New South Wales Government
Independent Planning Commission

TRANSCRIPT OF MEETING

RE: MUSWELLBROOK SOLAR FARM (SSD-46543209)

APPLICANT MEETING

PANEL:	NEAL MENZIES (CHAIR) SUELLEN FITZGERALD MICHAEL WRIGHT
OFFICE OF THE IPC:	KENDALL CLYDSDALE GEOFF KWOK
APPLICANT REPRESENTATIVES:	
OX2 Holdings	CARLA EVANS CATHERINE WAY HELEN KENNEDY DARCY DENTON
Idemitsu Australia	MITCHELL CRONIN
LOCATION:	ZOOM VIDEO-CONFERENCE
DATE:	10:00AM THURSDAY, 16th JANUARY 2025

<THE MEETING COMMENCED

MR NEAL MENZIES: Good morning, guys.

[All say good morning]

MR MENZIES: Okay. So, I anticipate that we've got all of you in one room and there's only one – yes? Excellent. That makes things work more readily, as you can see, the IPC team are everywhere. My name's Neal Menzies, I'm the Chair of the Panel. Look, we have to go through a formal process, so I have a statement that I'm going to read out which introduces us and the process. Having done that very formal thing, it's a very informal discussion from that point onwards, okay? So, we intend as a Panel to interrupt, ask questions, do all of these sorts of things, so don't be put off by the very profound change from the formal start to the informal follow-up.

Okay. So, I'm going to read our formal thing and then we'll go about actually introducing each other and having a discussion. Okay, so before we begin, I'd like to acknowledge that I'm speaking from the land of the Yugara and Turrbal people here in the lovely Brisbane River Valley, which is swelteringly hot today. I'm going to acknowledge the traditional owners of the country from which we're virtually meeting today and paying my respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

Welcome to the meeting today to discuss Muswellbrook Solar Farm Project (SSD-46543209), which is currently before the Commission for determination. The project is 135-watt – sorry, 135-megawatt solar farm and battery energy storage system located approximately 2.5 kilometres east of Muswellbrook in the Muswellbrook Shire Local Government Area within the Hunter-Central Coast Renewable Energy Zone.

My name is Neal Menzies, I'm the Chair of this Commission Panel. And I am joined by my fellow Commissioners, Suellen Fitzgerald and Michael Wright. And we're also joined by Kendall Clydsdale and Geoff Kwok from the Office of the Independent Planning Commission.

In the interest of openness and transparency and to ensure the full capture of information, today's meeting is being recorded, and a complete transcript will be produced and made available on the Commission's website.

This meeting is one part of the Commission's consideration of this matter and will form one of several sources of information upon which the Commission will base its determination.

It's important for the Commissioners to ask questions of attendees and to clarify issues whenever it is considered appropriate. If you are asked a question and

you're not in a position to answer, please feel free to take the question on notice and provide any additional information in writing, which we will then put up on our website.

I request all members here today to 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. Enough of the formalities. Over to you guys to introduce yourselves and then we're into the agenda.

MS CARLA EVANS: Great. Thank you very much. And I might ask Helen to just share our presentation.

MS HELEN KENNEDY: We need to introduce ourselves as well.

MS EVANS: Yes, I'll just introduce ourselves when we've got the screen shared. Are you able to see the screen now?

[UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER]: I had one nod there, I think.

MS SUELLEN FITZGERALD: Yes, now I can see it.

MS EVANS: Great.

MR KENDALL CLYDSDALE: We have your screen, which has your slide notes there as well. Not the actual slide deck, per say.

MS EVANS: Okay. While we're looking to share the screen, we might go through introductions. So, yes, as noted, we are here today to discuss the Muswellbrook Solar Farm which is a joint venture between OX2 and Idemitsu. My name is Carla Evans, I'm a Senior Development Manager at OX2 and have been project managing the development phase of the project for the last three years. I might hand over to you, Darcy, now.

MR DARCY DENTON: Hi, my name is Darcy Denton. So, I'm our Senior PV Engineer. So, I'm responsible for the design of the solar farm and BESS and, yes, dealing with any of the technical queries related to the project.

MS EVANS: Mitch?

MR MITCHELL CRONIN: Good morning. I am Mitch Cronin, I'm representing Idemitsu Australia. I work in our Renewable Development Team based in Brisbane and have been supporting Carla and the OX2 team on this project.

MS EVANS: Catherine?

MS CATHERINE WAY: Hello, everyone. I'm Catherine Way, I'm Director of Development here at OX2.

MS EVANS: And Helen?

MS HELEN KENNEDY: Hello everyone. My name is Helen Kennedy and I'm Community and Stakeholder Manager for OX2 Australia.

MR MENZIES: Okay. So, we'll let you jump straight into your presentation.

MS EVANS: Great. Thank you. I'll just ask Helen to move to the next slide, please. Personally, I would also like to just do an acknowledgement. The project is located within the traditional lands of the Wonnarua people, and we would like to acknowledge them as the traditional custodians of the land. And pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people past and present, and we acknowledge their continuous connection to country.

MS WAY: Before we get into the detail of the project, we thought we'd just give you a little bit of an overview of OX2 and Idemitsu, so this is a joint venture between the two companies. So, OX2 is the largest renewable energy developer in Europe, and we are headquartered in Sweden. And the next slide please.

So, you can look at the detail there at your leisure – there's a lot of detail there. In May 2023, OX2 purchased ESCO Pacific as its entry into the Australian market. And we have projects across all of the mainland states. And yes, we're a reputable developer. We have projects in development, in construction and in operation across Australia.

MR CRONIN: And Idemitsu is a large, diversified energy company. We are headquartered in Tokyo, in Japan. We've had a presence in Australia for a little over 40 years now and we're pursuing a range of renewable energy projects in Australia as part of our diversification activities and commitment to climate change targets.

I just wanted to give a little bit of context about the site itself. So, the Muswellbrook Coal Mine was one of the oldest operating coal mines in New South Wales, and it is completely finished operation now. So, there's no longer an operating coal mine on the site – that stopped mining about two years ago. And the mine site itself is in a rehabilitation phase.

Going back a few years, Idemitsu as the owner of that site, undertook some post-mining land use study work. We identified a range of post-mining land uses for the site and have since been developing some of those opportunities. That graphic just gives a little bit of flavour for some of the opportunities that were identified back in that 2020–2021 era of study. And this solar farm that we're speaking about today is the realisation of one of those opportunities. And the site is planned to host other energy opportunities as part of a precinct. But the solar farm is really the first cab off the rank and it's the first major project to be part of the post-mining land use for the closure of the Muswellbrook Coal Mine site.

MS EVANS: And now I'll just go through some of the key project details. So, it is

a 135-megawatt BC solar farm, and 135-megawatt BC battery with up to 2 hours of storage. The development footprint is 318 hectares and is located adjacent to the Muswellbrook Coal Mine on land primarily owned by Idemitsu. There is a third-party landholder in the southern section as well.

We anticipate up to 200 jobs will be created during the peak construction period, and 9 operational jobs. There will be shared benefits through community benefit funding. It is strategically located within the Hunter Central-Coast Renewable Energy Zone and will contribute to New South Wales and Commonwealth renewable energy targets.

We have received a grid connection offer from Ausgrid, which is a key project milestone and means that once the determination has been made for the development application, we'd be in a position to commence construction very quickly. And it is a leading example of the transition of the Upper Hunter from coal mining to innovative post-mining land uses.

This is the proposed site layout. As you can see, there's a southern section and a northern section around the existing mine pit. That will be connected by a 33 kV transmission line between the two sections. And we propose to connect to the existing 132 kV Ausgrid line which is to the west of the site. If we can move to the next slide, please.

MS KENNEDY: So, just to give a quick summary of the community engagement that's been undertaken for the project. So, this has been done in line with the guidelines for State Significant Projects.

Early engagement began three years ago back in early 2020, and that was really to identify who the community was, and who neighbours were to the project. That continued throughout the EIS development, and at the time of submission of the EIS, the engagement really sort of ramped up to be able to make sure the community was aware of the project and knew how to obtain additional information and ask questions.

We've held three community information sessions since the early stage of the project. And we have sent out multiple letters and emails to all the residents within 2 kilometres of the project. One engagement was distributed via Muswellbrook Shire Council, and this was to ensure that all landholders within 2 kilometres of the project were notified, whether they resided in the area or not.

To move onto community benefit sharing. The project would generate direct and indirect benefits to the local community. As Carla mentioned, we would have up to 200 construction workers during the peak construction period, and then 9 people working onsite during operations. This would lead to expenditure on accommodation and business in the local economy, and also expenditure on procurement of goods and services.

The project has also agreed a Planning Agreement with Muswellbrook Shire

Council. This is in line with the new guidelines for benefit sharing that we released late last year. So that's a monetary contribution of 850 megawatts paid annually – $850 per megawatt paid annually. And that's been agreed to be split between three different sections. And one section that we were keen to ensure received a benefit were the neighbours. So, we have 45% of that monetary value being directed towards a neighbour benefit contribution, and that's going to be a rate rebate for all residents within 1.2 kilometres of the project.

MS EVANS: So now we'll just touch on the key matters raised by DPHI in their Assessment Report. They were energy transition, land use compatibility, traffic and transport, biodiversity, and visual.

So, as mentioned previously, we're proposing a solar farm and battery. The project is consistent with New South Wales climate change policy framework of net zero emissions by 2050, and Commonwealth renewable energy targets. It will assist in transitioning the electricity sector from coal and gas-fired power stations. It is located within the Hunter-Central Coast Renewable Energy Zone.

And the proximity to existing electrical transmission infrastructure allows benefits from the project to be realised immediately, given it is not dependent on the completion of other new transmission infrastructure to be built. And as I mentioned previously, a key milestone is that we have received an offer to connect from Ausgrid.

A land, soil and erosion assessment was prepared as part of the EIS, which included soil surveys. And this was completed in accordance with the Large-Scale Solar Guidelines and verified the land and soil capability of the site. So, as you can see on the map, the majority of the site was verified as land soil capability Class 4, which means it has moderate to high limitations for agricultural use, with some being Class 5 and Class 6, being high to very high limitations.

Importantly, it does not contain any mapped biophysical strategic agricultural land. And both those elements were part of our site selection process. We have also committed to maintain grazing within the development footprint where practical over the life of the development, and that is a condition, a recommendation condition of consent.

Traffic was another key matter raised by DPHI. So, access to the site would be via the New England Highway and either Muscle Creek Road or Sandy Creek Road. Access to the northern section of the site would be via Sandy Creek Road, and a road upgrade would consist of a basic right-turn treatment. And the existing site access for the Muswellbrook Coal Company mine site would be utilised for the southern access, and no upgrades would be required.

Assessments have been completed for the New England Highway and Sandy Creek Road intersection, which is point 5 on the map. And we've worked closely with Transport for New South Wales and DPHI to come up with appropriate mitigation measures to reduce impacts at that intersection. This includes the use of

shuttle buses to transport workers to that section of the site, and restrictions on vehicle movements during school bus hours.

So, the southern area of the site is predominantly comprised of degraded native grasslands and modified pastures, with widely scattered paddock trees. And the northern section comprises predominantly regenerating even-aged regrowth Ironbark, and occasionally mature trees, vastly scattered shrubs and degraded grasslands.

During the site selection process, we focused on avoidance of higher quality native vegetation, including intact woodland areas and habitat. And as you can see in the map, we have a number of biodiversity exclusion areas within the project area, and that is to avoid areas of higher quality vegetation and some areas of threatened flora species and also maintain connectivity within the project area.

So, we have committed to delivering a biodiversity offset strategy that appropriately compensates for the unavoidable loss of ecological values as a result of the project. So that involves the retirement of 2,487 species credits, and the retirement of 1,629 ecosystem credits.

And in addition to that, the establishment of additional and appropriate measures area which is along a creek line and marked in green on the map. And that is to an additional offset for impacts to Box Gum woodland impacts the offsets for that PCT have been calculated in accordance with the Biodiversity Assessment Method, and are included in the ecosystem credits, But the additional and appropriate measures areas is in addition to that, and that will involve the protection of that area, that's a conservation area, and will include planting that area to increase the biodiversity values along that creek line. And it also provides that connectivity within the site.

I'll now hand over to Mitch to provide some further information on the stewardship sites.

MR CRONIN: Thanks, Carla. Yes, the project is pursuing a strategy whereby many of the required credit retirement can be generated via credits from adjacent land holdings. So, the areas on the map that are shaded in blue and the yellow on the northern side of the site, those areas have been committed by Idemitsu for biodiversity stewardship areas.

So, we've made formal applications to have those protected as stewardship areas to produce the credits, many of those credits are relevant to the project and the intent is that those credits are provided to the project to satisfy some of the project's biodiversity credit requirements. And the benefit of doing that is that instead of simply paying into the fund or one of the other options, we're getting much more of a like-for-like quality in the ecology, in that we're offsetting relative to the impact within the project area itself.

MS KENNEDY: To talk a little bit about the visual assessment and impact of the

project. The site's located adjacent to and within the existing coal mine infrastructure. But the project has been developed in consideration of the potential visual impacts, and the mitigation measures have been developed throughout its development, taking advantage of the existing topography and the surrounding screening from vegetation.

There are 128 non-associated residences within 2 kilometres of the project. And the majority of those are to the south in the Woodland Ridge housing estate. There are 13 viewpoints that have been used as part of the assessment. Nine of those were chosen originally, an additional four have then been assessed last year to ensure that all residences were assessed appropriately. The visual impacts of the project are low, very low or nil for all of the residential receivers, and that's when assessed against the 2022 Large-Scale Solar Energy Guidelines.

A glint and glare assessment has also been undertaken. With solar panel backtracking limitations to be applied to mitigate impacts, this would result in light being reflected away from receivers, which would eliminate glare production.

MS EVANS: Now, if I just pause there. We do have slides on the other matters raised. However, yes, we'll be guided by you as whether you'd like us to go through those final few slides, or you'd like to ask questions now and we can refer to the slides as necessary.

MR CLYDSDALE: How would you like to proceed, Neal? Are you happy to ask some questions or continue on?

MR MENZIES: Look, I think we'll jump to questions because there's been a number of things that you've touched on that we're really interested in pursuing in more detail. Fellow commissioners, what's the hottest topic? I might jump in and ask one and then flick across.

You just talked about glint and glare and the idea of backtracking. I don't understand what that means. Could you just give a really quick and not too technical explanation of what backtracking is about?

MR DENTON: No worries, yes, I can probably answer that. Yes, so again, my name's Darcy and I'm the Senior PV Engineer at OX2. So, essentially how the tracking system works on site is the solar panels are in rows that track the sun from east to west throughout the day. And I think typically, you've got one row every 6 metres or so, with the solar panels in a row of about 100 panels long.

As they track throughout the day, they're following the sun, so they're facing directly towards to the sun, so any reflection off the panels would be reflected back up into the sky back towards the sun. But as you get towards, either, yes, the very start of the day or the end of the day, when the sun's low in the sky, the angle of the panels basically will typically shade the next row of panels behind.
So, what the panels do is they track backwards to reduce the angle a little bit, to avoid any shading. And what that means is that point of the day, the sun is

reflected off the panels and then not directly back to the sun, it's usually just reflected back in another direction that's sort of at a lower point in the sky.

So, as you get really close to the panels being basically flat, in some cases, depending on the part of the solar farm and the location of a receiver, like a household or a road, there's a potential impact for some of the glare to be reflected towards those receivers.

So, what we do in the glints and glare assessment is look at all of the receivers and using some modelling software that can determine what amount of glare is turned towards any of these houses. And there's different types of glare. There's glare that will leave an aftermath image in your eye, basically, we try to avoid this type of glare which we classify as yellow glare. And then there's green glare which has sort of a low impact, low likelihood of any sort of after-image or significant glare.

So, we do an assessment of all of the glare impacts. And then what we do, for certain parts of the site where there is potential for glare, is we'll put a limitation on how far these panels sort of track back, to basically make sure that the glare's diverted away from those receivers. So that's at right at the start and the end of the day, basically so …

MR MENZIES: That's an absolutely brilliant explanation. I understood it completely, so thank you very much.

MR DENTON: No worries.

MR MENZIES: Michael, over to you.

MR MICHAEL WRIGHT: Just a question about traffic. I know that there's a prohibition on heavy vehicles on Sandy Creek Road during school hours, to avoid interactions with school buses. I'm not sure whether the same prohibition is currently in place for Muscle Creek, but I think looking through the documentation for this project, there was a suggestion that OX2 and Idemitsu would in any event not be utilising Muscle Creek Road during those peak school hours. Could that be explained, please?

MS EVANS: Yes, so certainly Sandy Creek Road, yes, we are, yes, avoiding that during the school bus hours. However, in discussions with Transport for New South Wales, Council and DPHI, there was no restriction on Muscle Creek Road. And that currently, for many years, has been utilised for coal trucks. Yes, so that road has a lot of significant traffic all the time going to that point up until recently when the coal mine was closed.

MR WRIGHT: Okay. So, maybe I misread the documentation. I thought there was a suggestion in there that the proponent would seek to avoid utilising Muscle Creek Road, certainly during the construction period, for heavy traffic or larger vehicles. Is that correct or not?

MS EVANS: Not Muscle Creek Road. Certainly, for Sandy Creek Road, that is the case.

MR WRIGHT: Okay.

MS EVANS: Sorry, team, you all froze for me there for a while. So, I'm assuming that there was a really great answer given to Michael's question. And Suellen, do you want to jump in with the next one or are you halfway through something and I'm just interrupting?

MS FITZGERALD: No, no, no, I'm happy to jump in, Neale, and go with the visual theme. You mentioned – I'm interested in the relationship between this proposed, and it sounds like it's fairly imminent, Muswellbrook bypass and visual impacts. There's a statement in your Visual Impact Assessment that says that "The bypass will increase total visual impact from sites east and south of the southern array." So, could you just talk about the connection between the bypass and the visual impacts for this project?

MS EVANS: Sure. And I'm not sure if we've got a slide that does have the proposed bypass on it. But it just does run to …

MS FITZGERALD: One of your … go right back, slides, one of your early slides showed the bypass location.

MS EVANS: Yes, actually, I don't think it is on this file, but that's okay, I can just talk to it. So, it actually just runs to the west of the southern section of the project. So, accumulative impacts have been assessed in the Visual Impact Assessment, and the impacts are low, and no mitigation measures were required.

So, from Woodland Ridge, there is a lot of intervening vegetation along there. So, as you can see, there's Muscle Creek which runs to the south of the site, and we're not proposing – yes, the project is to the north of that creek, so there is sort of intervening vegetation within the Woodland Ridge estate itself and just to the south of the creek.

MS FITZGERALD: Yes. Perhaps it's something that you might want to clarify for us post this meeting. But I just wondered from the description in the Visual Assessment Report, it sounds as though the bypass is going to create additional visual impacts. And my question was, is that because it's going to clear some of this screening vegetation? Perhaps you could clarify that …

MS EVANS: Yes, that's no problem. It wouldn't be clearing any of the intervening vegetation between the sensitive receivers and the solar farm. But yes, we can certainly take that on notice and come back to you on that one with the specifics.

MS FITZGERALD: Great. Thanks for that. And Neal, my other question goes to the environmental impacts. I noticed in the Environmental Assessment that you've

surveyed all the trees with hollows in them across the site, and there seems to be quite a lot coming up in that survey. But there was no follow-up from that finding, no actions that came out of that. Could you explain whether those are proposed to be kept or to be part of the cleared vegetation? What's the status of those?

MS EVANS: Yes, so all of the trees within the development footprint will need to be removed and all of the impacts associated with that have been – will be offset appropriately for the ecosystem credits and also the additional and appropriate measures conservation area.

We will be producing a Biodiversity Management Plan and one of the requirements of that will be to be looking to – will need to have hollows, either boxes to replace any of the hollows in hollow-bearing trees, and they will likely be within the offset areas. So, that is certainly something that will be included in the Biodiversity Management Plan for the site. However, so the ones mentioned within the development footprint will be lost, however, there is a significant number that we will look to avoid, come through the project refinement process.

MS FITZGERALD: Thank you. And Neal, while I've got the floor, I'll just ask one further question. It's on cumulative impacts. I was really interested by your slide number 6 which shows the bigger picture of developments to do with your renewable energy zone that you're proposing around here.

So, just looking at that map, there's a pumped hydro project and then presumably there's this solar project is roughly the yellow. Are you aware of – are any of those other land uses in that map your proposed developments? Or does that go much broader than your landholding in the area?

MS EVANS: I'll hand over to Mitch.

MR CRONIN: Yes, so I guess first and foremost the solar project is the first project to be realised as part of this post-mining land use. We are developing the pumped hydro project with another development partner, and that one has SEARs from DPHI and that's not yet lodged and the EIS.

But to answer your question, the pumped hydro project is a real project and is under development at the moment. The only other one of these land uses shown here that are being realised is the ecological stewardship areas. So, in terms of what's being realised at the moment, we've got the solar farm, the pumped hydro and the ecological stewardship areas.

There is also of course the Muswellbrook bypass project, which is a separate project, which needs to be considered from cumulative impacts. And anything beyond that is subject to finding interest in the land and also working with the Council and the community on what else will be acceptable at that site.

MS FITZGERALD: Yes. Okay. So that's the green on that map. And the yellow is the existing solar proposals?

MR CRONIN: The yellow on this map just shows land that Idemitsu identified as suitable for solar development. So, this mapping was done prior to the development of the Muswellbrook Solar Farm. So, we're utilising some of the yellow land in this map for the Muswellbrook Solar Farm, but not all of it. Some of the areas shown here in yellow were sort of deemed as part of the development area that was not suitable for solar, so we've avoided some of those areas for various reasons.

MS FITZGERALD: Okay. And the pumped hydro is the pink on this map?

MR CRONIN: No, the pumped hydro is shown in blue at the sort of top-right hand side of the map.

MS FITZGERALD: Oh, okay, I see up there. Right.

MR CRONIN: The pumped hydro project is only partially on Muswellbrook Coal Company land, so the premise for that project is to utilise one of the previous mine voids, but it also extends beyond the Muswellbrook Coal Company landholdings.

MS FITZGERALD: Okay. Thanks. Thank you.

MR WRIGHT: Neal, can I just ask another question –

MR MENZIES: Just a clarification – sorry, Michael. A clarification there, that Suellen's initial question was around the cumulative impact. So, the pumped hydro, will there be much of a visual impact from it that would build on the – and it's something we'll consider ultimately when the pumped hydro thing comes up.

But we're just wanting to get a sense of whether the various things that are going to go on this site cumulatively are going to impact the community. So, we're interested in what is the visual impact of a pumped hydro scheme going to be?

MR CRONIN: That's being assessed at the moment. So, the pumped hydro project is producing its EIS studies and assessing things like visual impact at the moment. So, that's not yet entirely understood.

MR MENZIES: Okay.

MR CRONIN: And certainly, the pumped hydro project entity will consider the cumulative impacts in its DA application. So, that project and its project approval will consider the cumulative impacts, you know, such as the Muswellbrook Solar Farm. I can't speak to what was considered as amongst the cumulative impacts as part of this application – Carla might have better knowledge of that.

MS EVANS: Yes. So, the bypass was certainly considered in the cumulative impacts and also the Bowmans Creek Wind Farm. So, any projects that had yet – were in the system either with planning approval or had their SEARs issued …

Oh, sorry. Yes, from a visual point of view, and the pumped hydro was considered from, yes, in the cumulative impact from a traffic point of view, you know, when you are working which projects could coincide. It is at a later date so we wouldn't need to consider that.

MR MENZIES: Yes, I knew it was going to be a tough question to answer, because they're sequential. So, until you've done the work, you can't answer. Michael, sorry, I ran straight across …

MR WRIGHT: Sorry, Neal, no. My question, just going back to biodiversity again and those stewardship, post-stewardship agreement areas, both on Idemitsu land, I'm presuming. Mitch, just picking up on what you said a little earlier. You're looking to generate as many of the required credits for retirement from those two stewardship agreements, but is it – did I hear correctly that that won't retire the entire set of credits and that you'll need to pay into the offset fund to retire the rest? Is that correct?

MS EVANS: So, we would be able to retire the majority. There isn't the full amount of Box Gum woodland credits, so we're currently in discussion with third-party brokers to offset that. But the majority of the offsets are both species credits and ecosystem credits would be retired between those stewardship sites.

MR WRIGHT: And those stewardship sites would require active management. So, there'd be revegetation activities and habitat restoration and those sorts of things occurring those two sites?

MR CRONIN: Yes, that's right. That's part of what we're working through with the relevant New South Wales agency in setting those stewardship areas. So, we're working through those requirements at the moment, as part of the application process for establishing the stewardship areas.

MR WRIGHT: Yes. And they are both by Idemitsu, is that correct?

MR CRONIN: Yes, that's right.

MR WRIGHT: Okay. Thank you. Thanks, Neal.

MR MENZIES: Another question from me on visual screening and visual impacts. In the sequence of my working through the material that we are presented with, one of the first things that I read was the Council's response. And within it, they'd suggested that even though the visual impact was low on most residences, that a gesture from the company of offering tree planting screening to lower visual impact would be well received. I was surprised that you didn't take up that suggestion, and I just wondered why that was?

MS EVANS: Yes. We have been talking to individual residents and the concern around screening has been raised. And when we visited particular residences, we've tried to indicate to those residents exactly where the project will be. I think

there has been a little bit of confusion as to how much of the project they will be able to see from their properties. So, visiting individual residents has been really useful to be able to clarify that.

And the neighbourhood payment that we've worked with the Council on, we were also suggesting that that rate rebate could be used for screening purposes should the resident choose to go down that path.

MR MENZIES: Okay. So, there was no technical impediment that wasn't possible to do it, it's just that you'd prefer a separate model of providing people with some cash and if they decide to spend it on some trees, that's a good option for them?

MS EVANS: Yes, that's right. And that's come from the assessment, all of the results of that assessment came out as low or very low. And therefore we didn't offer individual screening packages for residences.

MR WRIGHT: Sorry, just following on Neal's question so I'm clear on the VPA and how that works. So, would that neighbour benefit scheme, would it comprise, as Neal was suggesting, cash payments to individual property owners? Is that how that is intended to work?

MS EVANS: It will be a rebate to property rates payments. So, they will have a rebate of $550 per year. So, that would be automatically seen on their rates notices, so it would be a reduction in what they're required to pay.

MR WRIGHT: And that's for the duration of the project?

MS EVANS: Correct. Yes. And increased with CPI annually. So, it's 95 properties that are eligible for that payment surrounding the project.

MR MENZIES: So, it was 1.2 kilometres …?

MS EVANS: Correct. Yes. That's right. Yes.

MR MENZIES: Yes, so that captures a lot of the people who are impacted. Right.

MS EVANS: Correct, yes, and that's why that distance was chosen. Yes.

MR WRIGHT: Have you had any feedback from the property owners about that rebate and whether they're enthusiastic about it or think it's not sufficient or …?

MS EVANS: No. We presented that to them late last year and we haven't had any feedback to date. Yes.

MR MENZIES: Okay. Fellow commissioners, have we asked all of the questions that we needed to ask?

MS FITZGERALD: I've got one more clarifying question, Neal, it's on workers accommodation. In your strategy in the documents, you've said that you're working in collaboration with EnergyCo and others about potential for accommodation camps in the future. Have those discussions got anywhere, or are they still for the future?

MS KENNEDY: Yes, still something that we will consider if required. We've managed to secure the majority of accommodation for workers for the project, so we're not anticipating having to establish any camps. But if that does become a requirement in the future, then we would look to work with other companies to ensure that we're working together.

MS FITZGERALD: Okay. Thanks, Carla. Because the Department's assessment says that the temporary accommodation provider has been identified. So, you're satisfied you've got that sorted for the time being.

MS EVANS: Sorry, it was Helen speaking before, but it's Carla here now, I'll just jump in.

MS FITZGERALD: Oh right, I'm sorry.

MS EVANS: That's okay. Yes. So, there is no requirement for this project for a separate temporary accommodation camp, as we were able to identify accommodation providers in the local area that were able to support the project's needs. So, we have an agreement with the temporary accommodation provider and those discussions are ongoing. However, we do want to support the local area as well, so where possible we will utilise motels and other accommodation options within the area, but not at the expense of others not being able to use those. So, that has been assessed in detail in the Social Impact Assessment Report.

MS FITZGERALD: Okay. Thank you. Thanks, Neal.

MR MENZIES: Michael, any last questions from you? All right. And nor from me, so unusual for us to finish one of these meetings ahead of schedule. And I guess I'd thank your team, Carla, for giving succinct answers, because we did have quite a few questions to ask, and thank you for that, for the clear answers you've given.

There was a follow-up on Suellen's question just to make sure that we understand the potential for the bypass to clear vegetation. If you could look at that and ensure that there's no reason for concern there.

MS EVANS: Yes, we'll certainly get back to you on that.

MR MENZIES: And the other one that – you gave us a clear answer on offsets for the old trees, but I think we'd still like to know how many of those old trees with hollows in them are going to be lost. Just it feels like a loose end to us, that there was such a detailed assessment done and numbers counted, but then we don't

quite know how many of those are lost are being offset.

MS EVANS: That's certainly presented in the Biodiversity Development Assessment Report with the exact numbers. I just don't know off the top of my head, so I can certainly refer you back to that quickly.

MR MENZIES: That's quite okay, and if we read everything and understood every element, we'd find it. But just do us a favour, send us the number so that Suellen and I can relax.

MS EVANS: I can very easily do that for you.

MR MENZIES: Thank you. And trust me, it's not that we anticipate that you're going to save every single one of those trees. But as I say, it just feels like a loose end that we had. A very beautiful and detailed assessment of what was there, but Suellen and I didn't pick up the final strand of how it landed. Kendall?

MR CLYSDALE: Sorry – yes, sorry, Neal, just to interrupt. I was just going to reaffirm that we'll put the questions in writing as well, Carla, from the office and get that to you, so there's a paper trail between the two. So, we'll get that to you in the next couple of days.

MS EVANS: Great, thank you.

MR MENZIES: All right, so thank you very much for your input, it's been very useful to us. As you would understand, for us as commissioners, there is a stunning amount of material presented to us. And the change of what people are commenting on through time is also a confounding issue that, you know, we read feedback from people from early submissions and then things have changed. So, the complexity, you guys are across the top of the complexity, we need to get across the top of it in quite a short timeframe. So, these discussions are really very useful. The clear and direct answers that you gave to our questions were also really useful. So, thank you very much for your help with this. Okay. I'll call a meeting to an end at this point.

[All say thank you]

>THE MEETING CONCLUDED 00:53:20