



TRANSCRIPT OF MEETING

RE: SPICERS CREEK WIND FARM (SSD-41134610)

WARRUMBUNGLE SHIRE COUNCIL MEETING

PANEL: PROF NEAL MENZIES AM (CHAIR)
MR MICHAEL WRIGHT
MS SUELLEN FITZGERALD

OFFICE OF THE IPC: TAHLIA HUTCHINSON

WARRUMBUNGLE SHIRE COUNCIL: CR AMBROSE DOOLAN
CR DALE HOGDEN
LEEANNE RYAN
NICOLE BENSON
ADJUNCT PROF WARWICK GIBLIN

LOCATION: ZOOM VIDEOCONFERENCE

DATE: 9:00AM – 10:00AM
FRIDAY, 23RD AUGUST 2024

<THE MEETING COMMENCED

5 **PROF NEAL MENZIES:** I think we probably have the whole set of people. So let me just kick off. So my name is Neal Menzies. I'm the panel chair. I actually have a formal statement that I need to read before we kick off the meeting but following that formal statement, we like to have these as informal discussions, so we'll work through the agenda but it'll be very backwards and forwards to make sure that it's a simple discussion and we can tease out with you the things you think we need to know. So let me kick off with the formal statement and then into our meeting.

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15 So before we begin, I'd like to acknowledge that I'm speaking to you from the land of the Turrbal and Jagera people here in the Brisbane River Valley and I acknowledge the traditional owners of all the country from which we virtually meet today and pay my respects to the elders past and present.

20 Welcome to the meeting today to discuss Spicers Wind Farm, SSD-41134610, currently before the Commission for determination. Spicers Wind Farm Pty Ltd, a project entity owned by Squadron Energy Group of companies, proposes to develop a 700 megawatt wind farm located approximately 25 km northwest of Gulgong within the Dubbo Regional and Warrumbungle Shire local government areas.

25 The project site is in the Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone. The proposed project involves the development of 117 turbines with a maximum tip height of 256 metres, a 400 megawatt battery energy storage system, connected to the proposed Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone transmission line and other ancillary infrastructure.

30 My name is Neal Menzies. I'm the chair of the Commission panel and I'm joined by my fellow Commissioners, Michael Wright and Suellen Fitzgerald. We are also joined by Tahlia Hutchinson from the Office of the Independent Planning Commission.

35 In the interests 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 the matter and will form one of several sources of information on which the Commission will base its determination.

40 It's important the Commissioners ask questions of attendees and to clarify issues whenever it's considered appropriate. If you are asked a question and are not in a position to answer, please feel free to take the question on notice and provide any additional information in writing, which we will then put up on our website.

45 I request that all members here today introduce themselves before speaking for the first time and that all members ensure they do not speak over the top of each other

to ensure accuracy of the transcript. Before we begin, may I ask each member joining the Council to please introduce themselves and if applicable, provide a verbal declaration of any actual or potential interests that you may have in the project. Okay, so let's begin with those introductions if we could.

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ADJUNCT PROF WARWICK GIBLIN: Ambrose, do you want to go first, mate?

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CR AMBROSE DOOLAN: Well, I can kick off. Good morning, everyone. My name is Ambrose Doolan and I'm the mayor of the Warrumbungle Shire and could I begin by thanking you, Commissioner, for your acknowledgment of country. It's very important to who we are in this part of the world and I'm very proud of the farm that I live on here is the birthplace of a very significant woman in our town's history called Mary Jane Cain and she was the first person of mixed heritage born in this district and she was just born just over here.

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And she was a woman of great foresight and pride and she actually wrote to Queen Victoria to ask for a grant of land. So to think that a local woman born here would write to a woman upon whose empire the sun never set and got a positive result from that is something that our district's very proud of and as I said, I'm very proud that my children are born in the same place she's born.

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PROF MENZIES: What a wonderful opening statement. Thank you, Mayor.

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ADJUNCT PROF GIBLIN: So Leeanne, do you want to go next?

MS LEEANNE RYAN: Yes. So Leeanne Ryan, I'm Council's Director, Environment and Development Services and yes, work on all things REZ related.

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ADJUNCT PROF GIBLIN: Nicole.

MS NICOLE BENSON: Good morning, everybody. My name's Nicole Benson and I'm the Director of Technical Services with Warrumbungle Shire Council.

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PROF MENZIES: And Dale, can you hear us? Would you like to make an introduction?

CR DALE HOGDEN: Yes, Dale Hogden, Councillor for Warrumbungle Shire. I live at Dunedoo, so very close to the proposed project. Probably the best part of the world, I reckon we live in. But no, no disclosures. Thank you.

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PROF MENZIES: Thank you, Dale.

ADJUNCT PROF GIBLIN: Commissioner, if you don't mind, so the Council have asked me to sort of run proceedings from this end of the table if that's all right.

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PROF MENZIES: Absolutely.

ADJUNCT PROF GIBLIN: So can I commence by saying thank you, Commissioner Menzies and your team. Welcome to Tahlia. An introduction for myself, so I've had 45 years in the practical application of the assessment and determination of state significant development projects around the state of New South Wales, including the determination of Skitube and Mount Blue Cow Ski Resort, for those that venture into the mountains.

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And for the last 14 years I've acted for over 20 Councils in rural New South Wales and also numerous farmers in trying to address the state significant developments that may well have impacted on them to get a fair and just outcome. And I'll say that I've prepared about 30 planning agreements for rural Councils in New South Wales and I'm honoured to be advising Warrumbungle Shire Council in relation to all matters REZ.

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And so are you happy for – if it's okay with the Commissioners, can we just run into perhaps a brief overview from our perspective? Thank you. So I guess the key thing, Warrumbungle Shire Council is one of the three Councils, main Councils addressing the Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone developments, of which there are approximately 40 across the REZ, either in the REZ or immediately adjacent to it. But to focus our mind here today, there are 11 major projects pursuant to the REZ in Warrumbungle Shire. There are 10 generation projects and there is one major transmission line project.

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The other pivotal point in relation to Spicers Creek Wind Farm proposal is that there are seven, and I repeat seven, major projects [unintelligible 00:09:33] in this southwestern corner of the shire. I can name them if you like but it does highlight and emphasise to the Council the pivotal issue for us since day one, which is what are the cumulative costs and benefits of the REZ developments and who is wearing the costs and who's accruing the benefits.

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To be clear, we have no problem with renewable energy developments and moving to a low carbon future. We get that, we accept it unequivocally. However, the issue here under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act is to be able to have full transparency and accountability about what the costs and benefits are. Now, for us, one of the pivotal costs here is impacts on roads.

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Now, I would suggest, if I may, one of the challenges for the IPC and more broadly the state government is how are you going to have full transparency and accountability around the movements of people and especially in our case traffic and how are you going to – and the community, how is it going to see that the approved access routes are in fact the only ones that are being used because we have a very real concern based on experiences elsewhere that the workers will inevitably default to the quickest and fastest, shortest cuts of routes. Right.

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And you might think, well what's wrong with that? If these were designated

access routes, that's fine because we can get the accountability around the road repair and maintenance and upgrades. But if these roads are not prescribed routes, a big concern for us is that road repairs and costs, et cetera, will be outsourced to the residents and ratepayers. I'll stop at that point if I may because I'm interested, like you, Commissioner Menzies, about getting some dialogue on this. So I'm happy to take any questions or comments you may have.

PROF MENZIES: Yes, Warwick, so the information that Council provided was really useful to us, you know, the detailing all of the projects being developed, so we didn't need you to read them out because you've already provided them and the impact is clear, just the scale of the projects that are being built, so thanks for providing that. It was also really useful for us to get that material about what roads were – both the roads that are in scope and the company and the Council are in agreement, negotiating as to what's going to go on. We do get the risk that workers will – I think you said, “rat run.” If you didn't say, “rat run,” you wrote “rat run” in the material you provided us.

ADJUNCT PROF GIBLIN: I did say it.

PROF MENZIES: Yes. We completely understand that, that it's a risk. And look, we want to use the meeting to make sure that we are provided by you with any options that you can see that could help. We'll think through what other things might be possible but I'll bet you guys in the Council and in the community have been thinking about this a great deal and you know the locality. We're coming to visit next week so we can get a bit of a sense of the geographically where things sit and what roads are like.

But look, we're really interested into what insights you can provide us and particularly guidance on what might be done, what we might put in conditions that could help you. It's not that we don't want to invite – engage in a dialogue but given the limited time and the importance of this particular question to you, if you've got ideas, let's [cross-talk 00:14:23].

ADJUNCT PROF GIBLIN: Well, yes, we do. Thank you, Commissioner Menzies. We were pleased to receive the response via email from Trish McDonald, dated 20 August at 12.07 pm where she lists there quite a few undertakings, if I may say, that she says this might provide further comfort to Warrumbungle Shire Council. Now, the points that she raises there, as I say, that's encouraging.

However, our plea to the IPC would be that the undertakings listed there need to be enshrined in conditions of consent. We need full transparency and the rigour of the law to be applied and that all the undertakings that she lists in there and there's quite a few bullet points pursuant to them, we'd like to see that for starters and also, in addition, in our briefing note to the Commissioners, we also listed some other possible conditions of consent.

Right, so again, we would ask that those that were listed on p 3 of our briefing note to you, we'd be encouraged if the Commission would look very carefully at those as well because we need the reinforcement of robust conditions of consent to protect Council's interests in relation to road repair and maintenance and upgrade costs. In our view, that is a cost which is solely driven by the project and the project must carry that cost.

So we urge the Commission to please come up with transparent and robust conditions of consent which make it clear who's responsible for all these road related impacts, clearly generated as a consequence of the project.

PROF MENZIES: Yes. Warwick, let me just tease out an element here. So from what you're saying, the primary concern that you have is the impact on the roads, the cost it incurs on the Council to maintain them. So if you are – once the project kicks off, if you find that there's a lot of people rat running down a particular road, would you want to stop that happening or would you want to engage with the company about that's another road that we would like you to maintain and upgrade?

ADJUNCT PROF GIBLIN: No, in our view this needs to be clear, it needs to be black and white in the conditions of consent. These are the roads that you can use for your traffic, full stop. And there should be consequences if you use other roads that are non-prescribed and there should be penalties if there is evidence, as gleaned by Council, that traffic associated with your project is being non-compliant. In our view, there needs to be penalties and consequences for that because at the moment there are none.

PROF MENZIES: No, thanks, Warwick. That's clear. From what you'd written, that was the tenor that I'd taken but I wanted to be sure that you weren't saying – I was just led by your comments about costs to wonder whether you were open to some other roads [cross-talk 00:18:27].

ADJUNCT PROF GIBLIN: Just on costs, Commissioner, you may be interested to know, these are ballpark figures but to give you some sense of what's involved here, like a gravel road, routine maintenance costs about \$3,000 per kilometre. Okay. But if you have to rebuild a gravel road, that might be costing you more like \$30,000 a kilometre. Okay.

And if you get heavy vehicles and oversize vehicles on these local gravel roads, they're going to get smashed. Excuse the vernacular but it will, they will. And it's not just maybe a one off rebuild, the challenge is if traffic continues to be noncompliant or it might be compliant with the prescribed access routes but that's why there needs to be dilapidation reports, pre and post major activities, so it's transparent about what damage has been done to the road and hence what repair or rebuild work is required. I'll just come back to that in a minute.

And just to finish off, like so if you've got a sealed road and that needs say a

rebuild, you're talking about \$300,000 a kilometre. So we're not sort of chasing red herrings on this stuff because the costs otherwise get borne by the ratepayer and that's just unjust. And can I say the dilapidation reports pre and post major activities, to be clear, these need to be before and after the major construction phase, it needs to be before and after any refurbishment or repowering phases when inevitably, with a project like this, run for 30 years, the engines are going to get replaced ballpark it could be every 10 years, right.

So and also we need the dilapidation reports pre and post decommission, if that ever happens. So all these major activities that are generating substantial increases in particularly heavy traffic, heavy vehicles and oversize over mass, is pivotal.

PROF MENZIES: Okay. Can I just check with my fellow Commissioners, are there any questions from you guys about Council's concerns regarding roads?

MR MICHAEL WRIGHT: Could I just a question, Neal, of Council in terms of the roads that they're consenting to be used and the arrangements that Squadron's proposing to put in place for the use of those roads. Is Council happy in those circumstances?

ADJUNCT PROF GIBLIN: Well, as I say, Commissioner Wright, so we're interested in seeing adopted the suggestions, the offers from Squadron and so that is important and for us it needs to cover all those roads that were listed in attachment 2 to our briefing note. So all those roads that are coloured orange in there need to be, in our view, protected from damage throughout the duration of the life of the project.

And so all those – and so what is interesting, if I may say, also what's pivotal for us, if you can see that, so that's on attachment 3, all those – this is at the end of the line basically in Warrumbungle Shire and so where that circle is there, there's three compounds and there's the substation. Now, the question is – well, according to SQE, all the heavy gear to go into those sites and the traffic in and out is going to use farm tracks and not going to use Warrumbungle Shire roads. They're not going to use Sandy Creek Road. Now, that's a big call in reality, I think.

So we are urging the IPC to please safeguard Warrumbungle Shire Council's interests and the proponent has to be held totally accountable for absolutely ensuring that that undertaking they're making that they're going to use farm tracks for all their heavy gear and all the infrastructure and equipment for the turbines, the wind farm, the turbines, that they're not going to use our roads, then okay, it needs to be, with respect, buttressed in the conditions of consent.

PROF MENZIES: Yes.

MR WRIGHT: Got it.

ADJUNCT PROF GIBLIN: Is that okay?

PROF MENZIES: Suellen?

5 **MS SUELLEN FITZGERALD:** Thanks, Neal. And hello, Councillors and Warwick. I should just mention for the record, Neal, that Warwick and I worked on adjacent properties many years ago when Warwick was consulting to Eastern Creek Landfill site.

10 **ADJUNCT PROF GIBLIN:** Hello, Suellen.

MS FITZGERALD: Hi, Warwick. My question is just to go back to that point of clarification, Warwick. So Council's first preference is for Squadron to fully comply with not using those 11 kilometres of internal roads but am I hearing also that you're wanting to have some mechanism for maintenance and repair of those roads should that compliance not be fully operational? So you're –

15 **ADJUNCT PROF GIBLIN:** Yes, that's a good question, Commissioner. They are saying that some local traffic may use those local roads. So that's – again, how are you going to define local traffic is one thing. But if they're going to use local roads, then – and it looks like the local roads probably will be used although maybe you can, with respect, get some clarification around when will they be using those local roads and when will they not be using them. They did talk about 20% of their workforce may well be locals.

20 **ADJUNCT PROF GIBLIN:** Yes, that's a good question, Commissioner. They are saying that some local traffic may use those local roads. So that's – again, how are you going to define local traffic is one thing. But if they're going to use local roads, then – and it looks like the local roads probably will be used although maybe you can, with respect, get some clarification around when will they be using those local roads and when will they not be using them. They did talk about 20% of their workforce may well be locals.

25 Well, if that's the case then we need some clarity around are they using Warrumbungle Shire Council roads or are they using the farm tracks to move around the project site? And if they're using our roads, then yes, because this is an impact generated as a consequence of the project, then the project needs to be paying for repair and maintenance and upgrade costs. Does that answer your question, Commissioner, or not?

30 **MS FITZGERALD:** Yes. Thanks, Warwick. That's helpful.

ADJUNCT PROF GIBLIN: Is that okay?

35 **MS FITZGERALD:** And following on from that, am I correct in saying that Council is most concerned about those roads that are internal to the project site as opposed to the roads that might be used to access the site from external?

40 **ADJUNCT PROF GIBLIN:** Sorry, I'm not sure I understand your question.

MS FITZGERALD: The 11 kilometres of roads that are at the heart of the material you've provided are internal to the project site. So that's your main concern, the impact on those roads that's internal to the site as opposed to the roads external to the site that might be used to access the site. Is that correct?

45 **ADJUNCT PROF GIBLIN:** Yes. Leeanne, I might call on you in a minute but I

think that part of your question, if I may suggest, lends itself to the broader issue about the cumulative impacts in the region, in the district, as I say, with seven projects.

5 In our view, in the view of Warrumbungle Shire Council, we are not convinced at this point in time that anyone in government or the developers are adequately assessing the in globo cumulative impacts and it's not just on roads but it's going to be on broader issues about accommodation, social impacts, impacts on social services, et cetera, et cetera.

10 But our focus at the moment, this is about the Spicers Creek Wind Farm development application, so they're saying these are the roads in Warrumbungle Shire and so we accept that at face value and we just need these safeguarded.

15 **CR DOOLAN:** If I could just add something further to that. That is where Council very strongly feels that this project can't be looked at in isolation because as per your inquiry there, Councillor Fitzgerald, we've got an extensive road network outside this 11 kilometres that's going to be accessed by all of these developers and we're worried that they'll just say, "Well, it wasn't our development that" – you know, as they're bringing the blades and the engines and the towers up from Newcastle, they've got to access a lot more of our network than the 11 kilometres. But they'll all point the finger at each other and say, "Well, it wasn't us. It wasn't Squadron. It was ACEN. ACEN, it wasn't ACEN, it was Tilt. No, no, it wasn't us, it was ACEREZ with the construction."

25 So how are we going to quantify that and identify who's responsible for the denigration of our roads and who's going to be responsible for repairing them? So it is a really big picture and I'm pleased that you've identified our concern and we're not having any luck at all with the Department of Planning or EnergyCo in giving us any sense of comfort that that's going to be – those costs from the broader road network are going to be identified and who's going to do the compensating. So that's a really big worry for us and thank you for picking up on it.

35 **MS FITZGERALD:** Thanks, Mayor. Thanks, Neal.

40 **PROF MENZIENS:** Just to follow up, the other dimension – so Mayor, you've spoken about getting the major pieces of equipment to site. We were also thinking about the daily traffic of the workers to and from Dubbo or wherever they're living and what roads they'll be using.

45 So Warwick, we're also interested in the Council's thoughts on that aspect and whether there are particular roads that you want used and once again, the sense of we haven't visited the site yet but looking at maps, we can see that there are multiple roads. We can't really tell their condition but the idea that workers would shortcut down lesser roads rather than the main road, we're wondering what view you have on that, to what extent the Council's concerned and to what extent we

might be able to help you if it is a concern by constraining where people travel.

ADJUNCT PROF GIBLIN: Look, in terms of those roads that were listed on our map that were shown as orange, correct me if I'm wrong, Nicole or Leeanne, but I mean they're public roads, okay. So we're okay with their use, their being used by developers so long as that is identified and quantified and there are appropriate compensatory measures in terms of upgrade work and dilapidation reports to ensure that those assets are protected.

I think it's probably better that that's the front line rather than living in hope that all the traffic is going to go through farm tracks, hither and thither. I think let's assume, if I may say, that these public roads are going to be used and therefore we need full transparency around the maintenance and the upgrading, appropriate upgrading and the dilapidation reports pursuant to the use of those roads. Is that okay?

PROF MENZIES: No, absolutely we've heard you and our questions are really to make sure that we've got the tenor of your concerns correct. Warwick, I would like just to move on from roads and –

ADJUNCT PROF GIBLIN: Yes, please.

PROF MENZIES: – cover some of the others because there are set of issues that we need comfort that we understand the Council's position.

ADJUNCT PROF GIBLIN: Can I move to a related matter, Commissioners, if I may, and that is around accommodation. Now, my understanding from para 15 of the transcript involving your meeting with SQE, that there's going to be, para 15, "A peak of around 590 FTE equivalent positions." Now, but it is interesting about what is the scope of the assessment for the Spicers Creek Wind Farm DA? And I raise that in the context of the decision last Friday where the Supreme Court Court of Appeal threw out and deemed null and void the approval that was granted by the IPC for the Bowdens Silver Mine.

In summary, that consent was deemed null because the project failed to address the transmission line impacts. Now, Council raises a query here about whether the IPC, under the EP&A Act, is able to or is it prudent to make a decision on this project when a pivotal component of it, namely the worker accommodation, is outside the brief of the DA you are considering. Now, I do think it's a questionable matter and what if the DA that's to be considered elsewhere by Dubbo Regional Council, what if that DA is refused? Or what happens to that DA is not settled before you make a decision.

With respect, I might say that I think it would be a risky decision – please, I say this respectfully, of the IPC to make a decision on this project until it is settled as to where in fact the workers are to live. If that's not settled, how can you assess and determine the scope and extent of the impacts?

PROF MENZIES: I'm not sure that I've got a good answer for that, Warwick. It's certainly something that's exercising our minds, our discussion with Dubbo Shire Council was interesting because there was a whole lot of information that's not part of the approval that we're looking at that was provided to us. Part of that was around accommodation and what was planned and being negotiated with the Dubbo Shire Council. But it also was around sourcing of gravel, supply of water, et cetera. So you raise an interesting point for us and one that we are sensitive to is that we're looking at a particular set of things within the approval. But there's a lot of other activity that we are being made aware of.

ADJUNCT PROF GIBLIN: Yes.

PROF MENZIES: And so yes, look, at this point, as I say, we're on an information gathering mission. We'd like to hear what the Council's viewpoints are and including that sort of if this happens, are you happy if this doesn't happen, are you unhappy around the accommodation. We of course have good legal advice within the Commission, good legal advisers to help us with the what are our constraints and obligations, et cetera. So as you can imagine, we have to deal with these, each one step by step, Warwick. So if we could just pull the accommodation thing apart and get your sense of, you know, there are a lot of workers coming in, but on the flipside, the company are proposing to build accommodation in Dubbo. Is the Council well aware of those discussions?

CR HOGDEN: [unintelligible 00:37:33].

PROF MENZIES: Sorry, Dale?

CR HOGDEN: Sorry. Sorry, I wasn't on mute.

PROF MENZIES: That's okay. Warwick, we'd just like a sense from the Council of given the constraints you just talked about of what we can and can't do, we'd like to come back to what is your sense of the impact on accommodation. If the facilities that are being proposed to be built in Dubbo happen, will that relieve some of the pressure, et cetera?

ADJUNCT PROF GIBLIN: Well, Council view is that we note that there's to be accommodation camp. All the other developers, generally speaking, are building accommodation camps on their project sites. We note that the plan here is by the developer to have an accommodation camp further away in Dubbo. Now, we would've thought that for certainty around assessing impacts, that has to be locked down before we can finalise the scope and extent of your impacts and costs and benefits.

PROF MENZIES: Fellow Commissioners, can you remember from the discussion with Dubbo whether they'd actually approved that? I thought there was some reporting to us that they'd considered it at a recent meeting and it was

proceeding.

MR WRIGHT: It was certainly proceeding, Neal, and I think there had been consideration of it by Councillors. I'm not sure whether they've determined the matter or not.

PROF MENZIES: Warwick, we had a discussion with the Council and you can read the transcript of that but the Council, Dubbo Council, were very positive about that development, liked the fact that it was in the town rather than out at the site because of the benefits that provided. We shouldn't and woke speak to whether they're going to approve it or not. I thought they might've already approved it. Michael's corrected me that it's still in discussion. So you're quite right, we can't pre-judge whether that will be approved or not. But we can relate to you the tenor of the discussion with Dubbo about their enthusiasm for it.

ADJUNCT PROF GIBLIN: Yes, yes. Yes, I understand that. I think though there is some out clause, if I may use that terminology, in relation to the draft consent conditions that have been tabled with you by the DPHI about some – if that development didn't go ahead, there is – I'm just trying to think. It's under the strategy commentary, accommodation and employment strategy, I think it was there but I've seen somewhere, I think, that if – and even Dubbo I think put forward some provisions if that did not happen. I'm sorry, I can't find it quite at my fingertips now but anyway, yes, so that's about all I can say at the moment or we can say at the moment on the accommodation.

PROF MENZIES: Yes.

ADJUNCT PROF GIBLIN: The question in part two is why is there a need for a strategy? What's the strategy stuff? Why don't we just have the definition or the specifics around a workers camp or accommodation camp? What's the deal with the strategy? Strategy tends to be more broad brush, objectives, targets, et cetera, and it's questionable whether you can have a strategy as a transparent specific condition of consent. I'm just conscious, Commissioners and Commissioner Menzies, of the time – if I may say, Leanne and I both have the same meeting at 10 o'clock with DPHI on REZ matters.

PROF MENZIES: Yes.

ADJUNCT PROF GIBLIN: But I'd be interested to target on other specific burning questions that the Commissioners have.

PROF MENZIES: Look, there were a further set of key issues that were listed on the agenda.

ADJUNCT PROF GIBLIN: Yes.

PROF MENZIES: Warwick, it might be just sensible for us to explicitly ask you,

the Council, whether you have concerns. If you don't, I'm happy to just park them with a "No, that's not something we're worried about" or "We're content." But I think it's useful for us to just step through to make sure that we don't miss anything that is particularly exercising the Council. So we've talked about accommodation, we've talked about light and heavy vehicle movements, road and traffic impacts and road upgrades. The next one on the list that we haven't explicitly talked about was materials sourcing.

ADJUNCT PROF GIBLIN: Okay, Leeanne, would you like to talk about that?

MS RYAN: I might actually hand that to Nicole, the materials sourcing to do with roads.

ADJUNCT PROF GIBLIN: Sorry, Nicole.

MS BENSON: That's okay. Thanks, Leeanne. And I haven't got anything in front of me here about the materials but that's okay, I do recall our concerns largely around the sourcing of gravel and those types of materials. Council has agreements with landholders across our shire where we have what we call gravel pits where we access gravel for the maintenance of our unsealed roads. So we do have some concerns around developers accessing gravel that way and then that means that Council has to look at alternate options, which would likely be very expensive. And then the bringing in of materials as well is an impact on our roads, which Warwick's more than covered. So they're our concerns around those materials.

PROF MENZIES: Yes. And Nicole, in dealing with Councils around this [unintelligible 00:44:38] before, it is always a concern. Yes, that the infrastructure wasn't built for the scale of developments that are going on, so that has to be taken into account. Let's move on, the construction and operational jobs?

ADJUNCT PROF GIBLIN: No comment really other than – well, yes, we do have a comment, I should take that back. It's pivotal, in our view, that for benefits to accrue to the regions and to the shire, every effort, every endeavour should be made by the developer to engage locals. My personal experience is, working on other major projects, intrinsically the developers usually bring in EPC contractors who generally speaking have their own trained crew.

And so in many ways it's an additional burden for the developer, for the contractor to train and supervise new workers to their teams and often they find it simpler and cheaper to bring in their own trained crew. But we would welcome – we clearly believe no stone should be left unturned to ensure that as many locals as possible can reap the benefit of construction jobs and equally and probably more critically, long-term operational jobs.

PROF MENZIES: Yes, once again, Warwick, that entirely makes sense and yes, we're very sympathetic to that view.

MR WRIGHT: Just a question there. Sorry, Neal.

PROF MENZIES: Sorry.

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MR WRIGHT: Sorry, Neal. Just in terms of employment. I know there's a very large Aboriginal population in Warrumbungle Shire Council. Any particular views Council has about opportunities for Aboriginal employment?

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ADJUNCT PROF GIBLIN: Mayor Ambrose, do you wish to comment on that?

CR DOOLAN: I can do. I think the way we tend to roll out here is it's just you just lob up and apply for the job and it doesn't really matter what your background is, you're hired on your content of your character, if we can borrow that line. So we have a very significant proportion of our workforce at the Council have Indigenous heritage and that's just part of the day to day life here.

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I'm not sure that a specific project needs to be put forward, possibly the developer might do that but it's just if you're part of the fabric life out here, you just understand that that's just who we are and we just get on with it and you get a job because you're a good person.

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PROF MENZIES: Thank you, Mayor. The community contributions and benefits, Warwick.

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ADJUNCT PROF GIBLIN: In summary, Commissioners, we have negotiated terms for a planning agreement with SQE. We're comfortable with that and so happy to progress on that basis.

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PROF MENZIES: Great. Let's park that one as well. Thank you. Social impacts?

ADJUNCT PROF GIBLIN: Yes, on that point, Commissioners, I think this is one of the soft underbellies, if I may use that phrase, of the renewable energy developments across the REZ, across the whole REZ, in that it's been quite opaque and vague about what the social impacts are likely to be.

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And I think in part this is because it's an unreal request to have the developers try and articulate and determine the costs and benefits from a social perspective. Why? Because they are limited to their own patch, they are limited to their own development and this is why Warrumbungle Shire Council from day one has raised primary concern about the cumulative impacts.

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Now, DPHI, a couple of months ago, and Leanne was at that same meeting, they have acknowledged that yes, whilst they haven't done a preemptive cumulative impact assessment for the Central-West Orana REZ, they are going to do it now for the New England REZ and for the South West REZ. Right, so this is a major transformational assignment for a rural region that's been in operation for nearly

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200 years. This is dramatic in terms of a potential change, good or bad, and we would argue, Council would argue that it is incumbent upon the state government to have a general overview of what this looks like.

5 You know, the social stuff, it's been left to Mid-Western Regional Council, to their credit, have done their own social impact study. They Commissioned PWC to do it. That is the best effort that's been tabled to date and we think it's unreasonable that the developers should be saddled with this cumulative impact brush because it's not in their patch, with respect.

10 And this is the issue where DPPI, in the assessment report for Spicers Creek, have said, "Oh, well, Spicers Creek Wind Farm is the first cab off the rank. They don't have to worry about cumulative impact," in essence, I'm paraphrasing, "But the other developers to follow with their projects, will be responsible." Now, with respect, all those other developers, this is a competitive market they are working in. The other developers aren't necessarily going to give them this information and nor is the developer that's tabling the EIS going to know.

20 I think it's naïve and I think it's misguided, we think that is misguided and unrealistic to expect individual developers to be able to come to the table with a cumulative impact assessment. Therefore, the consequences of things going wrong or not being properly assessed and identified will be carried by the residents and ratepayers of the shire. We're happy to be challenged on that, happy to hear your views, if you think that assertion is wrong, then we're happy to hear it.

25 **PROF MENZIES:** No, we're going to tell you the assertion's wrong. We're going to ask you – well, I'm going to let Suellen ask you, I'll probably follow up with something equally.

30 **MS FITZGERALD:** Neal, I'm not going to challenge Warwick's assertion on that. but Warwick, Warrumbungle did helpfully put a link to that North-Western study in your submission to us. I received it or we received it as a PDF, the link wasn't active. Could that be provided to Tahlia so that we can access that information?

35 **ADJUNCT PROF GIBLIN:** Well, I can do that immediately now, Tahlia. If you go on to Mid-Western Regional Council website, you will find it there. If you have any trouble identifying it, let me know, but it's now clearly – yes, you should be able to find it just by looking at their website. If you have any dramas, let me know.

40 **PROF MENZIES:** So Warwick, as you expect, I'm going to bounce back to you and say, recognising that there is an issue, what's Council's view on what might be done? Within our power or not within our power, it's just we would like a sense of how you, as a Council, think that the community, the New South Wales community should proceed with dealing with cumulative impacts.

ADJUNCT PROF GIBLIN: Well, I think for starters, the social wellbeing matters, emergency services, how many ambulances do we need, how many extra doctors, how many beds in the hospitals and this stuff is articulated, these matters are articulated in the Mid-Western Council report. Mental health services,
5 preschools, if there's people coming in, bringing their children, there's just a few off the top of my head. If staff or the Councillors or the mayor have anything further to add, please do so.

CR DOOLAN: Well, there'd be police. We're talking about, with all of these
10 projects, we're talking about something like 30, 40% extra of our shire in population. So I'm sure most of them are good people but there'll be the odd bad egg and we don't have – some of our towns haven't got a police officer recruited at the present time, so we're going to need that to be remedied and then some extra, just for another example.

ADJUNCT PROF GIBLIN: And correct me if I'm wrong, Mayor, but also I
15 think there's what, a part-time, in effect part-time policeman at Coolah and one at Dunedoo, is that about it?

CR DOOLAN: That's about right.
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ADJUNCT PROF GIBLIN: So there's in effect, in the southern part of the shire,
there's no full-time –

CR HOGDEN: I'll just clarify on that, can I, please, Warwick?
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ADJUNCT PROF GIBLIN: Yes, go ahead, Dale.

CR HOGDEN: Currently there's one police officer in Dunedoo. Coolah, which is
30 50 ks to the north has none, no copper, and also Mendooran has no police. So the next closest is Binnaway which is staffed not very often. So we are struggling for police. If you call a police officer in Dunedoo, you've got to wait 24 hours at least.

MS BENSON: Yes, I can add to that if I may, please. I'm the chair of the local
35 emergency management committee here for Warrumbungle Shire and we met on Monday night, so it's a coming together of all combat agencies and emergency services and the REZ gets raised at almost each meeting with regards to concern around how emergency services cope and respond to incidents in and around these developments and with the extra people that it's going to bring to our community
40 because we are so thin on the ground already with emergency services and, as Warwick said, beds in hospitals, nurses and doctors.

So that's been discussed at the regional emergency management committee as
45 well, so it is being looked at a regional level. But it's worth noting that it is a huge concern to us locally at the grass roots level as well.

CR DOOLAN: I think, Dale, you might be able to add to that further, you know,

the agencies in Coolah, like the rescue squad, that's a volunteer agency. Similar with the fire brigades, they're all volunteers. So can you just [unintelligible 00:56:25] Dunedoo?

5 **CR HOGDEN:** Yes, so Coolah has New South Wales Fire and Rescue, which is retained but paid minimal and they also have a VRA. Dunedoo has the same. I'm the captain of the local New South Wales Fire and Rescue. We have an SES with only two members. So I addressed this – I brought this up on Monday with the LEMC meeting that when all these people arrive on our doorstep, the increased traffic, the MVAs and road crash rescues are going to go through the roof, I feel, and I don't think this has been thought about in the planning of it at all, with what's going on now in the whole REZ, in the whole southern end of the shire anyway.

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15 **ADJUNCT PROF GIBLIN:** I think road safety is going to be a huge issue moving forward.

MR WRIGHT: Neal, could I just ask a question about – and thank you for referring to that Mid-West Regional Council study and we'll obviously read that. Is that based around the Council boundary only or the entirety of the Central-West Orana REZ?

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25 **ADJUNCT PROF GIBLIN:** I think it's principally focused on the Mid-Western Regional Council.

MR WRIGHT: Okay. And Warwick, do you or the Council have a view, obviously DPHI is doing some work around preemptive cumulative impact assessment for the North East REZ, does Council or Warwick, do you have a view in terms of whether that sort of assessment is best done at an LGA level or a REZ level?

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35 **ADJUNCT PROF GIBLIN:** It should be done on a REZ level. It should be done on a REZ level. And it's interesting, just by the by, but the offshore wind developments off the Californian coast in the USA now, they are doing exactly the same sort of thing that we've been prosecuting for some time. The REZ is a construct which is an artificial construct in a way, this is profound. What does this mean? What does this mean environmentally, socially and economically from an in globo perspective? It hasn't been done for the Central-West REZ.

40 I'm just mindful of the time, Commissioners, if you'll forgive me. Can I just say I'm going to have to leave but please, keep the meeting going. Can I just say in conclusion from my viewpoint, congratulations to the IPC for the work it did on the Birriwa Solar Farm in inquiring of DPHI of proposed or suggested amendments or alterations to the consent conditions.

45 We applaud that and we encourage you to be thoroughly independent and robust and transparent around how you can improve the consent conditions and if I may

say, we are alarmed that the Department would say, “Oh, well,” in effect, on condition C8 that you prosecuted, they said, “This proposed condition is inconsistent with other SSD and SSI energy project consents and would set a precedent across the industry.”

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In our view, there needs to be precedent set. We’re dealing with a REZ here. We’re dealing with 40 projects. They’re going to be all interacting. We need to have clearly ongoing continuous improvement of conditions of consent, let’s make them better all the time, let’s strive for that and there needs to be a REZ rationale applied to this as well, in our view.

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PROF MENZIES: Thanks for that, Warwick, and as you would know, Suellen was one of the people who worked on that one. And I guess I agree with you, we should be setting precedents. We do feel that that’s part of our job, to think deeply about these problems and look for good solutions and if that sets a precedent that works elsewhere, then that’s wonderful.

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ADJUNCT PROF GIBLIN: But if I may, please forgive me for leaving early but I’m going to have to – please excuse me.

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PROF MENZIES: No, by all means, Warwick. We will call the meeting to an end and I just wanted to note that we will be visiting next week, both to visit the site and get a – visiting the site is really important for us. It really helps us put in context what the development is going to look like and how it’s going to impact on people who live there. We’ll have our town hall meeting as well.

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I do want to thank you very much for what was a very, very good open discussion and it’s really helped us to calibrate well. Reading documentation and Warwick, thank you for all the material you supplied, it starts to form an impression but this discussion backwards and forwards really helps us to calibrate that. So it’s been very, very useful for us indeed.

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So thank you, Mr Mayor, Councillor Hogden and the team, it’s been a very good meeting from our perspective. Let me just check with my fellow Commissioners that there’s no pressing issue that they want to pursue before we close off. Michael’s right, Suellen’s right. Then thank you very much and we’ll call our meeting to an end.

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CR DOOLAN: If I could just thank you all –

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PROF MENZIES: Mayor Doolan.

CR DOOLAN: Can I just – yes, just thank you for the time this morning. I agree, it was a very good meeting. I’ll be an apology next week, I’m very sorry but I can’t come to that. I’m a farmer, we have our annual bull sale and it clashes with that so I have to be on deck for that.

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5 But look, without putting too much pressure on you, we are really relying on you to provide justice to our people out here. We need you to put some robust terms of consent around this because the Department of Planning certainly isn't and if we could just ask you to live up to the independent part of the Independent Planning Commission and well, as I said, just look after our interests, bring us a bit of justice because we definitely feel we're not getting that from the Department of Planning and we are relying on you to give us some help.

10 So good luck next week, welcome to the Shire from here, from afar, and we'll have some Councillors down there that'll be happy to meet with you. Dale's going to be on deck and Councillor Rindfleish from Coolah will probably be there as well. So good luck next week. Thank you again.

15 **PROF MENZIES:** Mayor Doolan, you started with a great statement and you've closed off with a challenge for us, so thanks for that.

20 **CR DOOLAN:** No, it's – well, thank you for your kind words and thank you for your thoughtful statements and questions here today. I think I feel we're in good hands.

PROF MENZIES: Okay. Guys, thank you very much.

MR WRIGHT: Thank you.

25 **MS BENSON:** Thanks, everyone.

CR HOGDEN: Thank you, everyone. See you. Bye.

>THE MEETING CONCLUDED