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O/N H-1349524

**INDEPENDENT PLANNING COMMISSION**

**APPLICANT MEETING**

**RE: SPRINGDALE SOLAR FARM**

**PANEL:**                      **PROF ZADA LIPMAN (Chair)**  
**ANDREW HUTTON**

**OFFICE OF THE IPC:**      **JANE ANDERSON**

**COUNCIL:**                    **STEVEN REID**  
**JAMIE McMAHON**

**DATE:**                        **3.30 PM, TUESDAY, 8 DECEMBER 2020**

PROF LIPMAN: Good afternoon, and welcome. Before we begin, I'd like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet, and pay my respect to the elders past, present and emerging. Welcome to the meeting today for the Springdale Solar Farm Project. RES Australia propose to develop 100 megawatt solar farm on a rural property, located approximately 3.5 kilometres north of the ACT and seven kilometres northwest of Sutton village in the Southern Tablelands Region of New South Wales.

My name is Professor Zada Lipman, I'm the Chair of this Commission panel, and I'm joined by my colleague, Commissioner Andrew Hutton, and Jane Anderson from the Office of the Independent Planning Commission. In the interests of openness and transparency and to ensure the full capture of information, today's meeting is being recorded, and a full transcript will be produced and made available on the Commission's website. This meeting is one part of the Commission's consideration of this matter and will form one of several sources of information upon which the Commission will base its determination.

It is important for the Commissioners to ask questions of the attendees and to clarify issues whenever it is considered appropriate. If you're asked a question and not in a position to answer, feel free to take the question on notice and respond in writing, and we will put the information on our website. I request that all members here today introduce themselves before speaking for the first time, and for all members to ensure they do not speak over the top of each other to ensure the accuracy of the transcript. We will begin. I think we have – Jamie has the presentation, or is it Steve?

MR REID: Steve, yes.

PROF LIPMAN: Right.

MR REID: I'll be doing it.

PROF LIPMAN: Right. Steve, so we'll let you go through with the presentation

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MR REID: Yes.

PROF LIPMAN: - - - then after that, we'll take – you'll take questions. Is that right?

MR REID: Yes.

PROF LIPMAN: Okay.

MR REID: Thank you, guys. Okay. Everyone can see my screen, I hope?

PROF LIPMAN: Yes, we can.

MR REID: Yes.

5 MR HUTTON: Yes, yes. Thank you.

MR REID: So the presentation hopefully should take no more than 20, 25 minutes. We'll ask questions at the end, hopefully, if that's suitable for you guys. So just a quick agenda, we will run through – myself and Jamie – who we are, RES, why  
10 we're here, project overview and then a conclusion, and answer some of your questions at the end.

PROF LIPMAN: Yes.

15 MR REID: So introduce myself, I'm a development manager for RES Australia, been with – been in the industry 10 – served for 10 years. Four-ish – four and a-half years of those, I've been in Australia working for RES in the selection and consenting of large scale solar. Jamie's been supporting RES on this project. I'll let Jamie introduce himself.

20 MR McMAHON: Yes. Hello. Jamie McMahon, associate director at Aecom – planning and environment section of Aecom, and I've – yes, as it says there, nearly 20 years of experience in this field. Previously, an ecologist, in fact, then moved to planning several years ago now. And I've worked in the past on several renewable  
25 energy projects, including quite a lot of large offshore wind in the UK, and currently on Australia's own offshore wind farm down in – off the coast of Gippsland, Victoria, and certified environmental practitioner with impact assessor speciality.

MR REID: Thanks, Jamie. So just a couple of very quick slides on RES, just to  
30 have a context, as this name will come across. It's in Australia. We're obvious across a number of markets. We are a private company, owner – ultimate owner is Sir Robert McAlpine construction company in the UK. We set up 39, nearly 40 years ago, so we've been in the renewal business a long, long time. Some stats there. 18 gigawatts projects across our portfolio, 16 gigawatts of operational assets – that's  
35 assets which we manage for ourselves and a third party – and then 3000 employees. So the biggest share of that is a construction base of employees over in the US, and then we're engaged in all technologies, so wind solar storage in the US, transmission and distribution, so just a little bit of context.

40 And behind it all, I again say in a bit of context why we do the job we do. We really do – this is our – RES's company vision that we really do believe in it and it's set up with – you know, we're all tasked with creating a future where, you know, everyone has access to zero carbon energy and we really think, you know, in recent months and years that that's something that we'll – we're kind of transitioning to, so that's  
45 just a bit of context for why we do what we do. So on project specifics, we – you'll, no doubt, have seen this image in the EIS, just worth putting up again. Project

location, as you will know by now, is very close to the ACT. We're actually point 5 ks from the border.

5 The red image there in the middle is the site, about 370 hectares of land, and you can see Sutton to the south, about seven ks, so, yes, gives you – gives you an idea where we'll be – where we'll go next week and look forward to taking you guys around. So I thought a useful thing to do was have a high-level timeline because the project has been a little bit protracted and elongated. I thought we'd just run through the high-level timeline first, so – the project was identified by – not ourselves, as you may or  
10 may not know. Renew Estate, our competitor/developer, identified the project in 2017 – early 2017 and they secured the land – one landowner site with Bruce and Jill back in August 2017 also. They submitted a SEARs. That was received in September '17.

15 They then started a first consultation – that's back in December '17 – and there was a second public consultation which took place during the expression period of the EIS. There were supplementary SEARs issued in May of 2018 for Commonwealth assessment, then in 2018, Aecom, I guess, have been involved from the start. I've compiled the EIS and development application, that was submitted in January '18,  
20 and went on display – public display for two months in July and August of that year, so this is still all Renew Estate before RES got involved with the project.

Then the response – the submissions due date, that was in October of '18, and then things kind of were put on hold by Renew Estate, they had some competing projects  
25 and resourcing issues, and the project went on hold from summer 2018 to – '18/19 – to summer '19/20 when we started to discuss the opportunity of taking on the project with Renew Estate. So that culminated in the project going across to RES after some negotiation in April of 2020 and RES decided that, you know, to keep Aecom in the box seat and keep with Aecom to complete the planning process. DPIE, of course,  
30 were keen to move the project forward, they've been in hiatus for 18 months, and we were given a deadline of May – end of May to submit our response to submissions.

We met that and it was 31<sup>st</sup> of May we submitted a response to submission and an assessment before the DPIE. And, yes, it's really been since May where we've been  
35 in a conversation with DPIE about updates and requests for further information, and that's all culminating, and the assessment report and recommendation for approval on 25<sup>th</sup> of November, so they're the high-level. I'll run through this quite quickly, so why and why here? I guess – well, we all know there's a need to decarbonise. The transition's underway. We have, you know, as ..... we have committed to, you know,  
40 reducing our emissions by 26 to 28 per cent from 2005 levels, so there's an absolute need. And time's of the essence. That's kind of tied in with that also, I suppose.

Existing grid capacity, I guess these are specifically for this site. When we look for a site in solar wind we are driven largely by, you know, constraints and network  
45 constraints – big constraints, so we have – you know, we've the capacity at this particular location. There's two – 132 kV lines running through, plus an assigning of the 330 kV line. That means we've got a very robust grid connection which really

has started to drive projects and locations of projects, so we find projects, you know, moving much closer to loads to avail ourselves of better marginal loss factors, and this is no different in this project. Good road access to site. We're really close to the Federal Highway. Yes. It is an excellent sun resource – it's not Queensland – but  
5 it's definitely – you know, it's a good resource.

Grazing land, so not arable land that we are taking away from cropping. We still intend to keep sheep on there so there'll be an agricultural element to it. Scale and size of the property is sufficient for our project, and topography, albeit it not flat, has  
10 – is within the parameters that works for a solar farm. Willing landowner, of course, nearby workforce and loaders discussed before, and, again, this is – it's not in a New South Wales renewable energy zone but it is in an ISP targeted region and so forth, for increased renewables. So those are some of the reasons and I'll just pick out the grade is kind of key – key for this project.

15 On to project evolution – so, again, this is back at the very concept of the project, the – with Renew Estate – and this is from the EIS, that it does show you how the project has – had to evolve from day one, I guess, where the top of the – top box shows a much larger footprint before any constraints analysis had have been undertaken and  
20 conversations with the community. There was a move, then, following that analysis to move back from the western side of the project – the western boundary for constraints, but also for visual impact, and we've – we've, you know, through further – when RES got involved, further requests from community and discussion with community has led us to go back and remove some more of the project that was  
25 originally designed by Renew Estate, and that's really down the next slide.

And then also during the assessment period, the department came to us and asked us to do a little bit more in terms of pulling back from a receptor to the north. So, I  
30 guess, what I'm saying to you all, that is where there's been an opportunity or there's been something asked of the project, it has listened and it has, where possible, tried to deliver and mitigate where it can. So the end result of that has really been a project that has substantially avoided environmental constraints and that's why it's a little bit of a funny design, but that is primarily the reason for that. And just where we have had interactions with the community and where there's – it is – has been  
35 possible to go back and keep the project economically viable, we have done so.

And this is the final layout I referred to in the former slide. Some of the areas you can pick out, this circled area, was formerly circa two hectares of solar panels which, we when took the project on, decided that the feedback – the feedback from the  
40 community about driving through the solar farm was something we could – we would try and help with and we could still maintain the project scale by removing that, and that was quite – that area was quite close to the road, so we removed that completely. The northern section there's a new receptor, R35, which was not there at the commencement of the project when Renew Estate started, but in the 18 months  
45 hiatus a shed, come house, that is a dwelling, was – was constructed on that platform, you can see on our boundary.

So when we submitted our ICS and assessment report, we did go back from that boundary and introduced a landscape buffer to that area. The Department then did ask us just to go back further and we've resulted in a 90 metre setback to the closest ..... solar panel on that particular boundary. And then the last change that's just

5 worth noting, the substation has found itself in the southwest corner now. It was formerly located where I've got my cursor at, you know, a good location to the project, close to the 132 line coming through to begin to, and then closest to the other side of the project, which it needs to do – needs to connect across the other side of the road.

10

However, we – the feedback from the department was the visual impact of the substation here on R5, and would we consider looking at a corner location where we did have some panels also located. So after some internal review and discussion with TransGrid we agreed to it and the project finds its substation, albeit it's not the most

15 cost-effective solution for the project, but it does resolve a visual impact on R5 with this tree belt completely screening any visibility of the proposed substation. The substation will also have vegetation screening. With the Aboriginal heritage overview – so, again, this is during Renew Estate's time – but through the process, the team at Aecom engaged with the local reps and there was good engagement and

20 good take-up for the site walk over.

20

I think five groups were on site for that process. There were 145 individual stones – artefacts were found over 12 sites and there was also three potential star trees detected that were located. There is a requirement for subsurface trial pits to be

25 undertaken, and that has been agreed with Heritage New South Wales to be a post-consent item. So – yes, ..... be undertaking the methodology which was approved by OEH back in 2018. We'll go through the – we will, for that process, go through the consultation with RAPs as we did previously, and a couple of phases to that process are onsite trial pits of the size shown there on the grids, the size shown, and this

30 could be expanded, if required, if any of these archaeological features are affected. And that's a detailed one, in accordance with the code of practice, so there is some archaeological Aboriginal heritage work to do post-consent.

25

30

Sutton community engagement, we – the project, I should say, you know, from start to finish – start to now, has had multiple project consultations. There have been two drop-in sessions, as noted before. There's been regular engagement, much more before RES became involved. There's been ..... lots of community engagement. RES has focussed more, since taking over on those closest to the project, with trying to understand how those – which are most impacted – affected and what we can do

35 for them, and, then again, COVID-19 impact. This year's been a very difficult year when we took over to really go about our community engagement the way with this – you know, we would've preferred to, which be on a face to face basis.

35

40

We have met many of the close neighbours face to face, but we would've probably done a drop-in session. Key concerns that we all know about from the community are, you know, loss of good agricultural land, effect on property values and, of course, visual impact. There are others, but that was, to me, to be the key ones.

45

We've also engaged with council – Yass Valley Council and, of course, the project on a whole ..... prior to us taking over. There was discussions that continued with RES, with the general manager, Chris, and, like, you know, they've largely gone well. We've – we probably saw things slightly differently.

5

Initially, the project did have good feedback from its drop-in sessions on the tangible benefit to the local community that you might think are good upgrades, some kind of upgrade for Tallagandra Lane, which is a gravel road – partially gravel, and that has been – that's where RES and Renew Estate tried to target the community benefit funding kind offer, and we have – we tried to discuss and tried to gather a bit of – seeking some kind of community benefit towards a road sealing program, which wasn't agreed, and we had to eventually move away from that to something that the council was able to manage and was – worked for them, I think is probably a way of putting it.

15

So I think, you know, we were definitely keen to see the project spend more money up front, so a larger payment would go towards one large project which would – we were wanting to be the road sealing – partial road sealing of Tallagandra Lane, but that was not favoured by council, and, instead, the community enhancement fund looks a little bit like this. So we have 100K which had obviously been committed to buying new estates and we stood behind, that would be paid on day one of construction and then 40K estimate per annum over 30 years, so, essentially, it works out to over one per cent of the council value of the project which is in line with the council's community enhancement fund policy.

25

There's also – yes, we haven't agreed that – the EPA, but we have set some requirements of it which deal with how the money and where the money would be spent, so we got – we got a little bit more out of that than just allowing council to just give us their normal – their standard EPAs, we've kind of crafted it a little bit, and they're very much agreeable to that also. Direct benefits, we have – or Renew Estate kicked off the discussions with – it'd be 13 landowners at the start, all landowners with neighbouring land, not just properties, not just a dwelling, and there was an offer on the table for those neighbours of either a payment towards a battery solar system or a revenue from the project, and we've sorted out with them to simplify that to an offering of a 5K index a month, which is easier to – easier to manage and administrate for the project.

35

So those discussions are ongoing and it's been quite difficult to get everyone to respond. We've been kind of waiting for the next trigger, which is the project going forward to this stage, so we're reigniting these conversations with all of the locals. We have had – we have had an ongoing conversation with those who are closest and the most impacted with it. There has been some early community funding in the form of payment sponsorship towards Gundaroo Common Association for a community project, a refencing project and a sponsorship or a donation to the Sutton RFS, linked to the bushfire work that they've undertaken, just kind of recognising that the RFS are local to all of our projects.

45

Some impact – overview of the impact mitigations – this is quite high-level, but I will probably get into a little bit more detail – but biodiversity funds we have control of action, EPBC, and we are offsetting for Golden Sun Moth and Superb Parrot. I should say we have largely avoided areas – much of the site has the native grasses that the Golden Sun Moth inhabit, and, similarly, for the Superb Parrot we’ve avoided, where possible, those hollow-bearing trees, so we have a small credit to offset. We’ve touched on heritage a little bit, that there is 15 sites. Of the 15, 13 have been avoided, so, essentially, we are – you know, again, the site’s been designed to avoid constraints. Subsurface testing’s to be completed post-consent, and we will again reach out to those Registered Aboriginal Parties to come back and help with that process.

Visual – we’ve talked a little bit about it again, but we have set back where we can. Without challenging the project economically, we have done what we can. We have also removed development areas and the relocation of the substation and, I guess, in the areas that we feel we can move back from there’s a commitment to a 20 metre depth of screening vegetation, so that’s a substantial commitment. Construction traffic – concerns about construction traffic coming through Sutton, project – we’ll mitigate those concerns through the traffic management plan. We – you know, we have – the project did look at alternatives, but that is the shortest route from the Federal Highway to site and limiting the amount of time on the local roads. It does come through the village, but we believe those ..... can be making it through the traffic management plan.

Tallagandra Lane requires to be re-sheeted, not to be sealed, and that will be carried out before construction, and as I said at the bottom, we have chosen the shortest route to site on local roads. I talked a little about this before. The closest neighbouring landowners are offered – have been offered a form a direct benefit. Not all have been interested because of their views on the project, but those conversations are ongoing and we have committed, although we have committed to the terms of an EPA with Yass Valley Council on the terms that we talked about previously. So, I guess, in conclusion, the project – we believe in the project, we believe the site – you know, it’s a great site for its solar resource.

Because of its infrastructure and co-location of existing lines, we’re not having to travel long distances with great infrastructure which is starting to become something that remains in the future, so this is taking – making use of the existing capacity in the system, which we’re willing to do. Again, the site is suitable for all those reasons and we have designed it to the topography. There is obviously flooding in certain areas, but we’ve designed it to those to kind of be shipped around those. And we have a workforce very closely located, which will be very helpful when it comes to construction, and projects that are consistent with the Yass Valley Council Economic Development Strategy, which does note it’s potential ..... of renewable energy from solar and wind resources.

Environmental assessment project indicated all impact could be suitably avoided and we have gone down that pathway of avoid, on the first, mitigate an offset, so we



would get into a little bit of discussion about that, but we have – we can see that through how the project has been designed and Jamie can hopefully talk to that a little bit more. And the project – I know there is a bit of a breakdown on for and against in the assessment report, because obviously we're in front of IPC panel for the reason of objections – there was a substantial amount of support of the – you  
5 know, some of those further away, but that's acknowledged that there's a philosophic mind to the decision and the requirement for a project like this – a significant project to go ahead.

10 And, yet, the project is in the public interest and, as I said at the top of the presentation, we have obligations, we have a commitment to targets and reductions and this is just a small piece of that, and there's plenty more work to do. So, you know, we think we have a big project but we've really worked hard to listen and change and adapt, where possible, and I hope that you agree with on that – agree  
15 with us on that. I think that's really all I have to say. Happy to take questions or move into the next part of the agenda, whatever you see as working best.

PROF LIPMAN: Thanks very much for that presentation, Steve. It's been very helpful. Yes. We do have a few questions. We might start off by just going to that  
20 last slide which related to the VPA.

MR REID: Okay. This one?

PROF LIPMAN: Yes, yes.  
25

MR REID: Yes.

PROF LIPMAN: I noticed there that you've mentioned that you've made offers to  
30 15 neighbouring landowners for a direct ongoing annual payment or some sort of a revised offer. Can you clarify whether you've made that in writing and whether that offer's still open to the landowners, and whether they've accepted?

MR REID: Yes. So the project – when I say the project – has made those offers. RES has reached out or tried to reach out to each of those landowners verbally, to  
35 move those conversations forward. Not everyone has responded to that verbal, but we have – we've been waiting for the project to get to this stage. We've kind of concentrated a little bit more on the neighbours who are closest to the project, so we've met with probably five neighbours closest to the project to discuss the direct benefits and visual impacts for those neighbours. So, yes, there is still work to be  
40 done following this to move that forward even more and – yes, so there has – the project has made those offers. RES is still to kind of firm up those offers in writing to all 15 landowners.

PROF LIPMAN: So you've been getting – sending out to those 15 landowners a  
45 formal letter offering those benefits. Will RES be sending out a formal letter - - -

MR REID: Yes.

PROF LIPMAN: - - - offering the benefits?

MR REID: Yes, yes, correct, correct.

5 PROF LIPMAN: Right. And would you be happy for us to put that in the conditions?

MR REID: Absolutely, yes.

10 PROF LIPMAN: Right – if it was approved, that is.

MR REID: Correct.

15 PROF LIPMAN: The other thing – yes. Where are we now? Could we go back to the biodiversity slide, please, unless you’ve got some questions on this, Andrew.

MR HUTTON: No, Zada, not on this particular slide, but I am interested in – I have a question on biodiversity - - -

20 PROF LIPMAN: Yes. Good.

MR HUTTON: - - - if you don’t ask it. Yes.

PROF LIPMAN: Yes. Okay.

25

MR REID: Okay. ....

MR HUTTON: That’s okay.

30 MR REID: Well, I think it’s moving a little bit. It was an overview slide, I think.

MR HUTTON: Or maybe the layout slide that shows the biodiversity polygon, then the - - -

35 PROF LIPMAN: Yes, the layout slide would be fine. Hang on, you’ve got the mitigation for Golden Sun Moth.

MR HUTTON: Yes.

40 PROF LIPMAN: And, actually, it would be useful to go to the layout slide for that, if you don’t mind, Steve.

MR REID: Yes, yes.

45 PROF LIPMAN: Thanks.

MR REID: Yes, yes.

MR HUTTON: Yes.

MR REID: No problem. Okay.

5 PROF LIPMAN: Okay. Here we are.

MR HUTTON: Perfect. Perfect.

10 PROF LIPMAN: I noticed that this area here has been set aside and – 60 hectares in total as a conservation measure to protect the Golden Sun Moth - - -

MR REID: Yes.

15 PROF LIPMAN: - - - and I think that's a very useful conservation benefit. I was wondering if there's any prospect of using that as an offset site, whether the landowners would come in on that and whether it could be procured from them, and then used as an offset site rather than paying into the fund.

20 MR REID: Yes. Jamie could talk a little bit to this. I think there may be a conflict with that, as that is a mitigation strategy set out. So correct me if I'm wrong, Jamie, but I'm not sure they would then be able to be used as offset. I think we've had – we have looked at this and had this discussion – I might be wrong on that – but it certainly would be – have a – you know, a management of some sort – you know, as part of the biodiversity management plan there would be, you know, a subplan – a  
25 Golden Sun Moth management plan. Jamie, I believe you could speak a bit more to that.

MR McMAHON: Yes. Thank you. So, yes, the area – as you can see in that map there, the vast majority of the occurrence of Golden Sun Moth occurs in that western  
30 strip of the property. You can see some isolated patches underneath the development area and that's the central western larger development area, but those – the eastern and central development area has completely avoided Golden Sun Moth habitat. And just noting at this point too, that the assessment of Golden Sun Moths was undertaken by Alison Rowell in Canberra, who's probably the foremost authority on  
35 Golden Sun Months in the region, if not in the state, so her expertise on this is very, very trusted with – by us, and her mapping here has been very accurate.

Prior to this project going ahead there was one single Golden Sun Moth record within this property and we found, I think, in the order of 430-odd records of Golden  
40 Sun Moths, so it kind of illustrates that much of this area is not absent of threatened species, it's mostly absent of survey effort. So once we've applied that survey effort, we've come across quite a large amount of legitimate Golden Sun Moth habitat which the project's worked very hard to avoid, in the first instance, and, even so, I think we've gone really quite successfully down that western edge and around the  
45 periphery of those central and eastern portions as well.

So in terms of your question, Zada, about the actual offset and setting aside that land more formally, that was a discussion that we had early on, but – and I am casting my mind back here. I think it was something that was – the actual landowner was – didn't really – he was – he wasn't super keen on going down that path of having a  
5 formal Biodiversity Stewardship Agreement over that part of the property, noting that that has ongoing obligations that are tied to the land title. So in this case, whoever's got it now, the ongoing activity in that land, which would be livestock grazing, would be able to continue, and, in fact, would be of direct benefit to the management of Golden Sun Moth in keeping the grass to a certain abundance and  
10 quantity, and so the landowner continues to get his benefit out of the periphery of the property whilst the solar farm is under operation and operating the centre.

And as we've noted elsewhere in the EIS, the – yes, sheep is the particular animals that we would be looking for grazing. They would be allowed to, you know, migrate  
15 in and out and around the solar panels and keep the grass to a suitable level between and around them as well, so that also supports some degree of Golden Sun Moth within the solar array itself. It doesn't become any form of, you know, moonscape, so to speak, as there's actually quite a lot of grass in that area.

20 PROF LIPMAN: I see. And that area's going to be maintained for the life of the project, is it?

MR HUTTON: Which area is that, sorry?

25 PROF LIPMAN: The Golden Sun Moth site will be conserved for the life of the project.

MR HUTTON: Absolutely, yes. So there's no – there's no proposal for any other development in this outside of the solar array, within the property boundaries,  
30 currently.

PROF LIPMAN: Could you just clarify for me. In some of your diagrams it looks as if there are solar panels next to the substation and on the southside of Tallagandra Lane.  
35

MR REID: Yes.

PROF LIPMAN: Have they all been removed or are there still some in the west there?  
40

MR REID: So where I've got my cursor and this first circle was a triangle circuit, two hectares which we removed, so that's gone. And there is a square – I'm not sure how large the areas would – former substations locator data - - -

45 PROF LIPMAN: Right. All right. So that's still there. Yes.

MR REID: That is – that is still included as a development area, albeit it's small and – yes, it's – but it's still currently whatever's potentially having panels on it.

5 MR HUTTON: So, Steve, with the amendments to the project, you've been able to maintain the capacity – I understand you've been able to maintain the capacity of the project.

MR REID: Yes.

10 MR HUTTON: How is that achieved? Is that through just technology advances?

MR REID: Yes. Largely – so that's definitely one of them. Our modules are increasing in wattage and you look forward, even when this project would be delivered, they go up again. But just spacing – panel spacing as well – so you might  
15 have 100 megawatt project which we've maintained here, but when they are – we've had to sacrifice a bit of energy yield to get that, so the energy output could be improved if we had more land to play with, we'd have better spacing initiating the panels, but we have – we have been able to maintain, largely to do with technology improvements.

20 MR HUTTON: Yes. Is there a potential to increase the output through, you know, 10 or 15 years when the solar panel technology's advanced again, presumably? Is it possible to increase capacity and the second part of the question is, does the current infrastructure or the current network have that capability, or are you seeing yourself  
25 at a fixed delivery of the 100 megawatts?

MR REID: There is capacity to go up to – inject more than 100 megawatts and to the credit of this particular location currently. Now, as you all know, the grid is a moving feast and another project committing on the same line for several years has  
30 had an impact. So we just don't know, I guess, what the impacts will be in the long term, but we – the project, of course, through technology improvements, we'd be able to – could upgrade and swap out in due course. Yes.

MR HUTTON: And as I understand it, the current proposed draft conditions allow  
35 for that upgrade throughout your life - - -

MR REID: Yes, definitely.

MR HUTTON: - - - if that was something you wanted to do, yes, as long as the  
40 footprint - - -

MR REID: Yes. Correct. The footprints – the footprint would need to be maintained - - -

45 MR HUTTON: Yes.

MR REID: - - - then you can – to do outside of that would be an amendment notification, I guess.

MR HUTTON: Yes.

5

MR REID: It's not just as simple as saying if you go and stick the new larger panel on one string. You would be swapping out huge – a huge number of panels which weren't past their useful life, so I guess it's an economic forecast or analysis.

10 MR HUTTON: Yes, I understand. Yes.

MR REID: Yes.

15 MR HUTTON: Yes, yes, I understand that. Is it one host property owner or is there two - - -

PROF LIPMAN: Yes.

20 MR HUTTON: - - - properties together? Is it just the one owner?

MR REID: It's one landowner. Yes.

MR HUTTON: Yes. Okay.

25 PROF LIPMAN: Okay. Could I just ask a question on visual impacts and the screening measures that you've adopted, the type of vegetation ..... endemic vegetation. Have you taken the option of going for mature vegetation in some cases, or how do you envisage the plantings?

30 MR REID: Yes. I think there was a commitment to a 20 metre screening along the areas that are shown, and these are being pointed out to you now in the white areas, which is actually an incredible amount of screening for a project, but, you know, the community has – is obviously there on this project for that. I think there is a commitment or conditions with – conditions to the commencement of construction  
35 when we would – we would be asked to plant those screening vegetations. In terms of the maturity I think we have to sign off the plan with the department for planning, and there is – there will be a desire to see something there that matures quickly, but I guess there's a cost benefit. You know, there's a reasonable level of what can – what maturity we can plant in terms of the cost of the project.

40

MR HUTTON: Sure.

45 PROF LIPMAN: In terms of water usage, your projected water usage during construction is very similar to that during operations, which is unusual with solar farms, given the amount of dust suppression that is required during construction and also watering requirements for planted vegetation. Are you confident that you could manage that on two megalitres of water?

MR REID: I'll have to take that one on notice. I think – yes, that's something I'll need to come back to on that, Zada.

PROF LIPMAN: Right.

5

MR REID: Unless, Jamie, you've got anything to add to that, I haven't reviewed that position, actually, before I came on.

10 MR McMAHON: No, sorry, but we just note that – yes, there is obviously cleaning of the panels periodically during the operation as well, which requires water, so the project would do its best to source the majority, if not all that water from runoff on the site, if – you know, buildings and so on, but we'd import water where necessary.

15 PROF LIPMAN: I can understand that, but I would imagine you'd use a lot more in construction.

MR McMAHON: Yes, understood, and I think that's something we'll take on notice - - -

20 MR REID: Yes.

MR McMAHON: - - - and we'll get back to you.

25 MR REID: We'll come back to you.

PROF LIPMAN: Certainly. Thank you. And just getting back to R35, do you know how large that property is and what – whether they're conducting agricultural activities or what they use it for?

30 MR REID: Yes. So I met with the landowner at the property as part of the subdivision which occurred during the hiatus of the project, and it is a large agricultural shed. If you were to look at this property from the road you would not understand that it's a dwelling, and it's only when you go to the property and the northern end of the property – so the end of you facing north – north facing side  
35 towards the project is where there is an internally fitout two storey dwelling, where – and into the south there is a large commercial roller – double-roller and access – a double – single height space for agricultural or commercial vehicles. So the owner is not in agriculture, he is in construction, and he keeps some of his construction vehicles on site for that. He doesn't carry out any agricultural activities on that land.

40

PROF LIPMAN: Right. Thank you. Andrew, anything there?

45 MR HUTTON: I do have one more question – and I apologise, I haven't read the EIS in great detail as we're sort of commencing the project, but I'm interested to understand the commitments that you've made to decommissioning and rehabilitation of the site at the end of the 30 or 35 years. I also note that there is potential for a development like this to finish sooner, in the sense that there could be

technology changes and, you know, there's a potential, so I'm interested to understand. What are the commitments you've made in the EIS around removal of infrastructure, both above and below ground? Obviously, I understand it's been identified to return it back to the pre-development land use, but do you have some comments that you could provide to the panel around that, please?

MR REID: Jamie, did you want to speak to that?

MR McMAHON: Yes, yes, I can proffer now. Yes. So – yes, Andrew, we have committed to returning it back to its more or less pre-development stage. We've committed to the removal of all above-ground infrastructure and the rehabilitation of roadways, etcetera, noting that they won't be sealed but will have an all-weather access provided. The – yes, more or less, it's as simple as that. The – some of the – some infrastructure, such as below-ground cabling may remain in the site, depending on the ability to remove it at the time, and noting also the price of copper at the time, when it comes around to that, and how valuable it is to recycle.

So – but anything that is taken off site will be – sought to be recycled fully, as far as is practical at the time, and a lot of the elements such as, you know, the inverters, for example, are likely to be shipping container-style units, so can just be picked up and taken away once disconnected. Things like noise screenings around them will be easily dismantled and removed, and probably the one thing that I – we won't be able to make a strong commitment about is the substation, because that will be handed over to TransGrid and dedicated to them for their ongoing ownership and management.

So that will remain in the site, I would imagine, in perpetuity, depending on TransGrid's appetite for that, but, otherwise, the site has a very high ability to be returned to a near pre-development state and also noting that the agricultural value of the land may also benefit from that period of laying fallow and not having livestock grazing and other activities undertaken at such a high intensity for that period of time.

PROF LIPMAN: Jamie - - -

MR HUTTON: What - - -

PROF LIPMAN: Sorry.

MR HUTTON: Sorry.

PROF LIPMAN: I'm a little bit concerned that you say only some of the cabling have been removed, because generally, you know, commitments are given to remove all of subsurface infrastructure and cabling. Why would there be a problem, in this particular instance?



MR McMAHON: Look, I'm not saying that for sure that it would be retained underground. I have to remind myself as well of what was said in the EIS because I haven't yet gone back though that part of it, but I think there's a high probability that we would be pulling it up at the end of the project, so apologies for the confusion.

5

MR REID: Zada - - -

PROF LIPMAN: Right.

10 MR REID: - - - I can just – I can just add to that a little bit, you know, that's the planning side of it. There is, with the property side, the landowner agreements which have commitments and obligations to the Commission down the line, so there is some obligations in there to return it to a similar condition, and that we'd also be looking at anything one metre below the – below the .....

15

PROF LIPMAN: All right.

MR HUTTON: Do you, as a company, make a provision for closure and rehabilitation, and – you know, I guess the issue is that the consent is tied to the land and if, for some reason, your business was to be insolvent or move on or whatever, how do we get some sort of commitment that rehabilitation will be executed, given that the organisation may not exist, therefore fall back to the landowner as the consent - - -

20

25 MR REID: Yes. So at the end, this kind of jumps over into – not necessarily planning, but into further commitments of the landowner, and there is - - -

MR HUTTON: So I understand there's some - - -

30 MR REID: Yes.

MR HUTTON: I understand there's sensitivity, it appears to me - - -

MR REID: Yes.

35

MR HUTTON: - - - so I'm conscious of that. Yes.

MR REID: Yes.

40 MR HUTTON: Yes.

MR REID: So there are provisions made for that. I'm not sure exactly. It's not on every project, I guess, but there would be those commitments to - - -

45 MR HUTTON: Yes.

MR REID: - - - a fund, I guess, or .....

MR HUTTON: Yes. And the background of the question is that we're seeing in a lot of projects now, quite a concern in the community around what it looks like in 30 years, you know, in terms of these sites, you know, being rehabilitated.

5 MR REID: Yes.

MR HUTTON: So we're just sort of – I'm trying to understand - - -

MR REID: Yes, I appreciate that.

10

MR HUTTON: - - - those commitments, yes, and note that the consent is tied to the land, not to the organisation.

MR REID: Yes.

15

MR HUTTON: Thank you. I appreciate that's a difficult one to answer, due to the commercial sensitivities, but it's – I'm glad to hear there's been some consideration.

MR REID: Yes.

20

PROF LIPMAN: Right. I just had a question on the road upgrades, you know, the dilapidation upgrades. I understand that Tintinhull Road has just recently been worked on - - -

25 MR REID: Yes.

PROF LIPMAN: - - - and I'm just wondering whether there's an ongoing commitment, as there is in relation to the other roads, to upgrade and maintain that road - - -

30

MR REID: So - - -

PROF LIPMAN: The road going through the centre of the site.

35 MR REID: Okay. Yes. So Tintinhull Road, as you can see here, is – it's not a road that we have access to, other than for a crossing point here between the main area and this – these other dominant areas, and access points in this section of the site. The project doesn't have any access – or doesn't need any access along the majority of Tintinhull, which ends there, so there isn't a need – specific need, as there would  
40 be for Tallagandra Lane to be upgraded, and that Tallagandra Lane will be re-sheeted with gravel prior to construction and to this access point. But there is no project access during construction operation on Tintinhull Road along the – along the access. It's just a crossing point.

45 MR HUTTON: But one of the only - - -

PROF LIPMAN: I thought the department mentioned that there was actually – in fact, it was an alternative access to access the southern part of the site.

5 MR REID: So the southern part of the site, yes, there's this southern part, so we do just on this. This is a new part of Tintinhull Road which has been created again in hiatus, which connects Tallagandra to Tintinhull in the forward part of Tintinhull in through here, and so this is the only part that the project has access over.

10 PROF LIPMAN: I see.

MR REID: You can – you can see the green dots - - -

PROF LIPMAN: Yes, yes, I see the access point.

15 MR REID: - - - which is the access point.

PROF LIPMAN: Yes.

20 MR REID: Yes. So it's a small section and, yes, that there would be a commitment to re-sheet all of that section of that.

25 MR McMAHON: The EIS initially – well, prior to all of this when the EIS was first being developed, the Tintinhull Road entry was down near R3 and came up – then went north from that point, and the project had committed to creating that section of Tintinhull Road which you see running east-west, which is in the black crosshatching. However, the council actually went ahead and did that anyway, so that was created independent of RES or Renew Estate at the time. So that – but that area is required for the access for the construction of those panels, that development area to the southwest of the site there, as you can see.

30 PROF LIPMAN: Right. I just had another question on noise. I was wondering what measures you'd be taking to deal with noise during construction and operation. For example, during operation, I noticed that you've got horseshoe shelters around the inverters in the central area.

35 MR McMAHON: Yes. So we worked very hard to get the operational noise down below the local amenity levels in this location, noting that it is a rural area, so the amenity level is quite low to start with, and that included moving inverters more to the central part of the site and away from sensitive receptors, and then applying the mitigation of those horseshoe screens, as you mentioned there. We tried to get it down a little bit further and that was quite successful, and you'll note in our EIS we've got the noise contour – in the RTS, actually, where the updated noise assessment is we have the noise contours showing that we are compliant at those, including at R35, which is very close to – well, that was the most difficult one, 40 really, trying to move the inverters around from there.

But during construction we have also a standard suite of mitigation measures, including – yes, noise management of vehicles and maintenance of vehicles, prevention of idling, you know, minimisation of movement, generally speaking, and – but, broadly speaking, we think that the noise during construction won't be  
5 substantial, noting that there's the activity that would typically be undertaken to – construction of a solar farm is of a relatively small scale in terms of construction such as this. So it's, you know, small excavators and front-end loaders and so on, to move equipment around and to drive posts into the ground and dig trenches, etcetera.

10 PROF LIPMAN: But you'd be consulting with the landowners during this process.

MR McMAHON: Yes. Well, Steve, I think I'll leave that to you, but I'm pretty sure we're committing to ongoing consultation with regards to the landowners.

15 MR REID: Yes, yes. There's going to be a need to inform – keep the closest neighbours informed of activities on site, major construction, major movements, stockpiling, ..... activity which will kind of be fully ..... So, yes, there's an absolute commitment to those – for the community to liaise with everyone that we're required to, when we see fit, when we – if they are affected and impacted by noise.

20 PROF LIPMAN: I think that's all the questions from me. Have you got any other questions, Andrew?

MR HUTTON: Not a question, but maybe a request for the site inspection next  
25 week, which is - - -

PROF LIPMAN: Yes.

MR HUTTON: I'm wondering, Zada, whether we could ask you to position some  
30 side poles to enable us to get a sense of where the offsets or where the offsetting of the array is, so, for example, if a site pole could be put out in the paddock from R35  
- - -

MR REID: Yes.  
35

MR HUTTON: - - - just at the edge there. And then it's also useful, we found, that if you could use a star picket and then perhaps put a piece of poly pipe over that to approximately the height of the solar panels when they're at full tilt to get a sense of the height, so we can - - -

40 MR REID: Yes.

MR HUTTON: Yes, that'd be useful.

45 MR REID: Yes.

MR HUTTON: I'm thinking it'd be also useful, if it's not too much trouble, to put one on the western edge, somewhere near the creek there.

MR REID: Yes, just in here?

5

MR HUTTON: Yes, somewhere there. Yes.

MR REID: Yes, yes, that's fine. Yes.

10 MR HUTTON: And - - -

PROF LIPMAN: Or possibly one on a higher site, Andrew, as well – you know, one of the higher sites.

15 MR HUTTON: Yes, yes. And I'm thinking, if possible, Steve – sorry for my detailed request – but one on the southern point there so that when we're looking back from R5 we can get a sense of – maybe on the more western panels – yes, that point – that point - - -

20 MR REID: Just there?

MR HUTTON: Yes, somewhere there, just so we can get a sense of the distance and the height from R5, that'd be most useful, so that would cover R35, R2, R1 and R5. Yes.

25

PROF LIPMAN: That'd be fantastic, if you could manage to do that. Yes.

MR REID: Yes. I've had – I've had an initial conversation with the landowner, he is - - -

30

PROF LIPMAN: Yes.

MR REID: - - - willing to help, so we'll - - -

35 MR HUTTON: Yes.

MR REID: That's helpful to get a bit more detail around that. I can - - -

MR HUTTON: Yes.

40

MR REID: - - - speak with him.

MR HUTTON: Sometimes – we do ask this of a lot of applicants and it's also useful to maybe just put a piece of flagging tape on the top, because - - -

45

MR REID: Yes.

MR HUTTON: - - - sometimes when you're some distance away you can pick it out on the horizon.

MR REID: Okay.

5

PROF LIPMAN: That's a very good idea. Can we get a copy of the – can the office get a copy of your overheads or slides?

MR REID: Yes, absolutely no problem. I will send them through to – Jane's got them.

10

MS ANDERSON: Yes, I've received them.

MR REID: Jane's actually got them. Sorry. Yes.

15

PROF LIPMAN: You've got them, Jane, have you? Excellent.

MS ANDERSON: Yes.

MR HUTTON: Yes.

20

PROF LIPMAN: Excellent.

MR HUTTON: Other than that, Zada, thank you. I don't have any further questions for the applicant at this stage.

25

PROF LIPMAN: I've got no further questions, otherwise to thank you very much for your presentation today and for being with us. It's much appreciated.

MR REID: Thank you.

30

PROF LIPMAN: Thank you very much, everyone.

MR REID: Thanks for your time.

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MR HUTTON: Thank you very much.

MR McMAHON: Thank you.

MS ANDERSON: Thank you.

40

PROF LIPMAN: We'll adjourn the meeting for now, if that's convenient.

MS ANDERSON: Steve, can I just ask, before you go, whether you'll send through an itinerary, a brief overview of the - - -

45

MR REID: Yes.

MS ANDERSON: - - - site visit.

MR REID: That's my next task tomorrow.

5 MS ANDERSON: No problem.

MR REID: It's just to set out where we're going to go on this .....

MS ANDERSON: Great.

10

MR REID: I'll get that across to you, if not tomorrow, it'll be Thursday for that, yes. I'll work on it tomorrow.

MS ANDERSON: No problem, and, yes, I just wanted to confirm our conversation  
15 about the diesel vehicle, and that's all.

MR REID: Yes.

MS ANDERSON: That's fine. We've arranged to have a diesel vehicle on site.

20

MR REID: Perfect. Thank you. And I'll just – I'll send those requirements, if there's any other health and safety requirements which - - -

MS ANDERSON: That would be great.

25

MR REID: What we may have, I'll send it to you as well.

MS ANDERSON: Thank you.

MR HUTTON: Thank you, Steve. Anything that the landholder might require us to  
30 - - -

MR REID: Yes.

MR HUTTON: - - - wear or whatever, just let us know. We're more than happy to.

MR REID: Yes.

MR HUTTON: And also whether there's any COVID considerations, you know,  
40 please let us know. We'll obviously be managing that ourselves, but if there's something specific that you request, don't hesitate to reach out to Jane.

MR REID: Yes. I'll get that across to you, Jane, in the next couple of days.

MR HUTTON: Yes.

PROF LIPMAN: Thanks for that.

MS ANDERSON: Thank you.

MR HUTTON: Thank you, Steve.

5 MR REID: Thanks, all.

MS ANDERSON: Thanks, Jamie. Thanks, Steve.

PROF LIPMAN: Yes.

10

MR McMAHON: Thank you, everyone.

MR REID: Thanks, Jamie.

15

MS ANDERSON: Bye.

MR REID: Bye bye.

MR HUTTON: Bye.

20

**ADJOURNED**

**[4.33 pm]**