

Burrendong Wind Farm Community Consultative Committee (CCC)

DATE: 28 May 2021

VENUE: Horatio Motel, 15 Horatio Street, Mudgee

ATTENDEES:

Chairperson: Garry West (GW)

Community Members: Jacqui Coates (JC), Nathan (NC), Heather Gough-Fuller (HG-F), Justin Gard (JG), Carmel Vecchio (CV)

Mid-Western Regional Council Representative: Nil

Stakeholder Representatives: Brad Bliss (BB), Chris Pilley (CP)

Epuron Representatives: Andrew Wilson (AW), Melissa Pisani (MP)

Minute Taker: Rebecca Croake

Meeting opened at 1:34 pm

- **Welcome**
- Chairperson welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for applying for CCC.
- The Chair advised that he engaged Rebecca Croake to be an independent minute-taker.

- **Apologies:**
No apologies.

- **Declaration of Pecuniary Interest by Committee Members**
The Chair indicated that he was paid to Chair the Committee. The Chair stated that it is a commercial arrangement with Epuron. All committee members advised they had previously submitted their forms on pecuniary interests and code of conduct to the Chair.
- **Overview of CCC process – Chairperson**
- The Chair stated that the SEARS, which are issued by Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) outline what is required by a proposed development during the environmental assessment process, and also determines if a Project needs a CCC prior to the preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or after. Typically, CCC's are established prior to the preparation of an EIS.
- The Chair stated that he was appointed by DPIE to be the independent chair for the Burrendong Wind Farm (BWF) CCC.
- The Chair indicated that he Chairs several CCCs for State Significant Developments and State Significant Infrastructure projects around the state.
- The Chair stated that he invited the alternate members to attend the first meeting, so everybody is given a good overview of the Project at the start of the CCC process.
- The Chair indicated that a Mid-Western Regional Council (MWRC) representative was appointed to the CCC and invited to this meeting; however, was not present (Cr. Sam Paine).
- The Chair stated that it was Dubbo Regional Council (DRC) policy not to appoint representatives to CCCs. DRC has requested minutes from the CCC meetings. The majority of the Project is in the MWRC Local Government Area.

- The Chair stated that the Department did not appoint everyone who applied to be a member of the CCC.
- The Chair advised that draft minutes will be circulated via email following the meeting within 7 days for review by attendees. After a further 7-10 days, they will be finalised and uploaded on the project website and become a public document.
- The CCC process is a way of keeping community and key stakeholders informed on State Significant projects, which are typically large and complex projects usually with major economic benefits and environmental impacts. CCCs are formed for discussion and whilst they are not regulatory bodies and can't make decisions, they can make recommendations to proponent (Epuron) as part of the consultation process. The proponent is required to undertake a range of stakeholder and community consultations in addition to the CCC.
- Questions (JC): is this a small CCC group?
- The Chair advised that CCCs vary, but typically have around 5 to 7 community and stakeholder representatives plus Council representatives.
- Question (HG-F): Is there capacity to re-canvas for community members?
- The Chair responded by stating that two people expressed an interest in the CCC but did not return their nomination forms to him. The Chair stated that if people do submit their nomination forms, he will forward onto the Department for their decision. The Local Aboriginal Lands Council (LALC) was also invited to nominate but did not respond.
- HG-F stated that residents along Twelve Mile Rd were not aware of the project at the time of advertising for the CCC.
- The Chair advised that it might be awkward to readvertise, but if anybody has particular interest, tell them to contact him and he will forward them nomination forms, which he will send them to DPIE.
- HG-F stated that distribution of information regarding the Wind Farm appeared to stop at Yarrabin Road.
- Question (JC): How many people were contacted?
- AW stated that they had a list of people for their newsletter which was developed over time. The newsletter included an advertisement for CCC members in addition to being in the local newspaper.
- MP stated that people can sign up for project newsletters via the project website. The last newsletter was issued in December 2020 and the next one will be issued soon. These can be sent via email or postal mail, whichever is preferred
- AW advised that the CCC Guidelines also permit people to attend the CCC meetings as an observer, but they must apply to the Chairperson.
- The Chair indicated that CCC meetings generally occur every 3 months during the development phase but depends on the EIS progress. The Chair suggested that a 12pm lunch meeting for the next CCC meeting would better accommodate members travel arrangements.
- **Correspondence**
None.
- **Company report:**
Project overview
Presentation from AW regarding the Project and the Chair indicated that the presentation will go on the website.

- AW stated that Epuron has been working on renewable developments since 2003 (18 years). Epuron is Australian owned and based in North Sydney with ~22 employees.
- Question (JC): Why would you not do solar for this project? How many WFs have not been approved?
- AW stated that one small wind farm was not approved located on the South Coast of NSW where the Council was the consent authority. Both solar and wind farms sometimes don't go ahead as projects really rely on a number of factors including landholders that are interested.
- Question (JC): If the Department approves the Burrendong Wind Farm, who looks after the construction?
- AW stated that Epuron does not construct or operate large scale wind farms, but typically sells the project to investors who do have the ability to construct and operate the projects
- AW stated that Epuron has projects across Australia, NSW focussed but also throughout QLD, Tas. Solar Farms in NT are generally for small scale remote communities, not connected to the NEM. Silverton Wind Farm, near Broken Hill is a good resource using existing infrastructure.
- AW stated that Epuron has 7 Projects approved, 4 are now operating in NSW and 11 in development phase including 3 in NSW (including Burrendong Wind Farm). Epuron own and operate small scale solar farms which help fund project development activities. Epuron do not have the capital to fund and construct large scale solar and wind projects.
- Question (CV): Where do the subsidies go?
- AW and the Chair replied by saying that there are no Government subsidies for wind farms now. Renewable energy target which was implemented by the Government required electricity retailers to sell a portion of their energy sold from renewable sources. The renewable energy target has been met. New projects are competing to sell their energy in the national electricity market.
- Question (CV): Are the State Government putting money into the Burrendong Wind Farm?
- The Chair stated that the only State Government contribution has been through the identification of renewable energy zones. The Central West Orana Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) is one of the renewable energy zones established by the NSW Government.
- AW stated that Australia needs new power sources, with all operating coal fired power stations in NSW due to be retired by 2043.
- Question (JC): What is the lifespan of the Wind Farm?
- AW stated that wind farms are generally operational for 20-25 years.
- Question (JC): Where will the substation and connection point for the wind farm be located?
- AW stated that the wind farm will connect into the existing TransGrid 330kV transmission network.
- *Discussion regarding other renewable projects being planned around the region.*
- Question (JC): What countries will be supplying the turbines?
- AW stated that turbine components are manufactured around the world including in America, Europe, China, Mexico and Germany. In the past turbine components have been manufactured locally (in Australia), including blades in a factory in Portland VIC, nacelle assembly in Tasmania and towers made in Tasmania, Brisbane and Victoria.
- CP initiated discussion regarding the logistics of getting turbines to the site.
- AW stated that the logistics will be investigated as part of the studies required in the EIS. Access options via Twelve Mile Rd or Yarrabin Rd are being assessed. Any requirements for

Epuron to maintain and / or repair the roads after construction of the wind farm will be written into conditions of consent.

- AW stated that the Burrendong Wind Farm is a Major Project under NSW Planning Legislation. Council does not approve but is a stakeholder.
- NC expressed concerns regarding the use of consultants who might just provide what Epuron want.
- The Chair stated that this generally does not happen due to Department standards and requirements for the EIS, review processes etc. Consultants need to verify assessment methodologies which are within prescribed guidelines. The Department looks in detail at what is in the EIS and will get them to re-do it if not happy.
- *Discussion from attendees regarding road locations, other renewable projects in the region and nearby infrastructure.*
- AW stated that there is potential for turbines to be placed on WaterNSW and WaterNSW are interested but this has not been finalised.
- Question (NC): Are you tying into a new powerline?
- AW stated that the wind farm may connect to a new Renewable Energy Zone powerline, but that the existing TransGrid transmission line has adequate capacity.

- **Planning and approvals**
- AW stated that the scoping document and SEARS issued from the Department are available on the project website and the EIS will be in accordance with these requirements.
- Question (BB): Timeframe?
- AW states that the EIS gets reviewed by the Department, and then goes on public exhibition for the public to make comments. Epuron then reviews the comments and makes changes where needed. The Independent Planning Commission may also become part of the determination.
- AW stated that the assessments are still in progress.
- AW stated that consultation to date includes landholders, DRC, MWRC, Local Land Services, Crown lands - Survey Department, Roads and Maritime Service, and Biodiversity Conservation Division,

- **Community benefits**
- AW stated that residents who host turbines receive an annual lease on part of their land and there is also benefit sharing for immediate neighbours affected.
- Community enhancement fund will be established typically around \$2,500 - \$3,000 per turbine for boarder community projects, including road upgrades, mobile phone towers etc.,
- Question (NC): Does the wind farm affect mobile reception?
- AW stated that there no point-to-point mobile phone signal across the wind farm. There may be potential for Epuron to work with telecom providers to improve reception.
- *There was lots of discussion regarding mobile reception.*
- AW stated that it is up to the proponent (Epuron) in consultation with the community to determine how they want to set up their community enhancement fund. Sometimes Councils have control over the fund, however, sub-committees of CCC are often part of the process.

- **Milestones and timelines**

- AW stated that the SEARS were received during October 2020, the Federal approval (EPBC Referral) has been lodged and Epuron aim to lodge the EIS in Q3 2021. This is a tentative timeline. It takes about a year from lodging to approval, and another year to begin construction. Construction will take about 18 months or longer, with a staged approach proposed.
- *There was discussion regarding the various turbine components.*
- AW stated that different brands and models have different generator arrangements. Some turbine models have gearboxes and some are direct drive. Hydraulic pitch blades shut down automatically when wind speeds exceed a threshold and restart once below the threshold. Generally, there is about 200 to 800 L of oil in each turbine gearbox
- Question (CV): Is the noise assessment still happening?
- AW stated that the noise assessment is still in progress. The noise consultant picks representative locations for background noise monitoring. Noise predictions are provided for all nearby residences. For non-involved houses, noise must be less than 35 decibels or background noise plus 5 decibels, whichever is the greater. Insect noise is filtered out from the background noise data. Generally, houses >1.5 km away meet the noise criteria. There is no distance-based criteria.
- Question (JC): Has there been any studies on turbine noise and mental health?
- AW stated that there has been lots of studies on wind turbine noise and health. The Federal Government appointed a Wind Farm Commissioner (now the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner) who handles complaints and publishes a report every year.
Action: MP to provide link to the website.

- **Matters, which Community Representatives wish to raise.**

- BB provided feedback the Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) were concerned the heritage field survey processes and the methodology adopted by the archaeologists were not adequate. Detailed feedback notes were provided to AW.
- BB stated that he received general community comments including some farmers, against, some for the wind farm, as well as general complaints regarding how the turbines would look in environment.
- BB stated that he had received many comments from the local community regarding their concerns in relation to the impacts of another wind farm in the area.
- *There was lots of discussion regarding transport routes.*
- Question (NC): What happens to the turbines when they are at end of life?
- AW stated that equipment is removed and the land rehabilitated. Most of it gets recycled except the fibreglass which cannot be recycled yet. The conditions of consent deals with rehabilitation and removal.
- Question (HG-F): Where local council roads are upgraded for construction of the project who is responsible for their on-going maintenance?
- AW indicated that the wind farm company is usually responsible for maintenance of the council roads used during the construction of the wind farm with responsibility for ongoing maintenance reverting to the council.

- **Community Engagement Opportunities**

Question (HG-F): Can this CCC recommend a proportion of the community enhancement fund to go to local indigenous groups?

The Chair stated that is depends on how the proponent sets the fund up.

- **General Business**
Not discussed.
- **Meeting dates, times, venues**
 - The Chair stated that the next meeting should be held early in Q3 to align with EIS submission. Friday 24 September 2021, commencing at 12pm. Venue TBC.

Actions

NO.	ACTIONS	ACTION BY
1	Epuron will forward links to the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner's website information regarding wind farm noise and health, and the Commissioner's last published annual report (2019).	MP
2	Epuron will publish an online feedback form on the BWF project website	MP

Meeting closed 3:18 pm.