



New South Wales Government
Independent Planning Commission

TRANSCRIPT OF MEETING

RE: BIRRIWA SOLAR FARM (SSD-29508870)

APPLICANT MEETING

PANEL: JANETT MILLIGAN (CHAIR)
DUNCAN MARSHALL AM
SUELLEN FITZGERALD
OFFICE OF THE IPC: KENDALL CLYDSDALE
GEOFF KWOK

NAME ATTENDEE: CÉDRIC BERGÉ
MEGAN RICHARDSON
MICHAEL YEO
SARAH HAFEZ

LOCATION: VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE

DATE: 10:30 AM – 11:30 AM,
THURSDAY, 30TH MAY 2024

<THE MEETING COMMENCED AT 10:30 AM

MS MILLIGAN: Good morning. Good morning everybody. Before we begin, I'd like to acknowledge that I'm speaking to you from Cammeraygal Land, and I
5 acknowledge the traditional owners of all the country from which we virtually meet today. And I pay my respects to their elders, past and present. Welcome to the meeting today to discuss the Birriwa Solar farm case currently before the Commission for determination. The applicant ACEN Australia proprietary limited
10 proposes to develop a 600 megawatt solar farm and a 600 megawatt battery energy storage facility, an on-site accommodation facility and associated infrastructure approximately 15km south east of Dunedoo, which is in the- and the project is in the Mid-Western Regional and Warrumbungle Shire local government areas. The sites located within the Central West Orana Renewable Energy Zone. My name is Janett Milligan. I'm the chair of this commission panel, and I'm joined by my fellow
15 commissioners, Duncan Marshall and Suellen Fitzgerald. We're also joined by Kendall Clydsdale and Geoff Kwok from the office of the Independent Planning Commission. In the interest of openness and transparency, and to ensure the full capture of information. Today's meeting is being recorded and a complete transcript will be produced and made available on the Commission's website. The meeting is
20 one part of the Commission's consideration of this matter, and it will form one of several sources of information upon which the Commission will base its determination. It's important for the commissioners to ask questions of attendees and to clarify issues whenever it's considered appropriate. If you're asked a question and you're not in a position to answer, please feel free to take the question on notice and
25 to provide us with any additional information in writing, and we will make that written response available on our website. I request that all members here introduce themselves before they speak for the first time, and for all members to ensure that they do not speak over the top of each other just so we can ensure an accuracy of the transcript. So with those words of introduction let's begin, and can I now sort of pass
30 to ACEN and introduce the team and to kick us off. Thank you.

MR BERGE: Good morning. And thank you for your time. I'm going to start with introduction. So my name is Cédric Bergé, and I am the project manager for the Birriwa solar and battery project, and also the team lead for the New South Wales
35 solar project. I've been working with ACEN for more than five years, and I've been involved in this project since the early days. I was also the project development manager for the Stubbo solar project about 15km away. And this project is now in construction and Michael Yeo, who is in this call. Will talk about this in a minute. I'm heavily involved in ACEN strategy in the Central West Orana REZ. And Megan,
40 who is also in this call, and I have been working together across our peer projects in the REZ and in particular with the Valley of the winds project the Birriwa Solar and BESS project, as well as the Narragamba solar. And Sarah has been providing support around- across all our projects in the central west. But I'll probably leave it to Sarah to introduce herself directly.
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MS HAFEZ: Thank you. Cédric. My name is Sarah Hafez, and I'm ACEN Australia's community engagement and communications manager, covering our

project portfolio in the Central West New South Wales region. We have a number of projects here in development and one project in construction, which is our Stubbo solar project. And our construction manager is Michael Yeo, who's on the call, and I'll hand over to Michael.

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MR YEO: Yes thank you Sarah. Michael Yeo. I'm the construction project manager for Stubbo solar as previously mentioned. Been with the company almost two years, and been myself focused in that project. And as we're in about the middle stages of our construction of Stubbo. I'll pass over to Megan. Her audio is working. I did see (indistinct)- oh, no. All good, we might introduce Megan, then Cédric.

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MR BERGE: So Megan's video- audio is not working. So Megan, you've been the project development manager for the Valley of the winds project, which is located about 30km north of the Birriwa project, and you and I have been working on the Central West Orana REZ issues in common and in particular we've been coordinating our work with EnergyCo and a lot of activities in in the local community. Hopefully your audio can work a little bit later, but not a problem otherwise. Thank you. I think that's it for ACEN.

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MS MILLIGAN: All right. So do you have a presentation, do you want us to run the panel through the material that you have. And then at the end of that- we probably won't interrupt you- at the end of that, we will then sort of come forward with any points of clarification or questions.

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MR BERGE: Okay. So yes, I do have a presentation. I'm going to do my best to share it with you. I'm not very used to zoom, but I'm sure it'll work. Can I please confirm with you that what you can see is the presentation in the first slide?

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MS MILLIGAN: Yes, we can we can see it well, thank you, Cédric.

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MR BERGE: Okay. All right. So I'm happy to start then. So we put together this short presentation today. And the intention I'm trying to go from the next slide- that was working, thank you. In this short presentation, we're going to have a bit of a project overview for probably the next 15 minutes. So that would be run by myself, and then Sarah, we've put together a few slides about, around the key issues and the other matters that you outline in the meeting agenda. Very happy to be flexible on this one. I'll be happy to run you through the slides that we prepared or go directly to your questions. Before we commence, I would also like to acknowledge the Wiradjuri people who are the traditional custodians of the land on which our Birriwa of Solar and Battery project is proposed to be located. And we acknowledge the resilience and the knowledge of the traditional custodians of this nation. And we pay our respects to elders, past and present generation and the many Aboriginal people that did not make their elder status, and to those that continue to care for country.

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A few words on ACEN Australia. So ACEN Australia is the platform representing ACEN renewable energy assets in Australia, with more than one gigawatt capacity of large scale renewable energy generation in construction and operations, and with

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more than 13 gigawatt capacity in development pipeline, including in solar, wind, battery and pumped hydro projects across the country. Just to give a couple of examples, we've got the New England Solar in New South Wales, which is our first operational project, as well as the Stubbo Solar, still in New South Wales that is currently in construction, as Michael was mentioning earlier. So ACEN has been developing a 600 megawatt solar project with a 600 megawatt for two hour BESS-battery energy storage system, along with a workers accommodation facility and local road upgrades. The project, as you said earlier, is located between the town of Dunedoo and Gulgong in the Mid-Western regional LGA and in the Warrumbungle Shire Council, as in the Central West region of New South Wales. The project has been part of EnergyCo's candidate foundation generator, the CFG process, since May 2022. This process allows projects aiming to connect to the future Central West or Orana REZ to coordinate issue resolution. So over the last two years, ACEN and EnergyCo have discussed issues such as cumulative impacts, community contributions, accommodation access rights, and we have conducted grid studies with them too. The project would involve up to 500 jobs during the peak of the construction, and we will discuss this further in our workers accommodation slide. We- I think I'd like to mention here that we have a commitment to employ and buy local where practical. And for example, Michael, tell me if I'm wrong, but for a stable solar project that commenced construction in late 2022.

As of April 2024, \$44 million was spent on goods and services with business and social enterprises within the Mid-Western regional LGA. 20% of workers live in the Midwest Western Regional LGA area, and 21 learning workers are employed to work on the delivery of the Stubbo project, and \$2.5 million were- have been spent with indigenous businesses. I'd like to say a few words on the development application timeline. So ACEN started discussions with the local landholders back in 2019 and 2020. And as I said earlier, I've been involved in this process since pretty much the beginning. We launched a scoping report in September 2021 and got our SEARs in November of the same year. Then we prepared an EIS, an environmental impact statement throughout 2021 and 2022 and lodged it in September 2022. The project went on public exhibition for 28 days between October and November 2022. In November 2022, EnergyCo publicly released their plans for the Central West REZ network infrastructure, and these confirmed the locations of the Merotherie energy hub and the dedicated 330 kV transmission lines between the candidate foundation generators and in particular, our project and the Merotherie Hub. And just to note here that this happened after we launched the EIS for the Birriwa project. After receiving feedback from the public and various agencies, we decided to amend the project to include the workers accommodation facility and preparing the amendment report involved additional environmental and social assessments, community consultation, and engaging with local councils and relevant public agencies.

We then launched the amendment report and the Response to Submission report in September 2023, and the project was re-exhibited for two weeks in October 2023. We responded to more publicly- and public and agency submissions in November of the same year. And finally, we addressed the remaining issues with public agencies,

especially with Transport for New South Wales early this year between January and April before heading to the IPC referral in May 2024. I'd just like to note here that as far as I'm aware, the Birriwa project is the first CFG and project connecting to the central west Orana REZ to go through the independent Planning Commission process. So the project we're looking at has the potential to meet the need for replacement power as old coal fired generators shut down. It aligns with- Oh, sorry- it aligns with key strategic plans and policies at the Commonwealth, state, regional and local levels, especially the New South Wales Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap. One important aspect of the project is the BESS- the battery energy storage system, which will help improve grid stability and energy security in the network. The project is also located next to the Merotherie Energy Hub, which is a key part of the Central West Orana REZ infrastructure. So the Birriwa development footprint covers about 1800- 1197 hectares, mostly cleared land currently used for sheep and cattle grazing, as well as a bit of dry land cropping.

The project is across five properties and we have got agreements with Alder and Alders for the duration of the project. The construction of the project will take about 28 months, with staging of the solar and the BESS components to avoid overlapping construction peaks. I'll say a few words about this in another site. The proposed access route from the Port of Newcastle uses the Golden Highway and then south onto the Castlereagh Highway. The local route selection was made in consultation with the community during the preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement, the EIS. And the preferred route is via Barneys Reef Road and then east onto Birriwa bus route South. So this option, the preferred option, was preferred to other routes as it minimises impacts on the nearby Birriwa village. And The project includes upgrades to the intersection between the Castlereagh Highway, which is a state highway, and Barneys Reef Road within the Warrumbungle Shire Council. It also includes upgrades of Barneys Reef Road and parts of the Birriwa bus route South within the Mid-Western Regional Council. All the road upgrades have been proposed in consultation with Transport for New South Wales and the local councils. Now, I would like to say a word about the two options for the connection point, including the substation, the BESS and the interior infrastructure, also shown on the plan in a minute, both options A and B that you will see on the plan in a minute, were chosen for their minimal impact within the study area and their location in relation to the central west Orana REZ.

Although both options are included in our proposal. Option B, which is the eastern one, is our preferred option due to its location adjacent to the Merotherie energy hub. I note here that land subdivision may be needed for the switchyard area for the purpose of the network operator, which in this case is as REZ at either option A or B. And then finally the proposal includes a workers accommodation facility for up to 500 workers. And there is further information on this facility a bit later in the presentation. So this is the project layout plan as included in the recommended condition of consent. And it shows all the proposed features of the site, including the development footprint with the hatched area, the road upgrades from the intersection to the site access point, the options A and B for the location of the BESS and the substation and some of the visual mitigation measures that we're proposing. So I'm

very happy to go back to this slide later as required. And if you have any questions when we discuss the key issues. Now probably leave it to Sarah to go through our community engagement and consultation slides.

- 5 **MS HAFEZ:** Thank you, Cédric, when it comes to our community engagement and consultation. ACEN Australia recognises the importance of early and effective engagement with communities and stakeholders. We are committed to implementing a transparent and inclusive approach to working with communities and stakeholders who may be directly and indirectly impacted by our projects. Stakeholder
- 10 engagement on the project has been comprehensive to date and reflects the importance ACEN Australia places on this aspect of our business. Engagement with key stakeholders for the Birriwa project commenced in 2021. We placed a large emphasis on working with local communities during the assessment and the development application process to help us understand our stakeholders views.
- 15 Ensuring that we provided sufficient and timely information to enable communities and our stakeholders to provide us informed feedback, gave us a great opportunity to make amendments to the project design reflecting this feedback. A social impact assessment for the project was undertaken in 2022, including a baseline assessment of issues and opportunities. We have tailored our engagement and communications
- 20 to consider different stakeholder needs and expectations. With a community office in Gulgong staffed by locals, including myself, ACEN's Community engagement manager, who has relocated recently as a permanent resident of the region. We also have a Facebook page for project updates, as well as a dedicated 1800 free call project information line, and have a project email and a dedicated project website
- 25 with all our communication materials, maps, as well as project approval documents, reports and papers. We provide regular project updates and notifications of our upcoming events, as well as promotion of our community activities in both the Gulgong Gossip and the Dunedoo Diary.
- 30 Over the years, we have hosted several community information sessions and one on one meetings with our neighbours and other stakeholders. If I can get- thank you Cédric. When it comes to sharing in the benefits that our projects can provide, ACEN Australia's Social Investment Program, fondly known as our SIP, is our voluntary contribution that has been available to the Gulgong, Dunedoo and surrounding
- 35 communities since the early stages of development and is a commitment that we carry into construction of our projects and into our operations. Funding is available for not for profit organisations and activities that directly benefit and enhance the liveability and vibrancy of Gulgong, Dunedoo and surrounding communities. And since its inception in the Central West REZ, I am proud to say that we have
- 40 supported over 65 not for profit organisations and events. We are committed to ensuring that our neighbours also see a direct benefit from our projects, which will have an indirect benefit on the local economy and community more broadly. The direct benefits of our projects Neighbouring Property Benefits Scheme or the NPBS to eligible properties was revised after we received feedback from our neighbours.
- 45 From that feedback and ongoing engagement with our neighbours, our neighbouring property benefit scheme to eligible neighbours has been revised to an annual payment for the life of the project. This was a change that was made as a direct result

of our conversations with our neighbours and at their request, and we thank them for their feedback. Our Neighbour Property Benefit Scheme is eligible to neighbours who choose to enter into a neighbouring agreement with us.

5 We have also reached an in-principle agreement with Mid-Western Regional Council to enter into a voluntary planning agreement. This VPA consists of payment of 1.5% of the project's capital expenditure, paid through a series of instalments over the lifetime of the project. ACEN Australia and Council agreed to discuss the payment mechanism should the project be approved and prior to commencement of
10 construction. In terms of our ongoing commitment to engagement, we are investigating opportunities to boost local employment and increase workforce skills in our region in the renewable energy sector. Our Stubbo solar project is just the beginning. We have been an active participant of the Central West Orana Renewable Energy Zone Skills and Workforce Working Group, as well as working with the
15 Regional Industry Education Partnerships Program team. And more recently, we've been invited to be part of an introductory group looking at ways to support the development of a Wellington Correctional Centre REZ jobs initiative. As a signatory to the Clean Energy Councils Best Practice charter for renewable energy developments, ACEN Australia is committed to engage respectfully with the
20 communities in which we plan and operate our projects to be sensitive to environmental and cultural values, and to make a positive contribution to the region in which we operate. Finally, after determination, and should our project be approved, we remain committed to ensuring our engagement and consultation activities will continue to engage with stakeholders and the broader community
25 throughout the construction and the operation of our project. I'll hand back over to Cédric now.

MR BERGE: Well thank you, Sarah. I might pause here and make sure that anyone in the audience has questions or would like to say anything.

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MS MILLIGAN: Look, I think that there are probably a lot of questions in our head, but I'd like to give you the opportunity to continue talking to us, because you may answer some of those questions in the material that's coming.

35 **MR BERGE:** That sounds good. So the next slide will address or will, I guess, give you a bit of an overview of the key issues that you raised in the meeting agenda. So I'm going to start with land and use compatibility. And what I would like to say here is the project and the development footprint has avoided a BSAL, which is the biophysical strategic agricultural land from its design and is only located on land
40 classified as five and seven, indicating moderate, low to very low land capability, as you can see on the map the green areas are the higher land class values and in particular the BSAL areas. And our project is really on the yellow which is land five-land class five and seven. The land use change because of the project is temporary and reversible. I think this is something important we want to say here. Temporary
45 because that's during the life of the project and reversible because we've got decommissioning obligations that we are we will meet. It is anticipated that grazing will continue on site, along with weed management and ground cover maintenance.

And while we acknowledge that there will be a small loss of grazing land, we also believe that it will be in balance with the broader benefits for the state of New South Wales and the national electricity market.

5 In terms of traffic and transport. I'd like to say here that the traffic impact- the traffic assessment in our original EIS was very conservative and was considering worst case scenarios. The local road upgrades have been proposed in consultation with the local councils, in line with Austroad standards, and the intersection with the Castlereagh Highway was designed with input from Transport for New South Wales, with the
10 final design to be completed before construction starts. I'll also not here that EnergyCo's Port to REZ Project will also propose the delivery of this intersection, the Castlereagh intersection- the Castlereagh Highway intersection and we will be working with EnergyCo to coordinate the design and the works at the intersection prior to commencement of the project. Construction. The proposed access point to
15 the site is off Birriwa bus route south. As you can see on the on the map, I'm not sure if you can see my pointer. Can you still see my screen, by the way? Yes, okay. I wasn't sure. So yes, the site access point will be located at the end of- at the eastern end of the Birriwa bus route south. And finally public road crossings will allow connection between the various project clusters during construction and operation.

20 The location of those public road crossings and their design have been discussed and endorsed with Mid-Western Regional Council. In terms of visual impact. So they are 22 dwellings within two kilometres of the project, including those at the Birriwa village. Many of these dwellings will not be able to see the site because of the
25 existing topography and vegetation. And only a handful of these dwellings will have a visual impact. To mitigate visual impacts we have proposed setbacks and vegetation screening. And as we can see, I'll show you in a minute on the project layout plan, we have excluded large areas from the development footprint in consultation with the relevant the relevant neighbours. I'll show you- right to use the
30 pointer. Can you see the pointer? So, for example, we have excluded this paddock here and this paddock here in consultation with the dwellings, the landholders at R5. So they can be a bit more comfortable with the project. In a similar way, we have proposed a 300 metre setback around R3 in consultation with the landholders and then following feedback from the landholders who live at R1, R11 and R30. That's
35 the same property. We have agreed on a setback from the Birriwa bus route north. I think there is 100m setback at minimum, and then it follows an east west line so there's all this area that has been that has been avoided.

40 If I go back to my previous slides or the- our proposal also includes vegetation screening at a couple of locations to mitigate- I'll go back to the slide, sorry I should have stayed there. We've got visual screening along the Birriwa route south here to mitigate visual impact from the Central West Cycle Trail, in consultation with the Central West Cycle Trail organising Committee. Along the boundary with R3 here, in consultation with the neighbour and along our development footprint boundary
45 here to mitigate visual impacts from R1 and R1a. With those mitigation measures, the residual visual impacts have been assessed as low to very low, using the methodology in the revised large scale Solar energy guidelines published in 2022. I

note here that our previous- sorry that our original visual impact assessment in the EIS was undertaken in line with previous guidelines because of the timing of the guidelines. But we find the assessment at the recent date to ensure it was in line with the most recent guidelines. And this was the subject of a recent RFI with- from the department. I'd like to say a few words on the workers accommodation facility and its social impacts. So one of the key issues raised in the EIS submissions back in 2022, was the ability for the local area to accommodate the incoming workforce required to service the project.

The risk here was that the project would negatively impact on the region's thriving tourism by encroaching on an already limited short stay accommodation market and council, like Mid-Western Regional Council, was very clear on this. So we have consulted with key stakeholders, including Mid-Western Regional Council, Warrumbungle Shire Council and EnergyCo, as well as worked with an external consultant to guide us through defining accommodation strategies. And we have received support through this process of our proposed workers facility from Mid-Western Regional Council, who endorsed our proposal in correspondence dated October 2023. So our workers accommodation facility is located south of the EnergyCo's Merotherie Hub. On the opposite side of the Barneys Reef to Birriwa. The location for the workers accommodation facility was selected through thorough community and neighbour consultation, ongoing engagement with the local councils, as I said before, and coordination with EnergyCo. Two options were assessed for the workers facility on the same property, but only one was chosen after environmental and heritage assessments. Access to the camp is via the project's access point, the one that I showed previously on the screen, causing minimal changes to the EIS traffic impact assessment. The amended project. With the workers camp assumes 90% of the workforce will stay at the facility, with 10% residing in the regional area.

Initially, the EIS assumed construction peaks for solar and BESS would occur at the same time, which would have required up to 800 workers on site at peak. The amended project staggered these peaks, so the accommodation facility is now sized and proposed for up to 500 workers. I think that's an important point here. In the amendment report and subsequent responses to RFI, we assessed options to manage waste, wastewater and access to water in consultation with the Mid-Western Regional Council and other regional councils. Regarding some of the social impacts and the mitigation measures of the Workers Accommodation facility, we have planned for safety measures around the camp- medical services and we are proposing a nurse on site and access to telehealth services and a licensed social area for the workers. Not to overwhelm the local pubs and other local businesses in consultation with the New South Wales Police and relevant agencies. I would like to state, to say here that we have already drafted an accommodation and employment strategy. So it's a draft document that is attached to our DA. And this document will evolve with time. But I think there's already a lot of information here on how we deal and mitigate some of the social impacts and how we manage the workers camp.

In terms of cumulative impact, so we are aware here that we working in the context of the Central West Orana REZ, and more generally in the context of an area where

there has been a lot of renewable generation projects and the Stubbo one is an example. The assessment in our development application was, was based on information available at the time of report preparation. And as I said earlier, we started this work in 2021 and 2022. So that was before EnergyCo released
5 information on the Central West REZ project. And as I said earlier yes, we probably- the Birriwa project is probably one of the first projects in the REZ to reach that stage in the planning in the planning system and few information about other generation project connecting to the REZ was available at the time of preparation of the report. Nevertheless I really believe we did our best, our best to assess and address any
10 cumulative impacts based on our industry knowledge and with ongoing engagement as part of the CFG process. Working with EnergyCo to address cumulative impacts on issues such as access routes, traffic, accommodation, waste, water. We will keep working on that with EnergyCo and the network operator and all the relevant stakeholders on these issues in the future.

15 **MS MILLIGAN:** Cédric, I might at this point suggest that we pause the presentation and we get into our discussion just in the interest of time, the presentation you've provided to us, we may have time to come back to and it will be available sort of in full on the website. So are you okay if we now turn our minds to discussion points of
20 clarification questions.

MR BERGE: Sure.

25 **MS MILLIGAN:** Okay. All right. So I think there are probably a lot of things in our minds and we'll try and sort of work through them in an orderly fashion. So, I might first of all throw to Suellen Fitzgerald. Suellen, would you like to start us off with any questions that you have on your list?

30 **MS FITZGERALD:** Thanks, Janet. Suellen Fitzgerald. Cédric. I might start with the temporary work- temporary workers accommodation. And recognising that there's details provided in your draft accommodation and employment strategy. But I'm interested in how you think the interaction between the workers and the local community will play out during the construction phase, particularly in relation to social impacts and social benefits? And also traffic, given that we're not dealing with
35 a remote working accommodation camp here, we're dealing with something that's quite accessible to the local area. Have you got thoughts about how that interaction might play out?

40 **MR BERGE:** Yes. So I might start with answering the, the traffic question. I think, as I said we only proposing one access point to the site. So it means that workers who need to access the workers facility, accommodation facility, will have at this stage to use the main site access point or the only site access point. And we believe that our EIS and all the reports assess the traffic, and the traffic impact for these and we have designed the road upgrades accordingly. And our accommodation and
45 employment strategy will have further mitigation measures to make sure, you know, we can use shuttle buses, for example as often as possible and limit the use of personal vehicles. So I think this will be discussed further in the accommodation and

employment strategy as it's being finalised prior to construction commencing. Now in terms of impact to the local communities. I think what we try to- what we try to do here was to find the right balance between not impacting too much the local community and they- if I may say, they habits of going to the local shops, local pubs and local businesses, but still making sure that we provide support to, to those local services. So this is, for example, why we proposing this licensed social area on site, because we would like to avoid to have up to 500 workers going to the Dunedoo, the Gulgong or the local pubs at the same time when they're- not at the same time, but when they finish their shift or something like that. And we don't want to change the social- I'm not sure what the right word is here, but the- Sarah, if you want to help me with this, but the social context here-

MS HAFEZ: The social cohesion of the area already.

MR BERGE: Thank you. So, but still the social area, the licensed social area would have partnership with the local businesses to cater food and other services and making sure we've got the right balance. I think that was a key point of our community consultation and neighbour consultation on this. And we've done our best to reflect this in our application. And that's just the beginning. I think we will be working further on this. And I think importantly, we'll be working with EnergyCo and the other CFG's in the area to make sure there's the best coordination possible on these issues.

MS FITZGERALD: Yes, thanks. Thanks, Cédric. So what you're saying is, as the details of how you operate this temporary workers accommodation unfold, you don't anticipate there being a problem with congestion, traffic congestion at the end of a shift, for example, you'd be looking to find ways to mitigate that impact?

MR BERGE: That's correct. I'm not saying it's going to be it's going to be easy, but that's something we are anticipating. And again, in the context of the Central West Orana REZ, where we anticipate there will be a few busy years of construction, we'll have to make sure that our traffic impact- sorry, our traffic management plans will consider those issues and will address them as much as possible. And I should say here that having a workers accommodation facility at this location already addresses the issue, because in our original proposal, where at the time we did not have a workers accommodation facility, we were proposing to accommodate the local workers in the region, in the existing accommodation in the local towns. And I acknowledge two years later that it would have caused critical issues and potential congestions and safety issues. So I think just having the workers camp is already a good is already a good way to address those, those issues.

MS FITZGERALD: Thanks, Cédric. And we noted that in the documentation, there was a commitment to recruit workforce from underrepresented groups. Again, given that you've got detailed information still to provide and detailed thinking to do. Have you been able to turn your mind to the health and safety of some of these more underrepresented groups, perhaps more vulnerable groups?

MR BERGE: Sarah, would you like to- would you like to answer this one or-

MS HAFEZ: Yes, look at the same time we do want to ensure that we maximise our local employment and business opportunities. So our first precedent is always to
5 employ locally first. So when we do look to ways on how we can limit the impact on regional housing availability and affordability we do also want to ensure that we have our workers safe positive health and wellbeing experience for our workers through the appropriate accommodation design and avoiding any of those, you know, constraints already on our small regions. For our Stubbo solar project, we have
10 utilised the accommodation in the region. And so we have been able to mitigate any of those concerns as well. Our Stubbo project is ten kilometres out of Gulgong town. So for us to look at ways to further improve the temporary workers accommodation facility, certainly an ongoing process of engagement and consultation.

15 **MS FITZGERALD:** Sure.

MS MILLIGAN: So I just ask a couple of clarification questions. So Sarah, you said at Stubbo you had about 20% local workforce. In this project, I think you're aiming for about ten. So just interested in if there are any comments about that. And
20 just while we're on the topic of the accommodation facility, you've indicated or maybe we're assuming that you will appoint an experienced operator. So are there any comments in relation to, if that is one of the big providers, how does that deliver your 'buy local use local' sort of strategy?

25 **MR BERGE:** For the second point, maybe Michael or Sarah, if you if you want to- if you want to respond. And I'm happy to answer the first one. Michael.

MR YEO: Yes, sure. No problem. In relation to engagement of the, specifically the workers accommodation providers I guess at this stage, we're in early process of
30 talking to a lot of those. We see it being probably at this point a pretty competitive market when we get to this space and time. So we're actually- yes spending a great deal of time with different providers around and then also, I guess that which provider, as in the actual hardware of the camp itself. So the rooms and the structures as well as then the operating service providers that actually run the camps. We're in
35 the early stages of consulting with those people at this point in time trying to understand it, but definitely recognise that it's going to be key for the management of staff in the regions during this point for sure.

40 **MS MILLIGAN:** Can I just be specific and ask will your agreement with the provider require them to use local to buy local?

MR YEO: I it will under our requirements, correct. I'll be a part of the engagement process I guess. Again, probably going to be it was discussed before. It is that
45 balance where we don't want to then oversaturate the local providers. So if we insist that there's only one IGA in Gulgong, if suddenly we're all then drawing out of that one IGA, then we create a- we solve one problem and create another. So it's

obviously that balance I guess going forward. We're very aware of it and looking for it. Yes.

5 **MR BERGE:** I think it's also important to, in the context of the Central West Orana
Rez, we are actually currently in the process of applying for access rights to the REZ
with EnergyCo and the network operator. And as part of this process, we have to
demonstrate our commitments to buy local to employ local workers to train. So
there's, work to do there that we have been doing anyway because ACEN's values
10 already encouraged those commitments. Then just to go back to your very- your first
point in your question about the 20% local workers for Stubbo and 10% anticipated
for the Birriwa. Here we, in revising those numbers, we acknowledge that there will
be cumulative not necessarily impact, but there will be a bit of a competition
between the different projects and the REZ infrastructure itself. And having the same
15 numbers, having the same involvement from the local community might be more of a
challenge in the context of the REZ. We also use 10% as a conservative number, and
we still believe that this number could be a little bit higher.

20 **MS MILLIGAN:** Thank you. Now, Suellen, you were asking questions when I
jumped in with that clarification.

MS FITZGERALD: Yes, Janett, the only other question for me on relation to the
accommodation camp is the- at the moment, the proposal is for it to be
decommissioned post construction. But you also mentioned that you consider using
the camp for your own future developments. Have you turned your mind to what
25 might be a longer term proposal for this camp?

MR BERGE: Yes. So this is part of the accommodation strategy, ACEN's
accommodation strategy in the central West. So in this development application, we
seek approval for a 500 bed workers facility that will be decommissioned at the end
30 of the- at the end of the construction of the project. But I think we also need to be
clear and transparent with our plans and our intentions. And you may be aware that
we've got other projects in the central West. We've got the Valley of the winds. That
is at a late stage of the development application. We've got the Narragamba Solar,
which is at EIS stage of the project. And those projects will be constructed over a
35 period of 3 to 5 years in total. Aligned with the central West Orana REZ timelines.
So our plan here, or at least what we're trying to work on is a strategy where we can
reuse an existing workers camp if it's available for another project. I think for the
context of this DA, we kind of have to silo our request for approval. But in future
development applications for the Narragamba solar project, for example, or
40 potentially for the Valley of the winds project, we may include, you know, proposal
to use, extend the duration of this camp or the capacity of the camp. We are a bit
flexible on this, but for the context of the Birriwa, which is the first project to go
through this stage, I think we try to be clear that this is what we're proposing.

45 **MS FITZGERALD:** Thank you. Because that- yes. Sorry, Janett, you go ahead.

5 **MS HAFEZ:** No, it's Sarah here. I might actually add also that in our discussions and our engagement with our stakeholders, we have also looked at the potential for us to provide local government or other entities with accommodation facilities that can be reused to meet, you know, any community needs in future. But that would also come down to understanding what our stakeholder needs could be, how we could potentially repurpose these, this facility, and understanding further the local needs of our communities.

10 **MS FITZGERALD:** Sure, thank you. Because the Warrumbungle Council, I note, had made some comments about the reuse of facilities for broader accommodation needs, and presumably that thinking would go to the style and quality of the facilities you'd be putting in that accommodation camp.

15 **MS HAFEZ:** Yes, definitely.

MS MILLIGAN: So is that your- so the topic of the accommodation camp, do you have other questions on that topic.

20 **MS FITZGERALD:** No-

MS MILLIGAN: Duncan, do you have any questions on that topic?

25 **MR MARSHALL:** Let me just deal with the technology. I was actually only going to make one comment which touches on the traffic movements and the accommodation camp, which was I know we're talking about end of shift traffic movements, but I mean, I'm not quite sure what the working week will look like for any of the workers out there, but I guess there's also the issue of weekend traffic movements. I mean, if people are, you know 500 workers are decamping on a Friday night and coming back on a Monday morning, there could be a lot of traffic movements associated with that. The only question I was going to squeeze in, Janett, if it's okay, is just regarding continued grazing of the site. And I know, Cédric, that you mentioned that grazing is to continue the assessment report from the department talks about further investigation of that. I just wonder do you understand what that further investigation means in this context?

35 **MR BERGE:** Yes. I think grazing is our preferred way to manage the site during operation. And, but I think we have to understand here that this will be a facility, the project will be a facility that will be fenced with restricted access and specific conditions to go through our- through the site during operation. And so we really want to make sure that those conditions are acceptable for the landholders who would be grazing the site. We really want to make sure that the grazing activities will be compatible with the operation of the solar farm. But in saying that I just look at what we've been doing at our New England solar in near Uralla, and it's been very successful. So even though our proposal has maybe some- not reservations, but we try to be cautious in our commitment. We are very confident that this is a solution we can implement at our project and the Stubbo project a few kilometres away is also very likely to use grazing. So we will have several years of hopefully successful

experience before we start grazing on that on that site. And we want to make the most of this experience before finalising the grazing agreement with our landholders.

5 **MR YEO:** Maybe to expand on that a little bit more, Duncan, as well. At Stubbo we're actually currently in that process developing our grazing management plan, and it is a very involved process with the existing landholders, the way that they actually graze their land and the way that they do it can vary from one landholder to the other. So it's probably- it's that just trying to develop the understanding of how you'll actually break up your paddocks, provide water and in how you actually stock
10 stocking rates. And there's a fair bit that goes into that which is almost on a one-on-one basis, which we're currently going through at Stubbo now, they've successfully done it at New England, we've got large numbers of sheep grazing there right now, so it just takes a fair bit effort. But yes, it's yes, it's an (indistinct) process to get that plan up and. Right. So that the landholder themselves are also meeting their
15 requirements of their business and their obligations around biodiversity and the like.

MR MARSHALL: Okay. Great, thank you for that.

20 **MR YEO:** No problem.

MS MILLIGAN: Can I come in with a couple of questions about neighbours? Cédric, you told us earlier that you'd worked with neighbours to maybe adjust boundaries, adjust setbacks, exclude some portion of the site. And I think you talked about receivers that, you know, one, 11, 30, the fives and three. So my quick
25 question is did that negotiation address the concerns of those neighbours?

MR BERGE: It did to an extent, I think we have to acknowledge that we are here dealing with neighbours who would rather have no project than a project. So that's probably something we are- important to acknowledge. But in doing that we also
30 believe we have resolved and made many of our neighbours more comfortable with our proposal more comfortable with the impact, in particular visual impacts. And we are also committed to going further as required. So I think we've got a proposed mitigation measures in, in our DA, that's one thing. But with our ongoing neighbour consultation in the future, we are also open to, you know, provide additional visual
35 screening at the property if that addresses visual impact a little bit better. And so, to answer your question I think our neighbours are more and more comfortable with our proposal.

40 **MS MILLIGAN:** Okay. Thank you. And can I just go quickly to the neighbour benefits scheme? I'm interested to know, I was going to say the number, but probably it makes more sense. What roughly what percentage of your neighbours are part of the neighbour benefit scheme?

45 **MR BERGE:** I think, to answer your question what I would like to say here is we've got a mechanism that is available for the neighbours, and with eligibility criteria. And they are objective criteria. And the same for everyone. If a neighbour wants to opt in they know what amount we are proposing. And we're not necessarily

comfortable with having those numbers public just for, you know, just for confidentiality reasons. But we are also transparent with all our neighbours and all our neighbours, as long as they meet the criteria would be eligible.

5 **MS MILLIGAN:** Okay. Thank you. No, that's okay. So you're saying that of the 22 non associated neighbours, all are eligible to talk to you about that benefit sharing scheme.

10 **MR BERGE:** Amongst their eligibility criteria. A distance and visual impact are important. So if you are beyond a certain distance and you do not have visual impact, you're not in the list of eligibility.

15 **MS MILLIGAN:** Okay, I understand. All right. Thank you for that. Now we are pushing up against our allotted time. So let me just do a quick- Suellen, Duncan, do we have issues that we really don't want to leave on the table before we finish?

MS FITZGERALD: I'm good. Thanks, Janett. The presentation has cleared up a number of questions for me. Thank you.

20 **MS MILLIGAN:** And Duncan.

MR MARSHALL: I'm okay. Thanks, Janett. That's all good.

25 **MS MILLIGAN:** Okay. All right, well, well done, team. I know Cédric, there was more to your presentation that we didn't actually see, but I think people are feeling comfortable that there's been an opportunity to clarify and to ask questions. So can I just thank you for participating in the meeting. Thank you to you and your team. And thank you for the additional information that you've presented to us this morning. Thank you.

30 **MR BERGE:** Thank you very much. Bye.

MS HAFEZ: Thank you.

35 **<THE MEETING CONCLUDED**