

THE MEETING COMMENCED

PROF NEAL MENZIES: Okay, so my opening statement- before we begin, I'd like to acknowledge that I'm speaking to you from the land of the Turrbal and Yuggera people here on the Brisbane River Valley. I acknowledge the traditional owners of all the country from which we are virtually meeting today and pay my respects to their elders, past and present.

Welcome to the meeting today to discuss Thunderbolt Wind Farm. The case is currently before the Commission for determination. The Applicant, Neoen Australia Proprietary Limited, proposes 192 megawatt wind farm located in the New England Renewable Energy Zone near Kentucky. The proposed project involves development of up to 32 wind turbines with a maximum tip height of 260m, and the associated and cylinder infrastructure, including a new substation switching station required to connect to Transgrid's existing 330 kilovolt transmission line traversing the project site. My name is Neal Menzies. I'm the chair of the commission panel, and I'm joined by my fellow commissioners, Bronwyn Evans and Suellen Fitzgerald.

We're also joined by Steve Barry, Callum Firth and Kylie Dorsett from the office of the Independent Planning Commission. In the interest of openness and transparency, and to ensure the full capture of information, today's meeting is being recorded and a complete transcript will be produced and made available on the Commission's website. 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 that the commissioners asked questions of attendees and to clarify issues whenever it's considered appropriate. If you're asked a question and you're not in a position to answer, please feel free to take the question on notice and provide additional information in writing, which will 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 do not speak over the top of each other to ensure accuracy of the transcript. Okay, so we can now begin. Over to you guys.

MS GINA VEREKER: Good morning Neal. My name is Gina Vereker. I'm the Director of Liveable Communities with Tamworth Council, which involves both community services and all our planning functions. So that's why I'm here today. I'll get my team to introduce themselves. I just say to start with, thank you for meeting with us. This development hasn't been of significant concern to the Tamworth region certainly compared to others that we've been dealing with. But we do share the development with Uralla Shire Council. And so we have been meeting with representatives from Uralla Council during the process as well. So some things might overlap, in particular our concerns about the proposed VPA. But first I'll hand on to the rest of my team to introduce themselves. And I understand that there is an agenda that we will be following.

MR SAM LOBSEY: Yes, I'll introduce myself. I'm Sam Lobsey. I'm the Manager of the development team. That looks after the local and regional development applications here at Tamworth Regional Council. So we are particularly interested in just reviewing the draft conditions of consent. And we'll likely be providing a bit of a review of those conditions in a written submission of any particular conditions that we might have concerns or would like further clarification around.

MR STEVE BRAKE: And I'm Steve Brake. I'm Council's Manager of Development Engineering. I'm a civil engineer. I work alongside Sam's team and provide engineering expertise to our development assessment team. I also, in that capacity, have strong links with our water and waste and regional services teams that look after our waste streams and our roads and storm water networks. I don't know if we're doing it here today, but I have no interest to declare in this project.

MS VEREKER: Yeah.

MR MITCH GILLOGLY: Mitch Gillogly, I'm Team Leader of Strategic Planning here at Tamworth Council.

PROF MENZIES: Okay. We do have an agenda. So, and the next item is the Council's submission.

MS VEREKER: And I need to do, if you would like to start since that's probably one of our major issues, even though it's not that significant.

MR BRAKE: Yeah, look, I won't speak to the submission itself. It sort of speaks for itself. But there are unlike some of the projects we've had in front of us, there's only a few items that I think need to be addressed from an engineering perspective. Probably the main one would be around the transport route. So in this particular project, we don't really have a last mile section of roadway. So a lot of the projects do. This one doesn't. And the proponents elected to come straight off the state network into an access of their own. And then all of the internal movements are, at least at this stage, reported to be through internal roadways, which is fine.

However, the transport route does make its way through Tamworth and through the CBD. I'll talk to this issue. And it's not necessarily unique to this project. It's, I think, going to crop up for every project that's north of our town centre. So the route that has been taken in the past for some existing wind farms, and I think Sapphire would be an example of that. They came through Goonoo Goonoo Road, Scott Road, and then down through the New England Highway and then headed north. So they did come through our town centre and use our town centre roads. The traffic report and the route assessment for this project proposes the same route.

It talks about this the concern I've got is that it talks about fairly contemporary logistics for the wind farm. So we're talking 260 metre high turbines, which will have in the order of 90 metre long blades. 90-metre-long blades won't fit through that designated route. So the report talks about relying on split blade technology. My

concern is the conditions don't echo that, because if you know that there's a lot of statements in the statement of environmental effects and the transport report that talks about the uncertainty of exactly what componentry is going to be used. That's pretty normal at this stage of one of these projects. My concern, however, is that if
5 they don't adopt split blade technology in the end.

And larger turbine blades are sought to be brought through to this project. They won't fit through the old alignment. So it really is limited to 65m. So you either need to condition it that's the maximum componentry that will be allowed, or we need to
10 get the traffic report revisited and an alternative alignment and alternative haulage route assessed alongside the current haulage route. Now that alternative haulage route will pose some difficulties because they need to get across. You would imagine the south side of town. So that's going to take them through some of our gravel unsealed roads. And then there are some difficulties getting back onto the New
15 England Highway on that side of town. That would have to be resolved.

Probably having to go to the extent of land acquisitions to try and get the sort of sweeps that would be necessary to get larger componentry through. I'll put that in writing and sort of follow that up with a written element to our submission. That
20 would be my main concern at this stage. It's probably outside your purview, but following on from that, I think that's something that should be addressed by Energy Co. And it's because it's going to be universal to all of these projects, certainly wind farms. The tendency is for these things to be much larger turbines now, but for reasons of efficiency and availability, split blade technology, we've spoken to other
25 proponents and they're steering away from it because blade throw and blade reliability is an issue for them that has to be managed.

So you I think it's an Energy Co issue. And even solar farms, there's some fairly major componentry that needs to go through to solar farms, mostly around the energy
30 storage elements and certainly around the transformers that are needed on site. They're very large components. The traffic report for this project doesn't talk about it, but they're probably the heaviest elements that need to go through. So they're up to 300 tons or more. When you look at the, the component and the transport modules that are required to drag those things through. So there probably need to have a look
35 at that as well. Second issue I would raise, it's one that's raised itself with almost all of the wind farms, and it's the setback of the turbines from public roadways. So the report assesses that I'm not comfortable with their assessment.

There was a report handed down by, I forget his name, but his title. But I think it's
40 the Commissioner for Energy Transmission of Australia. It was a 2022 report with recommendations. Based on his reading. His assessment was that nothing should be closer than 200m from a sensitive receptor, so that included public roads, public reserves, private dwellings. And that was an absolute minimum. And then beyond that there was modelling undertaken. So look at the likelihood of
45 blade throw and blade strike, and then the potential for people to be in harms way. Our road that runs past the back end of this wind farm is Green Valley Road. And at least one of the turbines is quite close, you know, within. Potentially actually

overhanging according to my numbers. So I'd like to see a condition in the micro siting element of the approval that along the lines of notwithstanding any other constraint, no turbines shall be within 200m of the roadway.

5 That measurement would be taken from the centre of the pylon, not the tip of the blade. So it was a pylon, the roadway edge measurement. And then the third one, and I'm not sure that it will apply to this project. The description of the project is silent on the matter of battery energy storage. So I'm assuming from that that there is no battery energy storage as a component of this project. Would I be correct in that
10 assumption?

PROF MENZIES: Yeah. There's nothing under our consideration with respect to batteries.

15 **MR BRAKE:** Okay, so my next point was around mobilisation of pollutants from batteries when they catch fire. But if there aren't going to be any, then, that concern doesn't apply to this particular project. That's me really. And hand over to one of the other teams.

20 **PROF MENZIES:** But thanks, Steve. That's really useful material for us. Putting something in writing will be great. And just the, you know, you raised a couple of things which you correctly identify as being beyond the scope of what we're doing in this project. But nevertheless, I think they're important questions as to, you know,
25 how we deal with future projects, which will definitely have longer blades and the way that the state needs to support the development of the Renewable Energy Zone. So I think it's useful for you to put those in front of us. So even though they're not strictly in scope with what we need to think about for this project.

30 **MR BRAKE:** Now, look, based on based on the handful of projects we've had in front of us recently will be making representations to Energy Co and others. But as you say, the more people that are aware of it, the better.

35 **MS VEREKER:** So I think the (indistinct) last issue that I think you said you wanted.

MR LOBSEY: I'll look in just in terms of the draft conditions. It's some of our recent reviews of these projects and these proposals, proposed consents. One of the questions for finality is one that we want to sort of explore again with this project and just around conditions that are a little bit sort of open for interpretation once an
40 approval has been issued. And there's a few conditions that sort of just say simply things like unless the Planning Secretary agrees otherwise or, and, and it may relate to management plans for biodiversity and may relate to traffic management. It may even just be the siting of some of these turbines and the actual development site itself. We just we sort of just have that bit of a concern around that and not being
45 aware of what the final outcome is of the project. And so we'll be just presenting a little bit of a response to those conditions around that particular issue. One of the,

one of the conditions is talks about that they must be in accordance with the plan or the plans or the documents that have been submitted, but they're not specific enough.

5 So we're not sure what version of plans or what version of documents we're talking about. When you're looking at the actual development that's being approved. So a common thing that we do here, like with our DA is we will actually note the plan number and the date that it was that it was it was made and make that a little bit more certain to the community what the development is, you know, what's being approved. 10 However, in this case and what we've seen with other projects that are up going up to the IPC is that it's quite open for, I guess, interpretation or open for further consultation between the developer and the Planning Secretary.

15 Without the community or the Councils having much of a say or, or any say. So I guess it's that question of finality is probably the one thing we want to, I guess, raise and see whether there's any opportunities to sort of strengthen those conditions just so our, we can say to the community, well, this is what we expect and not say to the community, well, this is what's been approved, but it may change. And once the application has been approved, so I guess that's sort of the summary of that we won't go into, into any specifics, but as time goes towards the date we have to actually put 20 in a submission to the IPC. We'll certainly have a bit more around that.

MS VEREKER: And Neal, if I can just add and Sam that on another project which has just been to the IPC, we actually got legal advice on the issue of finality and certainty of the conditions because we as planners and planners around the room 25 we've always been very clear that your conditions need to be final and they need to be certain. And their legal advice supported what we thought and said that the way the conditions were worded which is similar to the way some conditions are worded in this draft, consent is actually open to legal challenge. Not that we're suggesting we will challenge it, but it's something to take into account because there may be 30 members of the community, particularly around Kentucky who may consider a challenge later on.

PROF MENZIES: Thanks Gina. And once again, we will really welcome the input that you can make to us before we have to finalise this. I expect that we're can learn a 35 lot more of what's concerning the community when we come down to the town hall. Yeah. So all useful input. I expect that you will also have some increase in knowledge at the town hall because of the, you know, opportunity for people to speak to you as well as to us.

40 **MS VEREKER:** Yeah. So Neal, the other major concern for us is the VPA and I just stop by saying. Obviously the greatest impact on community is in around Kentucky, and that is part of Uralla rather than Tamworth region. We've focused, I suppose, on the closest impacted community, which would be Bendemeer. And so as part of the VPA, we certainly are keen that there will be a contribution that 45 can assist Bendemeer in a significant way. But in terms of Council has an adopted policy around how any VPA should be distributed and how much that should be.

And as I understand, it's somewhat common amongst a number of Councils now that we are looking for 1.5% of that the value of the development and that 0.5 of that be paid up front. So what I mean by that is when the development- Well, basically when it starts construction we're looking for that 0.5 percent. And the our policy goes on to explain how that money will be spent and that the rest of it, the 1% then is paid over the 30 years in equal amounts each year. In terms of how we've been negotiating, it's interesting because Uralla Council's involved as well, and they also have an adopted policy and obviously they'll talk to you from their perspective.

10 But we have tried some joint meetings between us, Uralla and the proponents to agree on some aspects of the VPA. I'll let I'll ask Mitch to go into a bit more detail for you, but I suppose a short answer is where at this point we haven't we don't have an agreement. There are some aspects where we all do agree. There's we've agreed on a 60 over 40 split, so Tamworth 60%, Uralla 40% basically on the road impacts.

15 But we haven't agreed on some other particulars. And that's particularly around 1.5 and the 0.5%. And right now, hand on to Mitch to give me a bit more detail.

MR GILLOGLY: I think he's done a pretty good job summarising. So in terms of the 60/40%, the, you know, the numbers Council agrees with that. The main issue is some discrepancies around the payment details and the numbers that they're proposed. They've also optioned to which isn't in here. Also includes a net present value, but they haven't given us any calculations or analysis of how they got to the net present value. And as Gina said, the our policy requires a 50% upfront payment. Even in the appendix three here.

25 I'm just looking at the wording now and it's extremely open. It says within five years of operations which council would not accept. So we've sent a letter back to Neoen, and this morning raising our concerns and flagging some of these issues as well. So we had a meeting with them on the 29th of January, and unfortunately, some of the discussions that were discussed in that meeting agreement were different to what the offer came through as which ourselves in Uralla were quite disappointed with. So-

PROF MENZIES: So that's an ongoing discussion that's still happening between. Okay. Yeah. And we yeah, we certainly are meeting your Uralla. So we'll and that's next week. So I maybe we'll get some good news that you've reached consensus and that something we don't have to worry about.

MR LOBSEY: Oh yeah.

40 **MS VEREKER:** Yes we would hope we'll get there. Yeah. That's our intention.

MR GILLOGLY: Yeah, definitely.

MS VEREKER: Okay. I'm not sure. Do we need to mention biodiversity? Sam, I'd like we -

MR LOBSEY: No.

MS VEREKER: Well, I think we have an issue. There will be land. There will have to be clearing, but the biodiversity issues aren't significant from our perspective. That was really visual impact again. And visual impact really the impact is on Kentucky really not on our region. And I'm sure your Uralla will have something to say about that. Other issues -

MR GILLOGLY: Probably the only one I've got, the only other comment I've got, and it was similar to a recent wind farm we had here was just the 100 metre siting from those coordinates. To me that seems quite generous to allow development of this scale to move around 100m in a 360 direction. But then the consents giving you the coordinates of where it should go. For me, if there's coordinates that they know exactly where it's going and that like any other development that's where it should go. I think the hundred metres allows a significant amount of scope for, you know, unforeseen impacts to arise and to necessarily not been properly assessed as part of the, you know, DPI's assessment of the development. So that's probably really my only comment.

MS VEREKER: Finally, in terms of accommodation, we expect that obviously there will be impacts and pressures on Bendemeer and potentially other areas closer in into Tamworth. We are, I suppose, with every other region having issues about housing and the need for housing, the need for worker accommodation. We are towards the end of preparing a housing strategy which we hope will give us some options to implement.

But we are looking to applicants to at least make some I suppose, to come up with some solutions for their own developments. And our concern is that worker accommodation, the short terms so whether it's over five years, three years, five years our concern is what we're left with, I suppose. So it's the ongoing. Is that accommodation going to be removed? So it's like a mining camp or is it going to be something? And if it's visible on a main road, for example, we would be looking to ensure that it is of a quality that it's acceptable to our communities and that we're not left with a legacy that's not at the quality that we would expect in.

PROF MENZIES: Gina, this is a topic that the other Commissioners and I discussed ahead of this meeting. And because we recognised that it would be an issue for the community and we recognised that, you know, being in the Renewable Energy Zone, you're going to have, you know, more than one wind farm or solar farm that that will be impacting on you. So, so it's a topic where we're very interested in and would really welcome some viewpoints from you as to, you know, how the Council, you know, is planning to cope with this and really you know, what is your vision five years out. What should this all have done for Tamworth.

MR GILLOGLY: And I think, can I just add a point? I think that goes to the VPA as well. So in appendix three talks about, you know, 33% of the applicants saying 33% should be or must be sorry must be spent within the immediate vicinity.

So, yeah, 33% of all these renewable energy projects are coming is a significant amount of money. And Bendemeer is not a big town. So there's only so much, you know, infrastructure that can be built for these tiny communities that then potentially become a liability for Council in the long run. Once these are all done and dusted, you know, there's only so many foot paths you can build. So I think, you know, it needs, you know, in each projects coming in with, you know, we're getting bombarded with VPA's at the moment.

But, you know, in terms of Council needs to have a bigger picture sort of view of where all this money is going to go because 33% of all these, you know. \$900 million, \$1 Billion projects, they just can't get spent in their meeting facility in Bendemeer and these other outlying communities. You know, for the next 30 years, it just it just won't work. So, yeah -

MS VEREKER: And can I just clarify, Neal the majority of of the Tamworth region isn't in the REZ. We've only got a very small portion, and yet we are still getting these projects. So there's I think the team said overall solar and wind farm at the moment we've got about 16 that are in various stages of development. So we're getting the development anyway, and that's fine. But yes, we do need to manage those impacts on our region and it is a challenge. There's absolutely no doubt about it. It's challenging.

MR LOBSEY: But certainly one of the topics we just we have discussed with the proponents very early on with most of these projects that you're now seeing and we often talked about the impact that might have on tourism. And we obviously have our country music festival that's held every January and that's, you know, for a good part of a month or so worth of motel rooms and hotel rooms and caravan parks all being completely booked out.

And so the discussions we had was around ensuring that the proponents sort of time some of their construction periods where they know they're going to have a high influx of workers and having making sure their strategy, if their strategy does include sort of renting out some of these motels or caravan parks or wherever that they're sort of done outside those peak tourism periods for our region. We have we do have the festival, but we also have a number of other events and, and occasions throughout the year that actually just books out the town. So we've obviously got that issue as well that we're sort of quite conscious of not ensuring that these developments don't impact on our tourism economy.

And, the visitation and the making sure that we still have a consistent, you know, number of visitors coming to town and not being impacted by other developments. So we talk a fair bit about this issue with, you know, not just the state significant developments, but also those regionally significant solar farm projects. We get they still have a heavy influx of workers obviously for a shorter period of time. But when you look at the cumulative impact of all these projects, if they were all happening at once which is probably unlikely, but it's just something that we do ask them to consider. Yeah.

MR BRAKE: Look, from an engineering point of view, that whole concept of cumulative impact expresses itself in terms of traffic management and the way in which the various proponents and their associated consultants assess that cumulative impact. So some of them have been quite crude and only looked at whether they're clashing with Transport for New South Wales upgrades. That's a pretty simplistic approach to it. And I guess it's sort of fair enough because they're looking at an entire transport leg from port to project. Tamworth itself is nestled in there, but it's definitely a hotspot sort of punctuation mark in all of that transport.

As Sam said, we have a reliance on and we promote heavily our ability to host national events of sporting, you know, music, sporting all those sorts of things. We're quite well set up for it. But there are occasions when and I've experienced myself when you want people to come and visit you and there's just nothing because there'll be a national hockey tournament or athletics or equestrian or something going on. And Tamworth's got a lot of motels, but they just get totally booked out. And it would be a shame to see these projects totally dominate that accommodation market, because then all the work we've done in being recognised as a good host for these national level events, we'd have to rebuild that again at the end of the REZ project, which is 2030. I think that would be a crying shame if that was to happen.

So some of that rests on the way in which the cumulative impacts are dealt with in the in the various from my perspective, the traffic reports, but from others perspective, much broader sort of perspective on it. We're looking at things at the moment for some of the more another, cleverer proponents of this stage are looking at talking to us about which of the car parks in town they could use as a staging post, so that they can ferry people to sites, rather than having every individual on the roadways. 1 or 2 proponents are doing that. The others are sort of just paying lip service to it. So there's a lot of space there that needs to be covered again, maybe by Energy Co or some sort of a peak collective of these proponents, and they're clearly not going to all happen at once because you can't.

The supply chain just won't deliver the materials for them to do it at once. But it's foreseeable each one of these projects can be 300 staff on site at the peak activity, and if 2 or 3 of them are rolling at once, that's a lot of people to accommodate and move around our town and then to the to the hinterland to do the jobs. So yeah, that's probably food for thought more than anything. I mean, you guys are putting conditions in around management plans that need to be prepared and that we need to accept. I guess Sam's point about us being in the hot seat, but having our ability to negotiate a proper outcome usurped by someone who wants to just dispute it and go back to the planning secretary would be a concern to us. Just that process, you know, and the planning secretary is not a Tamworth person won't necessarily have those finessed sort of perspectives on things.

MS VEREKER: Right.

PROF MENZIES: Let me hand over to my fellow commissioners for some questions from them. Bronwyn, did you want to jump in at this point?

5 **DR BRONWYN EVANS:** Yeah, thank you very much. And thank you to the team there in Tamworth, Bronwyn Evans. I had a question around employment because, I mean, I think Steve, it was you who just said, you know, there's likely to be hundreds of people needed for site mostly coming in. But is there an opportunity or are there agencies that these companies could work with so that there are skills being built for the, you know, young men and women in your region that can then become part of
10 these projects?

MS VEREKER: I'll need to think about that Bronwyn. Thank you for the question. Not sure whether we do have community agencies. Anyone else can throw it not just I just think I think it's a great idea. Council itself would be interested in terms of our
15 workforce strategy, but the broader. I'm not sure. Anyone else? So Yeah.

MR LOBSEY: The only thing I can think of is maybe introducing new programs. Yeah. And they may already be doing so. But TAFE would be a good avenue for new skilled workers, I think. But, yeah, something we can sort of take on notice and,
20 Yeah.

MR GILLOGLY: Yeah.

MR BRAKE: And perhaps not the individual projects because that would be a
25 communication exercise trying to get them all to focus on. And they competing with each other, they're likely to be co-sponsoring any of those sorts of initiatives unless they're made to or some umbrella organisation does that. The rest project itself is the one project which is the, you know, the construction of the spawn transmission lines. Maybe that because it's a long, you know, that's a ten year long project and process,
30 maybe that can have that sort of vision and start introducing some educational programs around their needs. But the other ones are that only last six months the actual peak activity. And then they're gone again, and then the next competitor comes in somewhere else. And so yeah, it'll be a communication exercise to trying to get something coordinated.

35 **DR EVANS:** But it just seems like an opportunity for young people in the region to have the skills that they could go project to project, whether it's project management or engineering. But anyway, it was just something that came to mind as I was reading through your proposal and, and the project.

40 **MR LOBSEY:** Out there, I don't know, but actually has a lot but just the tender process for some of the, some of the jobs that are required out on site, like the concreting and electricians and those sorts of things. Perhaps the tender process itself needs to focus on local trade, local businesses before they go further afield.
45 And that might then encourage local businesses to maybe look at this a little bit closer and see what, you know, how they could help, maybe develop some local,

local people as well. So maybe something around that initiating something around the tenders.

MS VEREKER: Yeah.

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MR BRAKE: Yeah. And that whole supply chain constraint, it would be in the interest of the broader scope of projects to make known to the local business community, what skills they're going to be short of. And they're going to need to import if they can't source them locally. I guess that would be through someone like Energy Co, that's got an umbrella view of the whole thing through the organisations like ours, and then some of the industry peak bodies as well, to just disseminate that information and say, look, we're going to need whatever it might, you know, obviously electricians, but there'll be all sorts of trades required because there's heavy, heavy civil infrastructure in support of all these projects as well.

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DR EVANS: Thank you.

PROF MENZIES: All right, Suellen?

MS SUELLEN FITZGERALD: Thanks, Neal. Just following on from Bronwyn's point, I note that the proponent is saying there would be something like over 130 local jobs created during the two-year construction phase. So that's a lot of jobs locally out of that region. It'll be interesting for Council to consider the positive and also potentially the negative impacts on some of your businesses from that many jobs needing to be you know, focused on this particular project. But Neal, that's more by way of a comment. I guess my question is- thinking about the Commission coming up to the region and getting close to community views, I'm interested in your perception of the quality of the community engagement from this particular proponent. Have you got some comments on that?

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MR LOBSEY: Not really. I mean, we've found just from our experience to the proponents have been relatively proactive in terms of their handling with Council and I don't know, I couldn't sort of speak on behalf of residents in the Uralla Council. Obviously the Kentucky area, which is probably the most impacted. I guess from our perspective, the process hasn't been too bad. Like, you know, apart obviously apart from the sort of late issue we've got with this VPA, which we hope to be sorted out at some point. But yeah, up in this for the last year or so, working through the assessment issues I haven't personally had any major issues with the proponent and how they've communicated to us.

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MS VEREKER: And we haven't had a high level of community concern from our communities. We're very clear on the opposition from Kentucky and we can understand why?

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But I'm not aware that we certainly they have there hasn't been a high level of contact with councillors from the community, from our community compared to other projects that we've been dealing with, where the community concern has been

way significant. This one has been relatively quiet. And that's one of the reasons why Council actually doesn't have an adopted position of objecting to the proposal.

5 **MS FITZGERALD:** Thanks, Gina. It'll be interesting to hear from Uralla Council on that one.

10 **MR BRAKE:** Do I just loop us back to the 130 local jobs created? It depends how that manifests itself, because they big project like this, especially at the start of this process, can tend to cannibalise resources from other elements of our economy. So the engineering, from my perspective as an engineer, what we see is the quarries and some of those local supply entities running out of material. It gets soaked up into these projects because they can pay a little bit more. And then housing and civil infrastructure that I'm responsible for.

15 So new subdivisions and those sorts of things, we run out of gravel and we run out of bedding material. A few years ago, we ran out of concrete pipework because Rocla had struck difficulties. That's how it manifests itself. So it's 130 jobs but they were there anyway. They've just gone from somewhere else. In the long-term on a trajectory, if that communication can be had with the industry and they can prepare themselves and ramp up, then in 3 or 4 years it might smooth out. But I think in the 20 first instance it's just going to be a bit of a negative not a positive.

25 **PROF MENZIES:** Yes, Steve, these are interesting challenges, aren't they, that, you know, there's an opportunity here, but how to achieve that success in the opportunity really is difficult. Gina, you prefaced the Council's comments by saying that this is a project that relative to others is not so problematic. We're obviously going to spend most of our time talking about the problematic aspects, but I thought it warranted just asking you, you know, what are the bits that you thought that this company has done well in their dealings with the Council?

30 **MR BRAKE:** Well, I'll start from my perspective, not having too many dramas with that end last mile type transport, which it's probably unique to this project because it's frontal to the highway and the state network that takes a significant burden off us. So that's a positive for us. It's probably micro in the big picture, but yeah. And it's a 35 relatively small project now that they've cut it in half and dropped it back to 32 turbines. It hasn't been so onerous to try and assess what's going on. And their information package has been pretty comprehensive and fairly legible from my perspective.

40 **MR LOBSEY:** And obviously the siting the actual development site itself, it's on the main power line, the main transmission lines going north south. So obviously from that perspective you're not you don't need to do more clearing for a -

45 **MR BRAKE:** Major transmission -
MR LOBSEY: To get to connect to that. So that's certainly a very makes it a highly beneficial site. The site, the site itself as well it's largely, you know, it's been cleared through farming practices over many decades. A lot of the turbines are in locations

that have been heavily disturbed already. We know we do know sort of further towards the back of the project site. There will be some clearing as you as you go further higher up into the hills. However, on balance the majority of the turbine sites are in those in those agriculture, those farmed, cleared sort of locations. So I think
5 that those sort of points make it a fairly positive site.

The water supply, it looks like there now, they obviously amended the project to include connecting a pipeline to that dam on the Banalasta property site. That's probably giving it some more sort of benefits around not having to tap into
10 groundwater as hard but obviously there will be a question around that from us just around ensuring that that won't have any impact on existing sort of groundwater. So supplies of adjoining properties. It's one issue that we've had come up a lot in the region not just the renewable projects, but it could be poultry farm projects and wanting to get the understanding that the actual soil sorry, the groundwater supply
15 impacts before and approval is given.

So there may be a question from us just around water supply and ensuring that there won't be any impacts on surrounding properties. But apart from that, I think, yeah, on balance, there's obviously with a project like this, there is obviously going to be
20 some level of impact. And it's about how you mitigate the impacts and our feelings from sort of day one once, like we've, I've been out on site and a few of other people have obviously been heavily involved in this project. It's on balance, far more appropriate than other sites that we've been involved in.

MS VEREKER: And, Neal, I'd probably sum it up as benign in a way. It's compared to other projects and I was going to add to what Sam said about environmentally, it's a good site. There are many worse sites, I think. Another concern that Council has generally is we don't want to be using, if we can avoid it, our best agricultural land for renewable energy. Of course, that's you know, our
30 major industry here is about being a food producer, like cattle, sheep, etc. Chooks. So we are actually looking to when we're revising our LEP at the moment.

And one of the things we want to be looking at is having some sort of buffers so that we can protect what is our highest quality agricultural land from renewable energy
35 projects. So this one, again, is not the best, the highest quality land. So that makes it easier for us to support it. In environmental impacts, you know, can be mitigated and the land is already basically cleared. So all those things. When I look at the what we need to consider under the EPA act, in the end, is the site suitable? Generally, yes. And is it in the public interest generally from Tamworth Council's perspective, yes.
40 So that's the couple of ticks. Yes. It needs, you know, some controls on conditions and so on as we've outlined, particularly in Steve's area. But I think it from our perspective, it gets across the line or it would do.

MR BRAKE: Yeah. From that perspective, one of the real clever guys in my team put together a matrix of I guess it was just a self-determined sort of matrix of benefit
45 or disbenefit or parameter per megawatt supplied back into the network. And he came up with a sort of a measure. And one of the projects we looked at was kind of

scored worse in all of those parameters. This one, I haven't seen him, but I could get him to add it in. Would probably be all green.

5 One of the measures was an interesting one, and I don't know how to get to the bottom of it, but these guys are talking about a water requirement of 100 odd megalitres for 32 turbines, and the last project we looked at reckoned they were only going to need 50 megalitres for 68 turbines. I'm having trouble reconciling how that works. And what they actually throw into their calculations. But when you just look at it on crude values, this one uses an awful lot of water to get to where it's getting to.
10 But I suspect the other one might have their numbers wrong.

PROF MENZIES: Commissioners. Do we have other questions for the council? Bronwyn. No, Suellen? No, and nor do I. So let me just thank you for the time you've given us today. That was certainly really very useful for us indeed. And thank you
15 for sort of, you know, being, being willing to expand beyond, you know, what is strictly our job to give us some insights to, you know, the Council's broader challenges with what's happening. We look forward to seeing you when we come on site. We particularly look forward to hearing what the community has to say about this project and the various challenges they see. So thank you very much for your
20 time today.

MS VEREKER: And thank you.

25 **MR LOBSEY:** Thank you.

DR EVANS: Thank you. Bye.

THE MEETING CONCLUDED