



TRANSCRIPT OF MEETING

RE: BIRRIWA SOLAR FARM (SSD-29508870)

DEPARTMENT MEETING

PANEL: JANETT MILLIGAN (CHAIR)
DUNCAN MARSHALL AM
SUELLEN FITZGERALD

OFFICE OF THE IPC: KENDALL CLYDSDALE
GEOFF KWOK

NAME ATTENDEE: IWAN DAVIES
NESTOR TSAMBOS
CAMERON ASHE

LOCATION: VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE

DATE: 9:00 AM – 10:00 AM,
THURSDAY, 30th MAY 2024

<THE MEETING COMMENCED AT 9:00AM

MS MILLIGAN: Good morning everybody. Before we begin today, I'd like to acknowledge that I'm speaking to you from Cammeraygal Land, and I 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, proposes to develop a 600 megawatt solar farm with a 600 megawatt battery energy storage facility, an on-site accommodation facility and associated infrastructure, approximately 15km south east of Dunedoo 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, and I'm the chair of this commission panel, and I'm joined by my fellow commissioners, Duncan Marshall and Suellen Fitzgerald. We're also joined by Kendall Clydesdale and Geoff Kwok from the office of the Independent Planning Commission.

In the interest of openness and transparency 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. 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'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 you're not in a position to answer, please feel free to take the question on notice and provide any additional information in writing, which we'll then put up on our website. I request that all members here today introduce themselves before speaking for the first time, and for all members to ensure that they don't speak over the top of each other to ensure that we've got an accurate transcript. So let's begin. And can I hand it over to the department?

MR DAVIES: Thank you Janett. Good morning, everybody. My name is Iwan Davies, I'm director for energy assessments at the New South Wales Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure. I'm joined by my colleagues, Nestor Tsambos and Cameron Ashe. I would also like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we all join today's meeting. I would like to pay my respects to their elders, past and present, and extend that respect to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people here today. We will also be sharing the slide pack, Cameron or Nestor, if you could do so. And I'll just wait for that- Great. Thank you. Okay. Could we go to slide two, please?

So I'll begin with a few brief comments about the assessment process itself, and then very briefly identify what we believe are the key issues associated with the proposal. I will also use this opportunity to provide further details on the key assessment issues and our evaluation of the project, and in particular, the key reasons for the department's recommendation to the commission to approve the project. Next slide please. The applicant proposes to develop a \$1 billion, 600 megawatt solar farm

about 15km southeast of Dunedoo within Mid-Western and Warrumbungle local government areas within the Central Western Orana Renewable Energy Zone. The project would include a 600 megawatt, 1200 megawatt hour BESS, on site accommodation, an on-site substation, and would connect to the proposed CWO REZ Merotherie Energy Hub substation being developed by Energy Corporation New South Wales. Before I dive into the assessment issues, it is important to provide some strategic context about the project in relation to its location and access to the electricity network.

10 Noting that all coal fired power plants in New South Wales are scheduled for closure in the next 20 years, the project would assist in providing large scale renewable energy generation to meet increased electricity demand. The department considers that the project is consistent with the relevant national, state and local policy documents which identify the need to diversify the energy generation mix and reduce the carbon emissions intensity of the grid, while also providing energy security and reliability. There are also additional considerations from a regional context perspective that the project site would benefit from. The site is located within the Renewable Energy Zone, which has been identified by the New South Wales Government as an area which should be targeted for renewable energy investments.

15 The site is located in a sparsely populated rural area with no significant visual or noise impacts on residents or the local- or the locality. The site is located in close proximity to the Castlereagh Highway and has direct access to the electricity network. There are minimal biodiversity and heritage impacts. The site is located on land that is not mapped as biophysical, strategic, agricultural land that is BSAL land and predominantly on land that has a land and soil capability of class five and seven, which is defined as land restricted to low to moderate impact uses. The land is currently primarily used for grazing. Overall, the department considers the site to be appropriate for the project and is consistent with the department's large scale solar energy guideline.

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30 The project would also provide flow on benefits to the local community, including up to 500 construction jobs. Contributions to council, equating to 1.5% of the project's capital investment expenditure and provided through a voluntary planning agreement. There would be broader benefits to the state through an injection of approximately \$1 billion in capital investment into the New South Wales economy. Next slide please. The department exhibited the DIS from the 14th of October until the 10th of November 22, and received 89 public submissions, consisting of 85 objections and four comments. The department exhibited the amendment report, which included the accommodation camp, from the 6th of October until the 19th of

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40 October 23, and received 45 public objections. The most common matters raised in public objections were land use compatibility, including the loss of agricultural land, visual amenity, including impacts on the surrounding landscape and residences, and cumulative impacts, including impacts of the development in conjunction with other renewable energy projects within the region. Throughout the assessment process, the department sought advice from 13 government agencies in addition to Mid-Western and Warrumbungle councils, and visited the site. Next slide please.

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I'm now going to talk about what we found to be the key areas for assessment being energy transition, land use compatibility, traffic, visual and social. Next slide please. The project has a capacity of 600MW, which would generate enough energy to power about 230,000 homes. Solar generation is consistent with the New South
5 Wales Climate Change Policy framework of achieving net zero emissions by 2050. The project is in a declared renewable energy zone, meaning the location has been identified by the New South Wales Government as an area which should be targeted for renewable energy investments. Next slide please. The site is located across the
10 Mid-Western LEP and Warrumbungle LEP.

The proposed development is permitted with consent as the relevant land zonings under each respective LEP being RU1 and SP2, are nominated non-residential zones for which electricity generating and development is permissible via the transport and infrastructure SEPP. The Worker's accommodation camp is ancillary to the Solar and
15 BESS development, and forms part of the project, that is part of the of the development that is electricity generating works. The accommodation camp is categorised as an ancillary use to the solar farm, in that it is clearly subordinate to the primary use, and would not exist without it. This is reflected in the conditions which require decommissioning of the camp following completion of the construction
20 phase of the development. The project is consistent with both local and regional plans, including the Mid-Western LEP, the Warrumbungle LEP, and the Central Western Orana Regional Plan. Across the exhibition of the DIS and the exhibition of the amendment report, concerns around land use compatibility were raised. The development footprint is comprised of class five and class seven land, which has
25 limited agricultural capabilities. Considering land use impacts from a cumulative perspective with the addition of Birriwa Solar farm, the amount of agricultural land in the CWO REZ that would be occupied by solar farms, would be less than 0.18%.

The land subject to the development of the solar farm, would also be capable of
30 returning to a usable agricultural land following decommissioning of the project. Neither Council or DPI agriculture raised concerns that the project would compromise the long term use of the land for agricultural purposes. And importantly, the loss of a relatively small area of agricultural land in the region must be balanced against the broader strategic goals of the government, along with the environmental
35 and economic benefits of solar energy. Next slide please.

The haulage route for the project is via the Castlereagh Highway, Barneys Reef Road and Birriwa bus route south. Site access would be at the north west corner of the project off Birriwa Bus route South. The use of other roads in the vicinity of the site
40 would be prohibited for development related traffic. The intersection of Castlereagh Highway and Barneys Reef Road would be upgraded as part of the project. Additionally, Barneys Reef Road and Birriwa bus route South, between the Castlereagh Highway and the site, would be sealed and widened. The construction of the workers camp created a significant reduction in the estimated number of light
45 vehicles during the peak construction period, from 360 to 50 per day. Subject to the recommended conditions provided in paragraph 112 of the assessment report, the Department and Transport for New South Wales are satisfied that the project would

not have any significant impacts on the road network, capacity, efficiency or safety. Next slide please.

5 Concerns about visual impacts in public submissions include the proximity of the project to surrounding residences, and potential impacts on the scenic quality of the locality. The department visited the site and nearby non-associated residences to understand the visual impacts and to further understand residents' concerns. The applicant has incorporated a number of measures into the project design to minimise its visual impacts, including a 350 metre setback between the solar array and
10 residents R3, minimising clearance of existing vegetation, planting of vegetation screening in accordance with the landscaping plan to screen views of the project from nearby residences, road users and the Central West Cycle Trail users, and in addition, a number of setbacks from the project boundary throughout the site. Views of the project for vehicles travelling along the Castlereagh Highway would only be
15 slightly visible, as it is screened by existing vegetation. The department recognises the introduction of solar farm to rural setting would result in a change to the local landscape, but considers the development would have a limited impact beyond the project's immediate vicinity. In relation to views from nearby residences, there are a total of 22 non-associated residences within two kilometres of the site. All residential
20 receivers would experience low, very low or nil visual impacts. Subject to the recommended conditions, the Department is satisfied that ASN has adequately reduced the visual impacts of the project to an acceptable level. Next slide please.

25 Concerns about the social impacts of the proposed development were raised in 15 submissions during the EIS exhibition and in 15 submissions during the amendment exhibition. ACEN providers provided a social impact assessment to assess the social impacts of the proposed development would have within both local and regional contexts. The Department has reviewed all submissions received and met with non-associated residences to understand key concerns, including social and
30 accommodation concerns. The department has said it is satisfied that the potential of social amenity impacts can be effectively managed through conditions of consent and implementation of appropriate management plans to minimise impacts. ACEN proposed an accommodation camp through the amendment report to address potential impacts on accommodation availability in the area. ACEN has
35 demonstrated means of service in the accommodation camp in relation to support the water, sewage, waste, electricity and medical services. The department is satisfied that the accommodation camp provides a suitable means of mitigating potential increased demand for housing and associated residential services in the region. Noting that the final details of the provision of services is to be determined through
40 the post-approval stage of the development prior to construction and that Mid-Western Council supported on site accommodation. Next slide please.

45 The department is considered the potential cumulative impacts of the project, with all other projects that have been approved and not yet constructed, as well as those currently under assessment and proposed. An assessment has been completed in line with the Cumulative Impact Assessment guidelines for state significant projects. The assessment identified five nearby projects which have the potential to cause

cumulative impacts, these being the CWO transmission line including the Merotherie energy hub, Stubbo Solar Farm, Tallawang Solar Farm, Barneys Reef Wind Farm, and the Valley of the Winds Wind Farm. The department is satisfied that the project has been designed to minimise opportunities for potential cumulative impacts. The
5 key cumulative impacts considered were potential impacts on agricultural land, traffic, visual and accommodation impacts.

Regarding land use, the total development footprint of this project and all other operational, approved and proposed SSD solar farms in the Central West Orana the
10 region represents only 0.18% of the 8.9 million hectares of land currently used for agricultural output. It would result in a negligible reduction in the overall agricultural productivity of the region. Regarding traffic, there would be no reduction in the level of service on any roads along the haulage route, even if the peak construction period for the project overlaps with that of the CWO REZ transmission line and Tallawang
15 solar farm projects. Regarding visual, there would be low cumulative visual impacts for all residents near the Birriwa Solar project when considering all further projects, which may be visible simultaneously, primarily due to the low number of turbines potentially visible, combined with viewing distances from other nearby wind farms. There are moderate cumulative visual impacts to users of the Central West Cycle
20 Trail, though this is a worst case assessment which should- would be reduced by the proposed mitigating and vegetation screening along Birriwa Bus Route South. The project would not be visible from other solar farms in the LGA, and the setback of the project prevents any opportunities to view solar farms in quick succession along major travel routes. Next slide, please.

25 The operational life of the project would be about 40 years, but there is potential for it to operate for a longer period of time if solar panels are upgraded over time, as permitted under the recommended conditions of consent. The large scale solar energy guideline identifies four key decommissioning and rehabilitation principles
30 for circumstances where an applicant ceases operating a project, which are that the land must be returned to pre-existing use. Infrastructure, including underground infrastructure, must be removed if operations cease. The land must be rehabilitated and restored to pre-existing use, and the owner or operator of a solar energy project should be responsible for decommissioning and rehabilitation. With the
35 implementation of objective based conditions, the department considers that the solar farm would be suitably decommissioned at the end of the project life, or within 18 months if operations cease unexpectedly, and that the site be appropriately rehabilitated.

40 The department has also recommended a condition requiring the accommodation camp to be decommissioned within 12 months of operation of the solar farm. Regarding decommissioning bonds. It is the New South Wales Government policy that financial assurances should not be required by conditions of consent, and any financial assurances should be dealt with in commercial arrangements outside of the
45 planning system. Next slide please. The department has also conducted a detailed assessment of the matter- matters listed in this slide included that- and concluded that there would be no significant impacts, including on biodiversity and heritage. Next

slide please.

5 In summary, electricity generating works on the site are permissible with consent in
accordance with the transport and infrastructure SEPP. The overall agricultural
productivity of the region would not be significantly reduced. The site has good solar
resources, direct access to the road network and access to the electricity network.
10 The project has been designed to largely avoid site constraints, including nearby non-
associated receivers, agricultural land, watercourses, remnant native vegetation and
Aboriginal heritage sites, while maintaining its ability to utilise the existing
electricity infrastructure and road network.

15 The project would assist in transitioning the electricity sector from coal and gas fired
power stations to low emission sources, and is consistent with New South Wales
policy. It would have a generating capacity of 600MW of clean electricity, which can
power approximately 230,000 homes and 600MW of energy storage to dispatch
energy to the grid. When the energy generation from renewable energy resources is
20 limited. The department considers that the project achieves an appropriate balance
between maximising the efficiency of the solar resource development and
minimising the potential impacts on surrounding land users and the environment
through job creation and capital investment and a planning agreement with council,
the project would also stimulate economic investment in renewable energy and
provide flow on benefits to the local community. On balance, the department
25 considers that the project is in the public interest and approvable, subject to the
recommended conditions of consent. Thank you and happy to take questions.

30 **MS MILLIGAN:** Thank you. Thank you very much for that presentation and for
information provided. We now do have a good period for discussion and questions.
So let's start that. And perhaps, perhaps I might just ask my colleagues to start the
questions. Duncan, can I ask you just to introduce yourself and start with any
questions you have after that presentation?

35 **MR MARSHALL:** Yes. Thank you. Thank you. Janett, I'm Duncan Marshall, one
of the commissioners on this panel for this project. Let me work through a couple of
questions. And, Janett, can I just clarify, do you want me to lead us through the
combined list of questions or-

MS MILLIGAN: No-

40 **MR MARSHALL:** Just those that I had crafted.

MS MILLIGAN: No sort of- Duncan, just from hearing the presentation. Just the
things that you think still need some clarification.

45 **MR MARSHALL:** Okay.

MS MILLIGAN: Yes

MR MARSHALL: Okay. All right. So just one sort of detailed question about the land use and visual impact issues, noting that this was a key issue in many submissions and also the panel noting that landscaping is a mitigation measure to address those impacts. Was there a mature tree height proposed as part of the landscaping works in order to address those impacts? Do we have an understanding of that detail?

MR DAVIES: No we don't. And to clarify, the department considers that the potential visual impacts at all receivers are either low, very low or nil. The applicant amended its visual impact assessment to be in line with the current guideline, but also noting that this is being assessed against the 2016 guideline. Happy for you to recommend that you ask the applicant regarding its impact ratings for the visual, for its visual assessment. But the department is satisfied that this site has either low, very low or nil visual impacts on residential receivers without mitigation.

MR MARSHALL: Okay. Turning to the accommodation camp and I note in your presentation that you're talking about the anticipation that once the project is constructed, once the project is operational, then the kind of decommissioning phase starts or, you know, is anticipated. Was there any discussion with the applicant regarding the use of the camp for other potential ACEN developments or perhaps even for non-ACEN developments in the general area?

MR DAVIES: Absolutely. So that condition is formulated so that I believe decommissioning is required within 12 months of commencement of operations of the project decommissioned and rehabilitation, that is. But the department is absolutely aware that the- to make best use of that, of that camp the applicant may use- to use that for other projects in the locality, either ACEN projects or others which would be a post-approval matter, that they would need to consider in other projects. And that is why we have the Secretary's discretion in that condition, should they wish to continue that use. But ultimately the department considers that is absolutely a suitable site for an accommodation camp, with little to no amenity impacts and an access route through the site.

MR MARSHALL: And so the sort of further or additional uses would be subject to further approvals.

MR DAVIES: Correct.

MR MARSHALL: Okay. And we note in the assessment report that there's mention of a recommended I think it's employment and accommodation strategy and just focusing on the accommodation side of things. I just wonder what the purpose of the accommodation strategy is, if essentially it seems like the camp is already a proposed or planned facility.

MR DAVIES: To provide further detail, Duncan. So over the probably the past, well, since the assessment commenced, but in particular over the past 6 or 8 months the department has required a lot of detail on the accommodation camp and the

accommodation strategy and required that strategy as a draft as part of the assessment. We've solidified that with strong conditions of consent or recommended conditions of consent to include further detail, post approval, noting potential concerns from the community in the area.

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MR MARSHALL: So, I mean, that condition is all about firming up the details that it sounds like you've already been working through.

MR DAVIES: Absolutely. Yes that's correct.

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MR MARSHALL: Okay. That's good to clear.

MR DAVIES: It also provides further consultation with council. But that's correct, your statement.

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MR MARSHALL: Okay, right. And just again, another kind of fine detailed matter, but just looking at the residence numbers presented in the affected residences numbers presented in the assessment report, it looks like there's a- they don't quite all seem to add up, at least to my figuring. On page 28, Para 132 and table nine, there seem to be a couple of residences missing from those numbers. Not for now, but perhaps if it could be possible that you could just check that we're not missing a few residences and portrayal of their impacts and assessment. That would be helpful.

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MR DAVIES: Absolutely. We can do that. That table is focusing on not all where there are zero or nil impacts. That table doesn't include all receivers. And that's ordinarily how our reports are structured, rather than counting all residences within a certain region, within a certain distance. It's a merit- it's the merit based assessment table.

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MR MARSHALL: Okay. I just, I guess it's just the clarity of that for people who aren't familiar with the department's approach.

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MR DAVIES: Okay.

MS MILLIGAN: And can I just say so for clarification, I think you told us there are 22 non associated residences. Is that the figure?

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MR DAVIES: That's my understanding that there are 22 non-associated residences within two kilometres. Many would not have a line of sight of the project, but we can provide clarity. If there's a question there on-

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MS MILLIGAN: Okay. Thank you.

MR DAVIES: Yes. If they're just- yes.

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MS MILLIGAN: And if I might just ask another question of clarification Duncan, before we sort of move off the accommodation topic. Thank you for your

presentation and information on cumulative impacts. And I noted that you addressed land visual traffic, cumulative impacts. I'm wondering if you can say a little bit more about the cumulative impacts of workforce. So you've told us that the condition you're recommending is that the camp be decommissioned within 12 months of operations beginning. But you've also considered cumulative impacts. Can you talk a bit about accommodation and workforce cumulative impacts? Thank you.

MR DAVIES: Regarding the social impacts, is that right, Janett, or-

10 **MS MILLIGAN:** Well, I suppose I'm interested in so maybe a broader answer just about workforce, sourcing the workforce, accommodating the workforce. You know, just how you thought about that in terms of the work you did on cumulative impacts, particularly with reference to the transmission infrastructure project?

15 **MR DAVIES:** Yeah, absolutely. Thanks, Janett. So that's a that's a good question, and I think it's one that the New South Wales government is considering at a broader scale. Currently, given the number of renewable energy projects being proposed in rural New South Wales, particularly multiple projects being proposed within renewable energy zones. So the department met with council on a number of occasions regarding this project to understand any concerns, any preferences etc..
20 There's clearly a want from- I'll speak more broadly to start with, from the majority of councils in New South Wales to ensure that there is sufficient accommodation for local residents, existing local residents, but also for tourists to the area to ensure that the tourist accommodation economy is not negatively impacted. The department, the original EIS did not include an accommodation camp with the project, and the department sought further information about that. The solution put forward, put forward by ACEN in consultation with council, I believe, was to provide an accommodation camp on site. And that is what council supported, and that is what the department also supports.

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Now going into now the locality. So in meeting with residents and in reading submissions, there were concerns about the accommodation camp on site. There were various options for the siting of that camp, whether they would be in the main, in the original project boundary. But a decision was made by the applicant to extend
35 the project boundary to include the accommodation camp, to site it away from residences and ensure that local- no additional local roads would be utilised to service and access that camp. Regarding the cumulative impacts with other accommodation camps or projects in the area. So the Merotherie energy hub, which is located adjacent to the project, also includes an accommodation camp. Now the
40 Birriwa solar farm EIS and amendment report was submitted a long time before the CWO REZ project was submitted in line with the New South Wales Government's cumulative impact assessment. Cumulative impacts of projects that have submitted a development application are required to be assessed. So the ACEN undertook that assessment, as did the department, and it's fair to say that there were a number of
45 iterations to the social impact assessment undertaken by ACEN. The department- well, the department's assessments team, alongside the department social impact assessment team, reviewed the initial SIA and required further information. And I

believe ACEN either provided 1 or 2 more iterations to that. SIA, so the social impacts and the cumulative impacts of that accommodation camp have been assessed in absolute detail. Particularly in the past 6 or 8 months, as I alluded to earlier.

5 **MS MILLIGAN:** Thank you. Thank you for that.

MR DAVIES: Thanks.

10 **MS MILLIGAN:** At this point let me throw to Suellen Fitzgerald to ask if she has questions for the department. Thanks, Suellen.

15 **MS FITZGERALD:** Thanks, Janett. Suellen Fitzgerald. Just following on the discussion about the accommodation camp Iwan, and noting that a lot more detail will follow in the accommodation strategy when it's put together. I'm just wondering if there are already similar accommodation camps in operation elsewhere in New South Wales or these REZs. I mean, we're all familiar with remote mining camps and how they operate, but this is quite a different, quite a different arrangement, isn't it? It's not at all remote. I'm just wondering if we've got examples elsewhere of these camps springing up for the renewable energy projects.

20 **MR DAVIES:** This is the first for a solar farm, and It's not the first for an energy project or as you've alluded to, mining projects, sometimes have accommodation camps for Project EnergyConnect, which this team also assessed, accommodation camps were associated with that project. But this is the first renewable energy
25 generation project being wind or solar that includes an accommodation camp. Others are now including them. But this was the first and hence I suppose the real detailed assessment that the department undertook in line with those cumulative and social impact assessment guidelines, but also the merit assessment as well regarding the environmental impacts. But this would be the first solar farm that would be approved
30 with an accommodation camp, Suellen.

MS FITZGERALD: Okay. Thank you. So we'll look at the accommodation strategy when it's prepared with interest to see how the details of its operation might roll out. Janett, I've got another question in relation to cumulative impacts. Iwan you
35 mentioned the key ones for your consideration being loss of AG land traffic and visual. I'm wondering if you're relying on the Department of Environment to provide cumulative environmental impacts? I notice in this project the loss of habitat, say, for koalas, etc., is relatively minor. But thinking about the 20 odd projects that are proposed or in the pipeline for this general area is the Department of Environment
40 assessing the cumulative environmental impacts of these projects.

MR DAVIES: Thanks, Suellen. So the- I can turn to the advice from the Biodiversity and conservation division. But cumulative impacts are assessed for all matters, including biodiversity. So no doubt you'll have- the matter wasn't relevant to
45 this project, but you'll have heard more recently of serious and irreversible impacts on particular threat and ecological communities throughout the state. And that is a cumulative impact assessment. So the cumulative impacts are considered in the

locality. I can provide further detail if you wish, but I think I just turn to the advice provided by BCD which I don't have to hand at this stage, but happy providing further information if needed.

5 **MS FITZGERALD:** Iwan, if you've got information that's in addition to what's already in the documents on the portal, that would be great. If it's a repetition of what's on the portal. I'll catch it from there.

MR DAVIES: Thank you. It would be a repetition.

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MS FITZGERALD: Okay.

MR DAVIES: Thanks.

15 **MS MILLIGAN:** Suellen, other questions from you?

MS FITZGERALD: The only other one Janett. It was about the subdivision, unless that's something you want to ask about, but there's mention of a subdivision. We're interested to know what the purpose of that subdivision is and where it is on the site.

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MR DAVIES: Yes, bear with me. So the subdivision is required for the project to separate out parts of the site that would be utilised by ENCO for the connection to the project including the substation and the final subdivision layout would be dependent on which substation and battery option ACEN decides to go with. So there are two options there. Yes, that's what it's required for.

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MS FITZGERALD: Thank you.

MS MILLIGAN: Okay. And perhaps just a follow up question on the issue of connection to the network. Thank you for clarifying that one purpose of the subdivision is to address that. In the current application, there's I think no infrastructure relating to that. Can you talk a little bit about how that may emerge as the details of the construction and connection are finalised?

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35 **MR DAVIES:** Absolutely. So that connection forms part of the CWO transmission line application. So the detail of the spur that forms part of that project from the Merotherie energy hub, which is included in that application, that spur into the Birriwa solar farm is included in that application.

40 **MS MILLIGAN:** And so any infrastructure on that spur of land would be the responsibility of Energy Co?

MR DAVIES: Correct.

45 **MS MILLIGAN:** Okay. Thank you for that. One other question about the connection to network, and that's one of timing. Do you have any comments on that? Obviously, the construction and operation of the solar farm is dependent on the

connection to the network. And I'm just interested to know about the integration of those actions.

5 **MR DAVIES:** Absolutely. So the assessment of that project, first of all is well progressed. And you may see a determination on that project in the near future. In terms of timing, exact timing, I don't know to hand, I'm sorry, of when they Merotherie energy hub is due to be constructed. I do believe we have that information, and I can provide you with that separately, perhaps.

10 **MS MILLIGAN:** Thank you for that. Okay, it feels as though we're nearly through the things that are in our mind for questions. So let me just throw it back to my panel members, Duncan, Suellen. And do we have any residual questions or issues that haven't been addressed in the presentation?

15 **MR MARSHALL:** And I had a couple of transport traffic questions that arise out of the presentation if I might. Just well, I'll run through them in- they're short ones, but Iwan you mentioned that use of some roads would be prohibited in order to I guess, protect local traffic use for those roads. I'm just wondering how in practice that prohibition would actually work.

20 **MR DAVIES:** Yes thanks, Duncan. And that's a question that's raised on many projects, in terms of what we are able to do as part- under the EP&A act, in our assessment. Essentially there are three avenues. So, first of all we condition and strengthen our conditions as far as possible. By that, I mean, we've approved only a certain route. We've strengthened that by also prohibiting other routes noting
25 concerns of the local community for Birriwa bus route north and Merotherie Road, for example, for this project. So that's why we have strengthened the conditions there to prohibit the use of those routes. There are also measures within the traffic management plan that we've required to ensure compliance with the conditions that
30 we have enforced or that we are recommending. That's the extent of what is available to us at assessment stage. Duncan Post-approval, ultimately, there are three avenues that's self-reporting by the developer, which they are required to do under the conditions. It is also a matter for our compliance team as well. And the third option, and there's no reliance on the community, but there's absolutely an avenue for the
35 community to report to the department's compliance team. Yes.

MR MARSHALL: All right. And a related, or another question on traffic was you told us the numbers of traffic movements and I think I can't remember what the number was 50 or something like that a day, or whatever the, the number was, but
40 (indistinct) five, and that might mean 500 people, each with their own vehicle, potentially. You know, who come weekend will be you know, bolting for the city or bolting for somewhere else. I just wonder whether those accommodation camp traffic movements have been factored into the overall consideration of road use.

45 **MR DAVIES:** Thanks, Duncan. I missed the first part of the question, but I believe your question is about the use of local roads or the use of intersections by people

residing in the accommodation camp outside of normal construction periods such as weekends and evenings and the like.

MR MARSHALL: Yes.

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MR DAVIES: That's been assessed. So there was a want of, for want of a better term, a lot of back and forth on the traffic impacts of that accommodation camp. And an assessment has been undertaken by ACEN on normal use of that accommodation camp, but also use at periods outside of construction hours. Correct me if I'm wrong.
10 Nestor or Cameron. Thank you.

MR TSAMBOS: That's correct.

MR MARSHALL: So we're not expecting, you know, 500 vehicles to be on the
15 road at, you know, 430 on a Friday afternoon, to be the situation with this accommodation camp?

MR DAVIES: No, we are not.

20 **MR MARSHALL:** Okay. Good, good.

MS MILLIGAN: Nestor, were you about to contribute an answer to that answer too?

25 **MR TSAMBOS:** I was just saying I was just agreeing with you, in that it's been assessed.

MS MILLIGAN: Okay. Thank you very much. All right. So can I just clarify that
30 point? I think in the assessment it talked about 50 light vehicles. Duncan, you've asked about that figure. Given that there will probably be sort of recreational traffic out of construction hours. What- where have we landed on that? So can I just ask you, perhaps Iwan, to summarise your answer, the question being, I think you've sort of referenced 50 light vehicle movements. The question was, what about when construction hours are not enforced, you know, on the Sunday, etc.? What's your
35 expectation?

MR DAVIES: That has been assessed and the numbers are within the numbers that have been stated in the assessment report or the applicant's EIS.

40 **MS MILLIGAN:** And the conclusion was that there would be no significant impact on the performance of those roads. Is that correct?

MR DAVIES: That's correct.

45 **MS MILLIGAN:** Thank you for that, Duncan. Anything else on that topic from you?

MR MARSHALL: Just the last traffic question arises because I think one of the concerns of local councils is the impact on roads, road wear deterioration, maintenance and the like and, and the impact of these projects on, you know, their road maintenance activities, but also more particularly in terms of the cumulative impact of multiple renewable energy projects in the region. All leading to these sorts of impacts. I just wonder what the answer is to councils on that, that you know, is it a case that the solution is being developed on a project by project basis in terms of maintenance of roads or upgrading of roads and the like.

10 **MR DAVIES:** Thank you. Duncan. So regarding the state road network, so I appreciate you discuss just local roads there, but just to step back to the state road network, so that is separately funded. So now going into the local road network as you'll note there are conditions requiring the applicant to undertake all that mitigation- all that maintenance for the lifetime of the project. And then cumulative
15 impacts are considered. So for some projects where several projects share a particular local road network. There may be conditions where there is cost sharing or sharing of those maintenance requirements. But for this project I don't believe that Birriwa bus route south is being utilised for any other project. Yes.

20 **MR MARSHALL:** Okay.

MS MILLIGAN: Duncan, does that address your query about road maintenance?

25 **MR MARSHALL:** It does. Thank you.

MS MILLIGAN: Okay, all right. Okay, so I think that we probably have- no Suellen. Let me go to you.

30 **MS FITZGERALD:** Just before we finish up just on that question of shared costs and benefits, I note from the documents that Barneys Reef Road wind farm and the Tallawang project have received SEARs, and they seem to also use that intersection upgrade Castlereagh highway, Barneys Reef Road. Is that something the coordination of those costs and the coordination, I guess, of the design of those works. Is that something that's on your radar, or can it not be assessed at this time,
35 it's too early in the process for those other projects.

40 **MR DAVIES:** It's certainly on our radar Suellen, so a detailed assessment against the Tallawang solar farm in particular, but also the Barney's Reef wind farm was undertaken by the Department and by the developer and in multiple discussions and correspondence with the roads authorities and particularly Transport for New South Wales. Barneys Reef Wind farm is at a much earlier stage with just SEARs issued and unsure will when that development application is coming in. But absolutely for Tallawang solar farm, we'd received the development application and therefore full cumulative impact assessment with that project was required. Nestor and Cameron,
45 correct me if I'm wrong, but I don't believe that Tallawang is proposing to use Barneys Reef Road for their project, they continue down the castle.

MR TSAMBOS: I don't think so, no.

5 **MR DAVIES:** Great. Thank you. So they continue Tallawang continue down the Castlereagh Highway, or come up from the south. So there's no use of that other than driving past the intersection, and there's no use of that intersection by that project.

10 **MS FITZGERALD:** Okay. Just one other question, and this is about community benefits- local community benefits. I note that the proponents entering into a VPA with councils, there's also mention of a neighbourhood payment benefit plan. Are you aware of that Iwan? What arrangements might have been made between the proponents and local community members?

15 **MR DAVIES:** I'm unaware of the detail of that myself. We can either take that on notice or Nestor on Cameron, if you remember the absolute detail there, I probably actually just refer you to the-

MR TSAMBOS: Probably better to take it on notice.

20 **MR DAVIES:** Okay. Take it on notice, but perhaps one to ask the developer noting that clearly our impact assessment considers if there are any neighbour agreements and then the VPA with council and any additional monies or arrangements that the applicant may wish to put forward, does not- is not considered for the merit- the impact merit assessment.

25 **MS MILLIGAN:** Thanks. Suellen. I think yes, it is a question for the proponent too. And so we'll follow that up with them. Suellen, more questions?

MS FITZGERALD: No I'm good thank you.

30 **MS MILLIGAN:** Okay, and Duncan?

35 **MR MARSHALL:** Perhaps just with regard to the accommodation camp are there any site contamination issues that need to be addressed as reference to technical reports. But I just wonder whether that's adequately addressed?

MR DAVIES: That's been assessed, and there are no- my understanding is that there are no significant impacts. And there are stringent operating conditions recommended within the recommended development consent.

40 **MR MARSHALL:** Thanks.

45 **MS MILLIGAN:** Well. Thank you, thank you. So at this point, I think we are ready to wrap up. So can I just thank you Iwan, and thank you and your colleagues Nestor and Cameron, thank you for the information that you've presented to us and for the additional information you've provided through questions. That's really helpful to the panel. And so thank you very much for participating this morning.

MR DAVIES: Thanks for your time. Thanks all.

MS MILLIGAN: Thank you. Goodbye.

5 **MR DAVIES:** Thank you.

<THE MEETING CONCLUDED