

Central-West Orana REZ Community Reference Group

Held on: 22/10/2024 – 10:00am to 1:00pm

At: Country University Centre, Mudgee

Chaired by: Lisa Andrews

Attendees:

Category	Attendees
Independent Chair	Lisa Andrews (LA)
EnergyCo representatives	Amer Hussein, CWO Director Community and Place (AH) Jane Sayabath, CWO Community and Council Interface Manager (JS) John Fisher, CWO Post Approvals Lead (JF) <i>online</i> Yvette Lloyd, CWO Director for Regional Coordination (YL)
LGA delegates	Councillor Josh Black – Mayor, Dubbo Regional Council <i>online</i> Councillor Katie Dicker – Mid-Western Regional Council (KD)
Government/MPs	Mel Manchee – Snr Electorate Officer Roy Butler’s Office (Member for Barwon) <i>online [left at 12.04pm]</i>
Community representatives	Jock Rice-Ward (JRW)
Stakeholder groups	Tim Booth – Mudgee Region Tourism (TB) Neville Mattick, RE-Alliance (NM) David Thorne, NSW Farmers (Mudgee) (DT) Beverley Smiles, Central West Environment Council (BS) Rosemary Hadaway, Mudgee District Environment Group & Watershed Landcare Aleshia Lonsdale, Mudgee Local Aboriginal Land Council Jane Hegarty, Cassilis District Development Group Jillian Kirwan Lee, Foundation for Rural Regional Renewal Kylie Manson, Warrabinga Wiradjuri #7 Native Title Claimants
ACERREZ representatives	Tim Smith – Area Manager (TS) Kee Li – ACJV D&C Community and Stakeholder Engagement Manager (KL) Sonja Malcolm – Workforce Development & Training Manager (SM) Emily Wheeler – Communications & Stakeholder Engagement Advisor (EW) <i>arrived 10.44am</i>

Apologies	
	Tony Fuller, Aboriginal Affairs Department delegate (TF) David Walker, Burrendong Botanic Garden & Arboretum (DW) Colin Kilby (CK)

Agenda

Item	Details	Responsibility
1	Acknowledgement of Country	LA
2	Welcome and introductions	LA
3	Apologies	LA
4	Governance/Declarations	LA/All
5	Business arising	LA
6	Correspondence	LA
7	EnergyCo – Project Update	AH
8	ACEREZ – Project and Update	TS/SM
9	General Business	All
10	Next meeting	LA

Meeting minutes

Item	Description	Lead	Discussions
1	Acknowledgement of Country	Chair	
2	Welcome and Introductions	Chair	Meeting opened at 10:29am
3	Apologies	Chair	As listed.
4	Business arising from last meeting (23/7/24) Minutes finalised on 21/8/24	Chair	<p>Closed actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate microwave sites and fire safety parameters. Share Commonwealth project determination once public. The eligibility of the Wollar Progress Association to apply for Community & Employment Benefit Program funding. Provide information on water supply for Merotherie Workforce Accommodation.
5	Declarations	Chair	
6	Correspondence report	Chair	As per the meeting notice & final agenda sent 18 October 2024 with 3 additional items.
7	EnergyCo presentation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation included a general project update including milestones, community engagement, biodiversity offsets and the Roadmap. Refer to supplied slide pack for more information if required.
7.1	Electricity Roadmap and Renewable Energy Zones sentiment tracking (Slide 7)	AH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussions centered around the shifting energy landscape, the impacts on existing infrastructure and the role that renewable energy plays in the transition. Points were raised about the evolving energy mix, including the use of surplus solar energy and biofuels for power. These are being considered in the development of the energy roadmap. The surplus of solar energy entering the grid between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. was noted.

Item	Description	Lead	Discussions
	Cth Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) sentiment tracking (Slide 8)	AH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DCCEEW is conducting community sentiment surveys to assess understanding on various topics, results expected in 2025. A comprehensive program monitoring sentiments will inform stakeholders and engage the community to improve understanding, supporting ACERZ and other generation asset developers with a coordinated approach. Participants raised the need for more proactive and positive messaging about tourism in the REZ following negative news coverage. Action: YL to follow up with Destination NSW.
7.2	Environment, Planning and Sustainability Biodiversity Offsets (Slides 9, 10, 11 & 12)	JF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiple management plans (Traffic, Bush Fire, Environmental, etc.) need approval before development starts. EnergyCo consulting with relevant agencies. The CRG is not required for this consultation. Action: Include a slide with a timeline of management plan progress in future presentations to keep the CRG informed. Concerns raised about mining offsets, particularly at Moolarben Coal Mine, which may be impacted by exploration and drilling. EnergyCo is working with representatives to address the issue, ensuring compliance with applicable federal and state requirements.
7.3	Engagement Events and Milestones (Slides 13, 14, 15 & 16)	JS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A future engagement program is planned for late 2024 and early 2025, including procurement information sessions and briefings for new Councillors. Sessions facilitated by EnergyCo will include town hall meetings and drop-in sessions with developers. EnergyCo issued an expression of interest, with first round developers shortly to be announced (Candidate Foundation Generators). Concerns were raised about Social Impact Assessments (SIA) being conducted too early and suggested that they be done later to better manage cumulative impacts. EnergyCo is coordinating with the DPHI. The need for clearer calculations of cumulative impacts, including traffic, biodiversity, and agricultural land loss, was highlighted.
7.4	Community Employment Benefits Program (Slide 18)	AH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More than 110 applications received and currently in assessment. The Small Community Fund will open and close to REZ groups every 6 weeks. EnergyCo and Regional Development are managing the application process and will recommend and determine applications before sending them for EnergyCo approval.

Item	Description	Lead	Discussions
7.5	Port of Newcastle to Renewable Energy Zones (P2R) Project (Slide 20)	AH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P2R presentation. • Points raised about Oversize Over-Mass vehicles leaving Newcastle frequently, potentially creating bottlenecks. • Points raised about impacts on local travel and tourism, emphasising the need for coordination during regional events. • Rail routes to Dubbo were discussed as part of the logistics planning. It was noted that coal haulage uses up all available rail space from Newcastle.
	BREAK 12.04pm		
8	ACEREZ presentation	TS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation included Central-West Orana industry and Aboriginal engagement, landowner engagement and Property Access Plans, Merotherie workforce accommodation, water supply and bushfire management. It was reported that all easements have now been acquired.
8.1	Central West Orana Industry & Aboriginal Engagement (Slides 4, 5 & 6)	SM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACEREZ presentation explaining Industry & Aboriginal participation, which is categorised in three sections; Industry Engagement, Support Capability & Supply Chain Diversity.

Item	Description	Lead	Discussions
8.2	Landowner engagement and Property Access Plans	TS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACEREZ has met with one-third of landowners, focusing on Merotherie and Wollar. Meetings with Crown land will follow, including Native Title holders and Traditional Owners. • EnergyCo property team will assist ACEREZ in managing the acquisition process to ensure consistency, minimise issues and facilitate positive landowner interactions. • All sub-contractors are required to comply with consent conditions and will receive thorough environmental training. • ACEREZ Environmental team will collaborate with crews on-site to ensure compliance before work starts. • WSP is conducting biodiversity surveys and has its own access arrangements with landowners. • A comprehensive biosecurity management process with red, amber and green levels is in place to protect properties, including two organically registered properties. This is a shared responsibility under the Act, and involves measures to address matters such as the potential transfer of weeds and planned vehicle washing stations. Work may be halted if any breaches occur. • Place Managers will coordinate biosecurity with farmers. • Landowner agreements are with EC, and Strategic Benefit Payments will begin upon completion and energisation of the line. • An Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Management Plan is being prepared to address both European and Aboriginal heritage, which will be provided to CRG members when available. • A Rehabilitation Plan, informed by geotechnical assessments, will be developed in consultation with farmers.

Item	Description	Lead	Discussions
8.3	Merotherie workforce accommodation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no updates regarding Neeleys Lane workforce accommodation. • First Aid and Emergency Management arrangements for the Merotherie site include access to telehealth doctors, on-site nurses, a paramedic and “first aid vehicle”. • Conditions can be placed on construction subcontractor agreements to ensure Merotherie workforce accommodation is utilised to assist with mimimising impact on local housing availability. • Parking will accommodate 600 light vehicles and 100 buses. Workers will be transported to and from the site and town. It is proposed to bus workforce from Sydney and Central Coast. • ACEREZ plans to upgrade 6.25 km of Merotherie Road to the hub. A Traffic Management Strategy will be implemented. • The Operation Plan is in draft and will consider resident access to site facilities like the gym. • Initially, potable water will be used on site, followed by recycled grey water and sludge from black water.
9	General business	LA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The recent tornado damage to Broken Hill transmission lines prompted discussion about the resilience of the CWO transmission line to similar events. The project's design will incorporate considerations for future climate related events. • Questions about government-funded job training in the Central West - discussions have been had with Future Jobs and Investment Authorities. • Concerns about medical services in the region were noted. A suggestion was made to seek primary health support through the Community Benefit Fund. Local councils are working with doctors and health care professionals around attraction and retention recruitment strategies to the region. • The assessment panel for community grants operates independently through Regional Development NSW. Action: A copy of the policy and application results will be provided when available. • The current CRG will be managed by EnergyCo until the end of 2024, then ACEREZ will take over. • A question was received about Bush Fire Management Plan and whether it would include cool burns as a mitigation strategy. • Information will be sent to members regarding the First Nations Engagement Team.
10	Next meeting	LA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmed and agreed for 18th February 2025 in Dubbo at 10am with the venue to be confirmed.
11	Meeting close	LA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting closed at 1:22 pm

Actions

No	Action	Responsibility	Due date	Comments / updates	Status
1	Link to ACERREZ website to be provided, once live, with reporting requirements	TS	When available	Held over from 23/7/24 CRG	To be actioned
2	Provide feedback from sentiment survey when available in 2025.	AH	When available		To be actioned
3	Follow up with Destination NSW regarding potential tourism impacts from negative press on CWO REZ	YL	ASAP		To be actioned
4	Slide outlining timeline of management plans to be included in future CRG presentations	JF	Ongoing		To be actioned
5	Provide update on SIA coordination between REZ projects	AH	Next Meeting		To be actioned
6	Provide a copy of the Heritage Management Plan to CRG members	JF	When available		To be actioned
7	Consider potential use of facilities at Merotherie Accommodation Camp by local residents and sporting groups when preparing Operational Plan	TS	Next meeting		To be actioned
8	A copy of the policy and application results will be provided when available for CEPB community grants through Regional Development NSW	JS	When available		To be actioned
9	Provide information on First Nations Engagement Team	AH			Complete

Next meeting

Date: Tuesday 18th February 2025
 Time: 10am morning tea 10.30am to 1pm CRG
 Venue: TBC (Dubbo)