure people's accountability. • RH requested that communication be passed on down to the sub-contractors/personnel on the ground, especially in relation to clearing of vegetation and biodiversity.
10	Next meeting	LA	• Confirmed and agreed for Tuesday 18th November 2025 in Mudgee at 10am with the venue to be confirmed
11	Meeting close	LA	• Meeting closed at 1:35 pm

ACTIONS

No	Action	Responsibility	Due date	Comments / updates	Status
1	Slide outlining timeline of management plans to be included in future CRG presentations	JF	Ongoing	Management plans being prepared	Ongoing
2	Provide a copy of the Heritage Management Plan to CRG members	JF	With DPHI for approval. When available	Held over	To be actioned
3	A copy of the policy and application results will be provided when available for CEPB community grants through Regional Development NSW	JS	When available	Held over	To be actioned
4	Send online survey to members on CEBP application process	YL	When available		To be actioned
5	Check whether application for CEBP funding was made by UHSC	YL	Next meeting		To be actioned
6	Hard copies of Conservation Strategy to be made available at the Community Information Centre	AH	ASAP		To be actioned
7	Port to REZ Update at next CRG	DP	Next meeting		To be actioned

NEXT MEETING

Date: Tuesday 18th November 2025

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

Venue: TBC (Mudgee)