



New South Wales Government
Independent Planning Commission

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

RE: HILLS OF GOLD WIND FARM (SSD-9679)

LIVERPOOL PLAINS SHIRE COUNCIL MEETING

PANEL
CLARE SYKES (CHAIR)
JULIET GRANT
DUNCAN MARSHALL AM

OFFICE OF THE IPC
GEOFF KWOK
STEVE BARRY

LIVERPOOL PLAINS
SHIRE COUNCIL
NATHAN SKELLY
DAVID KITSON

LOCATION: VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE

DATE: 4:00 PM – 4:30 PM
MONDAY, 15TH JANUARY 2024

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<THE MEETING COMMENCED

MS SYKES: Before we begin, I would like to acknowledge that I'm speaking to you from Gadigal Land, and I acknowledge the traditional owners of all of the country
5 from which we virtually meet today and pay my respects to their elders, past and present. I welcome to the meeting today to discuss the Hills of Gold Wind Farm Case SSD 9679. Currently before the Commission for determination, the Applicant Hills of Gold Wind Farm Proprietary Limited, a project entity owned by Energy Australia and New Zealand, proposes to develop a 390 megawatt wind farm approximately
10 60km south east of Tamworth, near Nundle, Hanging Rock and Crawney, in the local government areas of Tamworth, Upper Hunter and Liverpool Plains. The proposed project involves the development of up to 64 turbines, up to 230m high, a 100 megawatt battery energy storage system, a 330 kilovolt transmission line connecting to Transgrid's existing transmission network at Wallabadah, and other associated
15 ancillary infrastructure. My name is Clare Sykes. I'm the chair of this commission panel and I'm joined by my fellow commissioners, Commissioners Juliet Grant and Duncan Marshall. We are also joined by Geoff Kwok and Steve Barry from the Office of the Independent Planning Commission.

20 So 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. This meeting is one part of the Commission's consideration of this matter, and will form one of several
25 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 is considered appropriate. If you are asked a question and not in a position to answer, please feel free to take up the question on notice and provide any additional information in writing, which we will then put up on our website. So I request that all members here today introduce themselves before speaking for the
30 first time, and for all members to ensure that they do not speak over the top of each other to ensure accuracy of the transcript. And so we will now begin. And may I please ask for each member joining from Liverpool Plains COUNCIL to please introduce yourself and, if applicable, provide a verbal declaration of any actual or potential personal interests that you may have in the project. Thank you very much.

35 MR SKELLY: So Nathan Skelly, Director of Infrastructure Environmental Services at Liverpool Plains Shire Council. I have no perceived conflicts of interest in this project.

40 MR KITSON: David Kitson, Manager of Planning and Regulations. I also have no conflicts of interest in respect to this matter.

MS SYKES: Thanks, David, and thanks, Nathan. So I guess at this point, you know, we have submitted an agenda, in advance of the meeting. And really, the aim of the
45 meeting is to, you know, if you want to wish to provide any overview of submissions

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or any key matters. and any sort of statements related to that. You know, we've listed a few key issues, raised in the agenda, as well as any other matters. So over to you.

5 MR KITSON: Did you want to speak first, Nathan? Now, look, I guess, the project as it impacts on, Liverpool Plains Council is fairly minor in terms of, there just being a transmission line along a ridge. I think probably the bigger impacts are going to be in the other COUNCIL areas. So I guess I don't know whether, you know, there is much to provide in terms of any, positions in respect to this development from this COUNCIL.

10 MS SYKES: Thanks. Thanks very much. Thanks very much, David. And Nathan, did you have any anything that you wish you wish to add?

15 MR SKELLY: The only impact that we can foresee relates to air traffic impacts on our infrastructure because, as I understand, they will be accessing through local roads of Liverpool Plains Shire Council for various things. So as I understand the wind turbine components will be going through, Lindsey Gap Road is our is one of our roads and then as I understand, there will be access up Wallabadah Creek road for the substation and electrical lines, etc. etc. So we'd certainly be keen to understand or sorry mitigate the impact more correctly of particularly the access across Wallabadah Creek Road. Being an unsealed road, it is likely that construction traffic will create a much higher impact on that road than the current usage sees.

25 MS SYKES: Sorry, just for clarification, the Wallabadah Creek Road is more for the transmission infrastructure components.

MR SKELLY: Sorry. I beg your pardon?

30 MS SYKES: You mentioned the actual components that would be transported.

MR SKELLY: Yeah. As I understand, the substation that needs to be constructed will access off that part.

35 MS SYKES: Okay, and it's unsealed.

MR SKELLY: Yep.

MS GRANT: And what was sorry? What was the name of the other road?

40 MR SKELLY: Lindsey Gap road.

MS SYKES: We're currently in the process of planning out our site visits. So it would be just seeing how we can incorporate the quite vast area...

45 MR SKELLY: Yep.

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MS SYKES: ...Within it. In terms of location of both of those roads. Oh I see, oh, is that the Old Wallabadah road? Is that a separate road?

MR SKELLY: I can't see the map you're looking at, obviously, so.

5

MS SYKES: It's called Old Wallabadah Road. Oh, Wallabadah Creek road. Okay. Got it. In the top, see here on the bottom on the western side, there, on the bottom.

MR KWOK: I think it is up here.

10

MS GRANT: Up there. I see.

MS SYKES: Okay, we've got our bearings here. Thank you. And, in terms of, so most of the, it's the transmission infrastructure that is running through the Liverpool Plains Council area. Is there anything specific to that aspect of the project that you wish to raise or wish to comment on?

15

MR SKELLY: No, not particularly.

MS GRANT: And in terms of the conditions of consent and obviously, impact on your local roads, are you comfortable with the approach that the Department has that those roads are covered sufficiently covered, in terms of funding, the cost of any upgrades or maintenance?

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MR SKELLY: Broadly, it's just making sure that when they're...Excuse me. It's also to make sure that they're returned to a suitable condition at the end of the works as well.

25

MS GRANT: I can see that Lindsay Gap Road is listed in a couple of spots. I'm not sure if they're specifically the areas in your LGA. There's three mentions there, but, the Wallabadah Creek Road doesn't look like it's listed.

30

MR SKELLY: Yep.

MR KITSON: Or is it the Old Wallabadah Road?

35

MS GRANT: That's not listed either.

MR SKELLY: Wallabadah Creek Road comes off the New England Highway just to the north of Wallabadah. Just bear with me. I'm just looking at one of my road maps behind me.

40

MS GRANT: And then I guess it's unsealed, Wallabadah Creek Road is unsealed. When you say, return it back, if they seal it, presumably we don't want it returned.

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MR SKELLY: Yeah, if they have to seal it for their works, no, don't return it to an unsealed state. That would be a little bit nonsensical, but I suspect the Old Wallabadah Road, I think, is outside of my shire.

5 MS GRANT: Okay.

MR SKELLY: Okay, so, yeah, Wallabadah Creek Road is just immediately to the north of the New England Highway, and that was where, the last time I spoke with Hills of Gold, that was one of the places they're looking to access for their substation works and some of their transmission line works.

MR MARSHALL: So you have had discussions with the Applicant about use of the roads, traffic impacts, remediation, that sort of...

15 MR SKELLY: Not so much, no. So not so much about, that level of work. So we've had them...So they came to a, they held a community meeting at Wallabadah and we discussed with them that part of it. I've briefly discussed with them about the access up there, but it was only, you know, they've got to get up there and if they need to do works to get up there, well that would be incumbent on them to do so, and yeah, if there's upgrades that need to be done, they need to do that. And I just want to make sure that they don't destroy it in the process because it's unsafe. It's not designed for heavy traffic. There's no two ways about that.

25 MS SYKES: Yeah. Has the Applicant entered into any voluntary planning agreement...

MR SKELLY: No.

MS SYKES: With Liverpool Plains Council? Sorry, that was no?

MR SKELLY: No.

MS SYKES: Yes.

35 MS GRANT: So there's no there's no community benefit.

MR SKELLY: I know they have provided some grant funding to the local, the Wallabadah Community Association to assist with an upgrade of a facility that they hold.

40 MS GRANT: Community Enhancement Fund.

MR SKELLY: That was through their broader fund, if I understand correctly.

45 MS GRANT: Right. Okay.

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MR MARSHALL: David, you mentioned, minor impacts regarding the transmission line. Is that something separate from the traffic impacts or including the traffic impacts?

5 MR KITSON: Yeah. Look, when I was, making that statement, I was really talking more about its, probably its long-term visual impact and environmental impacts, not so much, the construction phase.

10 MR MARSHALL: And by environmental, do you mean biodiversity or other environmental matters or?

15 MR KITSON: Yes. I don't really see there being...I'm probably talking more about, visual impacts, and, you know, as I say, in the overall scheme of things, it's a very small part of the overall proposal that is actually within our shire. Yeah.

MR MARSHALL: But it sounds like you're relaxed about the level of impact and...

20 MR KITSON: Yeah, look, I guess, I would suggest that, you know, you're going to be able to accommodate, any of the impacts, yeah. And that's what the IS, I guess has been, prepared for. So, yeah.

25 MS SYKES: So did you have any other comments, in relation to Liverpool Plains COUNCIL, just on the broader sort of economic, social benefits or any other comments related to employment protections, housing?

30 MR KITSON: Well, look, I guess, there's always going to be, with a infrastructure project like this, there's always going to be some increased economic activity in the local area, especially during construction, during the construction period, I guess in longer terms, I guess, it will kind of feed into the electrical supply for the area. And I guess that's, probably a good thing in terms of making energy supply more reliable and I guess potentially environmentally sustainable.

MS SYKES: Okay. Well, did you have any more questions?

35 MS GRANT: No, I don't think so. Thank you.

40 MR MARSHALL: Can I just circle back again to the roads and the potential for them to be upgraded? One of the other COUNCILs, in thinking about the impacts of the project, was concerned that in order to achieve access for heavy vehicles, there might have to be substantial engineering to upgrade the roads to achieve access for those vehicles. have you thought about that at all with regard to the two roads that you have mentioned?

45 MR SKELLY: Yep. So for Lindsay Gap Road, yes. Getting access with the turbines may be an issue, but as I understand, it's been a long while since I looked at it, but the route planning that they did, I think they're actually fine within the section of

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Lindsay Gap Road that LPSC looks after. So it's pretty well open through there for Wallabalah Creek Road. They're looking to take nothing greater than a b-double, which, Wallabalah Creek Road is already approved for b-doubles, but we approve our roads by exception. So essentially we say the whole shire is approved except for these particular areas. So, access for them would be potentially, it would be access to driveways, but it's not going to be anything like majorly significant works that would need to be that would be required for this. So the Lindsay Gap Road, the intersection with New England Highway, may require some work, but again, that would be in partnership with Transport and COUNCIL, should that be required. But I think that area is probably sufficiently wide enough that they can get through. And then the balance of Lindsay Gap Road, with appropriate traffic control, I would imagine they can get through there because we haven't got any really tight, twisty bits like they do heading from Nundle up the hill. I've been up there myself, but I looked at the transport plan with great interest through there and I've gone, I don't know how they're going to achieve that, but outside my realm of control.

MR MARSHALL: Thanks.

MS SYKES: Yeah. Okay. Well, I think there are no more questions. I didn't have any more questions, specific questions as well, but just wanted to invite whether you had any additional comments or, that you wish to make.

MR SKELLY: No, I don't think so. Thank you.

MR KITSON: No. That's fine.

MS SYKES: Okay. Well, thanks very much for your time today and for raising those sort of specific, specific points for this meeting. And I think at that point we might close the meeting for now, and thanks very much for your time.

MR SKELLY: Not a problem.

MR KITSON: Thank you.

MR SKELLY: Thank you very much. Thanks.

MR KITSON: Cheers.

<THE MEETING CONCLUDED.

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