



**New South Wales Government**  
**Independent Planning Commission**

**TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

RE: GLANMIRE SOLAR FARM (SSD-21208499)

**COUNCIL MEETING**

COMMISSION PANEL: DR SHERIDAN COAKES (Panel Chair)  
CHRIS WILSON  
RICHARD PEARSON

OFFICE OF THE IPC: BRAD JAMES  
OLIVER COPE  
CALLUM FIRTH

BATHURST COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES: CR JESS JENNINGS  
DAVID SHERLEY  
NEIL SOUTHORN  
RICHARD DENYER

LOCATION: VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE

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**TRANSCRIBED AND RECORDED BY APT TRANSCRIPTIONS**

DR SHERIDAN COAKES: Well, good morning and welcome. Thank you for joining us this morning. Before we begin, I'd like to acknowledge that I'm speaking to you from Worimi land and I acknowledge the traditional owners of all the country from which we virtually meet today and pay my respect to their Elders past and present. Welcome to the meeting today to discuss the Glanmire Solar Farm case currently before the Commission for determination. The Applicant Elgin Energy Pty Limited proposes to develop the Glanmire Solar Farm. The project involves the construction of a solar farm with a generating capacity of approximately 60 megawatts along with the upgrading and decommissioning of infrastructure and equipment over time.

The project also includes a 60 megawatt / 120 megawatt hour battery energy storage system and onsite substation with connection to an existing transmission line operated by Essential Energy via an underground powerline. My name is Dr Sheridan Coakes, I'm the Chair of the Commission Panel and I'm joined by my fellow Commissioners, Chris Wilson and Richard Pearson. We're also joined by Brad James, Oliver Cope and Callum Firth from the Office of the Independent Planning Commission. In the interests of openness and transparency and to ensure the full capture of information today the 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 our consideration of this matter and will form one of several sources of information upon which we will base our determination.

It is important for us as Commissioners to ask questions of attendees, to clarify issues whenever it's considered appropriate but if you are asked a question and you're not in a position to answer, please feel free to take that question on notice and provide any additional information to us in writing which we will then put on our website. If everyone - all members here today could please introduce themselves before speaking for the first time and avoid speaking over the top of each other to ensure accuracy of the transcript. We will now begin. So thank you everybody for joining us this morning. We're very pleased to have you with us. We have provided a little bit of an agenda I guess to start the discussions.

MR CHRIS WILSON: Sheridan, you're breaking up a bit so you're going to have to stay closer to that microphone. Sorry.

DR COAKES: O.K. Sorry, if I'm right up front everybody. So, I guess, without further ado if we can hand over to - who will be sort of, I guess, walking us through those agenda items today from Council's perspective?

MR DAVID SHERLEY: From my perspective, Neil, you'd probably be the best one to have any discussion points from the Council given that it's a planning position. The Council has not, as a body, resolved a specific position in this matter. We've provided some feedback through Neil but it's fair to say there is no Council-resolved position.

DR COAKES: O.K.

MR WILSON: Can I just ask a question. David, does that include on the in-principle agreement in relation to the VPA?

MR SHERLEY: I have authorised that as the General Manager that if the - and I have advised the relevant parties that if the item goes through, certainly the VPA will be accepted.

MR WILSON: O.K. But does it need a - does it need to go to Council?

10 MR SHERLEY: I don't believe so.

MR WILSON: O.K. Thanks.

MR SHERLEY: Particularly given the nature of it that it is not what we would call significant dollars.

MR WILSON: O.K. Thank you. Sorry, Sherrie.

20 DR COAKES: No, no, that's fine, Chris. Obviously just we're very interested today just to hear Council's views on the Department's assessment with any - any key issues. I'm not sure if you've had an opportunity to review the conditions - the draft conditions that have been provided by the Department as well. So, yes, very interested in hearing your position on any project amendment and any residual issues which you feel need to be considered from your perspective.

30 MR NEIL SOUTHORN: So following on from David's opening comments I'll start that conversation and invite Richard to add to those comments. In short, Council has satisfied with the Department's assessment and the conditions of consent are as we might've expected and do cover some of the issues which Council might have been concerned about, specifically traffic impacts. Council is satisfied that the Department's assessment has considered things like visual assessment and other matters which are contentious with members of the local community and, I guess, I'm also making a point of difference between Council staff officer assessment which has been criticised by some members of the local community it's not reflecting their view of the project and its merit. Whether I need to expand on that theme or not I'm in your hands.

40 DR COAKES: Yes. Neil, I think that would be helpful just to hear from your perspective what you see - we will be obviously interested in understanding, I guess, your Council's perspective on the community sentiment towards the development so - and then obviously what - what you see yourselves as those - those key issues that - that I know there note there have been some amendments to the project as a result of that but, yes, so please if you could differentiate that would be - that would be - would be helpful.

MR SOUTHORN: And I do so again by way of explaining background as a member of the community consultative committee, the Council appointee to that consultative committee but even before the committee process unfolded I was a party to, and I

think Richard joined me on a couple of occasions, discussions with members of the local community who have been opposed to this project from the day it was conceived and, indeed, that consultative process, that engagement with the local community was not dissimilar to the engagement with the community for a different large-scale solar project that was to be - was proposed to be located not far from where this one is proposed to be built.

DR COAKES: So, Neil, just to clarify that. Is that - for our benefit, that's Brewongle Solar Farm that was proposed back in 2018?

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MR SOUTHORN: Yes, it is.

DR COAKES: Yes. O.K. Thanks.

MR SOUTHORN: And, indeed, back in those days there was a debate as to the merits of large-scale solar in the Bathurst landscape - regional landscape and it's my belief that some of that debate actually led to the first version of the Department's guidelines which is now in its second version and up for its third and, indeed, there's been a continuity of some members of that local community objecting to large-scale solar in the regional landscape since those days and it has continued unabated with the Glanmire proposal.

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At the community consultative committee some members of the community who were invited to participate in that representing the Glanmire Action Group withdrew their participation not long after the consultative committee kicked off and in summary, if I can paraphrase their concerns which is probably unfair because it's for them to share their concerns firsthand, it relates to just incompatibility, inappropriateness and below that overarching view of the world they've made various claims of certain details which they find offensive but a Council officer's view is has the project application followed the guidelines? Have the supporting documents been robust? Has there been some adjustment to the proposal to accommodate the concerns of some members of the local community? And an officer's assessment is yes in answer to all those questions.

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I could go into the detail of some of those points of difference if you wish but in summary view, they're - the Commissioners, you probably know them, you've seen them, you've seen them, you've read them, you've probably been presented or will be presented with those concerns firsthand so I'm happy to pull it up there and either pass over to Richard for his perspective or answer questions.

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DR COAKES: O.K. Thank you, Neil. Richard, do you have anything else to add?

MR RICHARD DENYER: No. In terms of our directive backed on Council infrastructure Neil's pointed to what the neighbours might think. Certainly we've picked up on Brewongle Lane which is currently a dirt lane and certainly there's conditions on there that require that to be upgraded from the highway through to the entrance point so that's a position we've taken through our submission and been

adopted in the assessment report and the conditions. So that's something we're happy with and been supportive of.

10 DR COAKES: O.K. Thank you, Richard. I think in your original submission, I guess through the process some of the issues that have been raised previously related to sort of that - that future growth area which I wouldn't mind if you - you're able just to comment on from that. Obviously, water use would be one we would be interested in hearing from you on, the VPA which we've touched on briefly. Understand obviously there's a heritage cottage located on the site that has local significance. So your views on whether that's been handled appropriate in terms of the Applicant in the conditions and, I guess, the other one which we're hearing a lot in these sort of projects is around waste disposal and, I guess, the ability of Council to accommodate additional waste in your facility, particularly maybe construction waste. This is an issue we're hearing around.

20 Some of the other issues from a community perspective obviously from the submissions that we've read relate to sort of insurability for proximal landholders so we'd be interested in your views there and obviously from a visual perspective which you touched on, Neil, the adequacy of the planting, the proposed planting and vegetation screening around the site. So sorry to just - and I think we identified some of those issues in our - in our agenda. So just some general feedback from you on those aspects would be helpful.

MR SOUTHORN: So I might ask you to go through that list one at a time.

DR COAKES: O.K. Sorry. Sorry, Neil. O.K. So maybe let's start with the sort of future growth piece.

30 MR SOUTHORN: So Council's future growth strategy does not extend significantly eastward from the Bathurst built-up area, more to the north-east and west and we're dealing with both zoned and land we expect to be rezoned in those compass directions. Expansion of Bathurst in an urban sense along the Sydney Road corridor is problematic for a couple of reasons. Firstly, the airport. Secondly, lack of complexities in supplying utilities including water and if we are to expand to the east it would be for employment lands attached to the airport precinct. I'm also referring to lands where we haven't had discussions with landowners but for the purposes of the discussion and much of those - - -

40 DR COAKES: Apologies - apologies, Neil, for that interruption. I'm not sure why we keep hearing that, Brad and Oliver.

MR SOUTHORN: That's fine.

DR COAKES: Yes. Thank you.

MR SHERLEY: Can I - I think the reason you keep hearing that message is that every now and then my Zoom is dropping out and then reconnecting and then once I reconnect you get that message.

DR COAKES: No worries. Thank you, David, we'll just keep going then. No problem at all.

MR SOUTHORN: And whilst individual landowners might not have been consulted at a macro level those growth corridors - those growth areas are reflected in Council's Local Strategic Planning Statement. So it's my professional opinion that it's not a constraint to solar PV in that locality.

10 DR COAKES: O.K. Thank you.

MR SOUTHORN: The visual - I'll let you go through your list so I make sure - - -

DR COAKES: Visual improvement we can - yes, so visual and, I guess, the proposed strategy around screening at the site, et cetera.

MR SOUTHORN: So the - at a landscape scale I'm satisfied that the landscape impacts are minimal. I have had the pleasure of visiting other large-scale solar sites in similar, but not identical landscapes. I have travelled around the locality from  
20 different vantage points myself, not relied entirely or solely on the opinion of others and in other local government areas have been involved with the approval of large-scale solar.

So I don't think the - at a landscape level the visual impacts are significant. I do understand that at a micro level the neighbours would have legitimate concerns around the visual impact from their particular patch and they are legitimate concerns which the Applicant's have addressed to some extent by adjusting the footprint of the panel layout by creating separation distance in the main visual corridors and by vegetation, conservation and planting.

30 To the extent where that probably hasn't satisfied the - some of the immediate neighbours, that's understandable, including the risks of relying on vegetation to provide for visual screening. That's no better way to do it than a proper vegetation planting but the secret to success is in the longevity and time it takes for those plantings to reach - reach their use. That's my summary of visual.

DR COAKES: O.K.

MR RICHARD PEARSON: Can I - can I, Sherrie, just ask on that, Neil. Is Council  
40 happy with what they're proposing to plant at a kind of species level and its compatibility with the area? I notice there was a lot of acacias which are quite fast-growing. Is there anything that could be done to kind of improve the concerns about using vegetation for screening by ensuring that the right things are being planted in the - in the area of you're fairly satisfied with what's proposed?

MR SOUTHORN: Satisfied on paper but again the secret to success is implementation but to address that issue one imagines there could be a condition of consent that Council be consulted prior to the landscape details, specie selection,

method planting, the maintenance program and so on be - be done in consultation with Council.

MR PEARSON: O.K. Thank you for that suggestion.

DR COAKES: O.K. So moving on then, Neil, to sort of the heritage issues in terms of the Woodside Cottage which I understand was formerly the Woodside Inn at some point, yes.

10 MR SOUTHORN: Richard, could you comment more on that for me, thanks.

MR DENYER: Yes. And to be fair, the inn's probably doesn't have any outward signs of being an inn or being a significant building so it's reasonably not well - it's not well maintained, to be honest but there's no direct impact where - where the solar farm itself are located behind the building. So there's no visual impact on when it's viewed particularly from the highway. So there's limited impact, there's no direct works, there's no history that would suggest there's archaeology or something similar in the area. So as much as they can they've avoided the direct impacts that might be associated with building close to it.

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DR COAKES: Yes. And I think, Richard, you've answered my question there was whether it is actually sort of a local - a local feature that, you know, do tourists - but you said it's probably not in a - not in a state that it would be of interest to people driving through the area or - - -

MR DENYER: It doesn't show a lot of visible signs of being significant.

DR COAKES: O.K. Thank you. Thanks. O.K. then. So moving on to the sort of water issue. I note that, you know, water use requirements for the project, the  
30 Applicant has said can be met locally in their amendment report. Does Council have any comments around the water use?

MR SOUTHORN: No, that didn't pop up on my radar as being a significant constraint.

DR COAKES: O.K. And, I guess, the - one of the other issues we've been hearing a lot from a community perspective has been around sort of decommissioning and rehabilitation of the site. Again interested in your perspective around - and some reference to obviously underground infrastructure and underground cables and so  
40 forth.

MR SOUTHORN: So the commitment to decommission is there. I don't think anyone quite knows how that's going to work and coupled with the - not just the construction waste question, which you're about to come to, is what to do with the solar panels at the end of their life as decommissioning progresses. There's some optimism at industry level, of course, that these things will be dealt with satisfactorily. There's already some scope for solar panel component recycling at end of life. So one imagines that it can be dealt with before it becomes a problem.

Having said that, as a society we're not - not doing a pretty good job at the moment. The decommissioning is a mechanical process which removes the components from the ground. Yes, there will be some components left underground. I accept that that won't interfere with a return to agricultural use of the land, that's my - again my opinion. So I don't think the decommissioning - the concept of decommissioning is too much of a challenge.

10 DR COAKES: And in relation to the waste disposal, Neil, if that's at your local facility?

MR SOUTHORN: So that perhaps applies more specifically to construction waste.

DR COAKES: Yes, yes.

20 MR SOUTHORN: That would be of interest to Council. Again one imagines there's either is or can be a condition of consent that relates to a waste management plan and so we would be interested in that. Our landfill doesn't have unlimited room but it does have some capacity still to receive reasonable levels of construction waste and so the management plan needs to describe how reasonable the quantities of waste are likely to be. My understanding is that it won't be huge. Again devil in the detail.

DR COAKES: O.K.

MR SOUTHORN: That relates to construction waste. I've always wondered if Bathurst could actually take a lead and become a hub for recycling technology. We'd all like - always like Bathurst to be at the forefront of many things and maybe that's another industry we could - we could develop.

30 DR COAKES: Yes, yes. And I think lots of opportunities there in that - in that regard. Yes. O.K. Any further questions from Richard and Chris, sorry, in relation to waste and decommissioning?

40 MR WILSON: On the waste - waste matter just in terms of - there's a risk of damaged panels during the 40-year life of the - and, yes, we're talking about sort of a growing - growing industry or an industry in its infancy in terms of recycling. I mean, is there a potential for, I guess, you know, the damaged panels put pressure on your - your ability to meet your waste avoidance targets? I mean, is this something that you've considered?

MR SOUTHORN: Not at depth. In fact, now you mention it is that something we should be worried about? I, again, are drawing an opinion which others might not agree with but the risk of damaged panels one imagines is modest. If panels are damaged during the construction phase they've either arrived damaged on site or damaged during installation. I don't think it's in anyone's interest including the developer that there be too many.

MR WILSON: Yes.



MR SOUTHORN: And again I'd be interested if there's any proportional statistics on other solar farm constructions. There's been plenty to learn from if that's been a problem elsewhere. I don't see it as a limitation to approval, no.

DR COAKES: O.K.

MR WILSON: O.K. Thanks. Thanks, Neil.

10 DR COAKES: O.K. So, I guess - so we touched a bit on the traffic and transport issue. I think, Neil, you mentioned - Richard, the - obviously the intended upgrade of Brewongle Lane and the access of the highway so that's good. Yes, Chris.

MR WILSON: Sorry. Just in relation to the upgrade, Neil, so that - so that's - because it's a state road, isn't it, and then - so how does that - how does that work in terms - we understand those works need to be finished prior to construction commencing. Is - are those works to be undertaken by you or are they to be undertaken by the Applicant or by the state? Who undertakes those works?

20 MR SOUTHORN: So the highway, of course, is a Transport for NSW road. The extent to which they require Transport for NSW concurrence and approvals and documentation to construct works on their road they'll - they'll deal directly with Transport. In regard to works in Brewongle Lane that's a Council road and so we would be involved in approving the scope of works there. The bit that comes into Brewongle Lane is pretty - pretty minor works in the scheme of things.

MR WILSON: O.K.

MR SOUTHORN: Yep.

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MR WILSON: Yes. The other question is, is it - so any concerns in Council in relation to, I guess, transport - I think the Applicant told us there's 107 movements per day. I think that was the number used. I mean, is that a concern of Council in terms of staff - I presume most - most construction workers will be coming from Bathurst, is that a fair statement?

MR SOUTHORN: Yes, but most trucks will probably be coming from Sydney.

40 MR WILSON: O.K. So any concerns with parking for construction vehicles or workers on site?

MR SOUTHORN: Not from me. There's ample space on their land to create a compound for construction worker vehicles. One imagines that a proportion of their workforce would be conveyed to site in buses or minibuses. The intersection safety is a matter that Transport for NSW and the Council will take an interest in but particularly Transport and, hence, the - the specifications of the intersection upgrade will be to satisfy Transport's concerns, not just on traffic numbers but also safety of movements.

MR WILSON: I note the Department's recommended condition requires a traffic management plan to be prepared in consultation with both Council and Transport for NSW.

MR SOUTHORN: Yes.

MR WILSON: O.K. Quite comprehensive.

- 10 MR SOUTHORN: Yes. So I think all the - all the concerns are able to be accommodated and again it's one of those areas where it's not that different from any other big project that requires construction vehicles and so on. So I think that those concerns are legitimate but the way they're handled is pretty stock-standard.

MR WILSON: O.K. Thank you, Neil.

- DR COAKES: Thanks, Neil. And just - I guess just extending that, Neil, obviously these construction works will - there is a condition provided to - for the Applicant to develop an accommodation and employment strategy in consultation with Council.
- 20 Are you comfortable with that condition and, I guess, Bathurst being the size it is as a town that there are opportunities for local employment, for example, and an ability to accommodate the workforce. Obviously that strategy we need to explore that and get the evidence base to support that but, yes, just - just any comments on that given the other developments that are going on in the region.

- MR SOUTHORN: Yes. So the Central West including Bathurst is a sponge for skilled workers for lots of infrastructure projects and, indeed, developing a workforce and housing them will be a challenge and, hence - hence, the importance of a strategic approach to that and one that's done in conjunction with Council because any one
- 30 developer is not necessarily in tune with what other projects are happening and Council's probably is a conduit for sort of conveying those messages.

It actually will be a challenge for Glanmire on both fronts. So Bathurst enjoys a much lower than state average unemployment rate. So the ability to find workers locally will be difficult. That raises the possibility of FIFO workers and for both categories whether they're workers coming to live in Bathurst because there's work here for - on - on the solar farm or whether they're FIFO workers or term contractors finding a place to stay is going to be difficult.

- 40 MR PEARSON: Is there motel - adequate motel accommodation - because I think it's a one-year construction period, you know, plus or minus, so would motels be available? One of the arguments that, I think, that Applicant's put is because this isn't in a REZ but perhaps these issues won't be as acute because there are not so many other projects in the - in the area but you're suggesting that maybe Bathurst is already housing some - some - some of these other infrastructure project workforce?

MR SOUTHORN: Yes. So - and it's not just infrastructure workforce but to list some of the infrastructure projects we have McPhillamys Mine in the Blayney Shire

but we expect Bathurst to be the home for many of their workers. That's now approved at state level. We have the Great Western Highway upgrades so there's uncertainty over the continuity of delivery of that project but it's not going to stop altogether. The other end of the pipeline we have the Inland Rail which is absorbing workers and civil contractors from our region to go further west. We have upgrade to Simplot occurring as we speak. We have other large employment start-ups including IBM at the CSU Campus.

10 So cut a long story short, all of those projects are going to struggle to attract workers. They will be in competition and those workers will be in competition for limited beds. Your question went to motels. There isn't a constant spare capacity in Bathurst, no. The tourist and visitor market would have Bathurst full many weeks - many weekends of the year and certainly beyond Bathurst on race events. So motor race events. So it will be a challenge to them, yes.

DR COAKES: Yes. And that's an important point, I think, you've raised there, Neil, around that interaction with the tourism and those main events which obviously Bathurst does attract a large proportion of influx of visitors at certain times. So - - -

20 MR SOUTHORN: So pretty well just to give you some slant on that. For most of the major motor race events they'd be booked out years in advance.

DR COAKES: Yes.

MR WILSON: Just on that, Neil. Sorry. Because the peak construction period I understand is four months so what would be the - what would be the key tourist season? Would it be around Mount Panorama or - - -

30 MR SOUTHORN: Certainly the peak - so the motor race events are relatively short duration on the television but would last between one - seven days and 10 days, bump in, bump out, but they are relatively short peaks and on, what, six or eight occasions per year and beyond that, that's motor racing, there is other sporting events and so on regularly scheduled which would book out the whole of Bathurst. We're hosting the Koori Cup, for example, next year, that's one - one example that just comes to mind because it's just recently been announced.

40 We also have - I'm going to guess because the date is not clear - a reasonable supply of bed and breakfast-type accommodation, so Airbnb short - short stay stuff. How available that is to workforce - infrastructure workforce is also unclear. So, yeah, just repeat the - the obvious, it's going to be an interesting challenge for them.

DR COAKES: Yes.

MR WILSON: Yes.

DR COAKES: O.K. Thanks, Neil. That's - that's important context, I think, from a community and regional perspective and whilst obviously there's construction work is only 150 - - -

MR PEARSON: Just to conclude that point, I think they have to develop that strategy in consultation with Council. So, I guess, very much value your local input to that, I'm sure. So, yes, it will be a challenge, I think that's one of the key challenges and, I mean, I guess, the fact that it's a relatively short-term construction impact is beneficial from that point of view but it will be a tough manage for that period.

10 MR SOUTHORN: Yes. And I don't think there's a magic wand. I believe - I've heard talk that Blayney's considering a pop-up village for the McPhillamy workforce, for example. I'm not sure that's - that's the right solution for this project but - - -

MR PEARSON: No, probably not.

MR SOUTHORN: - - - we're happy to talk through with the Applicant - with the developers on those issues without necessarily having a solution we can throw out.

MR PEARSON: Yes, of course.

20 MR SHERLEY: You just tell them not to operate the October weekend and every weekend - - -

MR SOUTHORN: That weekend to start.

30 DR COAKES: And, as you know, I think, Neil, on there there are other options around repurposing the building, that's just a discussion, I guess, that will be important in that - development of that strategy as Richard was saying so, yes. O.K. Thank you. That's been great. I guess, just moving to the VPA, we did note in the submissions report that the Applicant has identified, I think, through their Social Impact Assessment a number of local initiatives that they felt were useful to support, I think there were about eight initiatives, you know, which included roadside weed spraying, contribution to the RFS, Rotary and other awareness programs. I'm just wondered did you have a comment on that? I think that was intended to be considered as part of the VPA but just interested in your view on those initiatives that have been noted.

40 MR SOUTHORN: So I'll have to confess that I might've had some influence over there - over there because I, at one stage, held a view that there would be greater value in any business contributing to community by building the capacity of the community rather than a token gift to do up something and I think some of that conversation of many, many months ago might've been reflected in their ambit. There's perhaps a reality check required on some of that.

They might be nice things to think about but how do you actually manage the income and expenditure side of it? How do you measure the outcome? But if even some of that flavour has filtered down, that it's not just a walk in, here's a few thousand bucks and walk out again but rather it's a genuine attempt to work with the community and build out capacity but particularly if it's in renewables, the trend industries I would've thought that was a good thing. Others might have a different view, particularly those

who have to account for it and account not just financially but to the political side of those - those relationships.

DR COAKES: O.K.

MR SHERLEY: Neil, this is the VPA for the \$18,000 a year, is it, that we're talking about?

MR SOUTHORN: Yes. So - - -

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MR SHERLEY: I was just going to say we have a similar type arrangement with one of the other renewable energy locations to the north of the Council area and what we tended to do with that is operate it that because the dollars aren't huge and, I mean, there may be push for a community committee but for \$18,000 a year you just overboard with administration to allocate those funds. What we've tended to do is have - depending on whether it's to be renewables or for infrastructure, operate a committee of the Mayor, the General Manager and the relevant Director of the area concerned and then we work with the community as to how those funds would be allocated and we report as to how they're spent each year.

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That's the sort of thing that personally I would rather that was implemented. If there's discussions about setting up a committee that includes a group of people, yes, their input but then you're not - for 18,000 it's just going to - you're going to spend more in the administration and also given the nature of our Council area I would see that it should be - funds can be utilised in the Council region even if the scope was that relayed it to the rural areas rather than the city area because that gives us an opportunity as potentially more of these types of developments occur in our region even though we're not a REZ but we're still getting a lot of expressions of interest to put of these in the Bathurst area that then allows us to pool those funds together to

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DR COAKES: Yes.

MR PEARSON: Yes.

DR COAKES: Thanks, David. Any further comments from Richard or Chris on the VPA?

MR WILSON: No, thanks.

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MR PEARSON: No, not really on the VPA. Not at this point, thank you.

DR COAKES: O.K. O.K. So, I guess, the last one that I just wanted to raise was just around the issue around insurability which we're hearing in - obviously noted in submissions. Is that something you're hearing from a Council perspective as well in relation to solar farm development? Just - again just interested in your - in your comment or perspective.

MR SOUTHORN: Insurability, that was the topic?

DR COAKES: Yes.

MR SOUTHORN: We have heard that said by objectors to the project. How far will I go, Richard? I have both a professional and a personal view on this. I'm a rural landholder myself. I don't think there's much weight can be placed on that claim. There's no evidence that - there's no substantial evidence that it's a valid claim. There's plenty of solar farms in operation where people are conducting their business next door unaffected by insurability and the risk, if I can summarise it from the objector's perspective, which again is probably unfair because they have - that's my perspective influencing it - is that if I was farming next door, and they use grain farming as an example, there's a known and quantifiable risk that a fire is possible because of machine operations, they're in failure, for example, exhaust pipe exposure.

They are known and quantifiable risks and if you start a fire that way and the weather conditions are such that it's going to impact on your neighbours you should not be operating the machinery. So it's a manageable risk. It's also an insurable risk that I don't believe is affected by there being a solar farm next door and my belief is, and again this is more of an opinion rather than strict evidence, that if the use of the land next door to me growing grain was a high-value capital investment that was agriculturally-related which could be livestock, could be greenhouses, could be a farm processing facility, would not the same risk apply to those uses next door than it would be a solar farm?

I've heard it said that the risk of fire the other way is a possibility and that's the case, particularly if batteries are to be located but my understanding and my belief is that the - that those are also manageable risks which shouldn't impact on the insurability of the enjoyment of land on the neighbours.

DR COAKES: Thank you.

MR SOUTHORN: I might've stuck my neck out a bit there by expressing a bit too much or a personal opinion than a Council officer position so I'd be - I'd welcome any - any other - - -

MR WILSON: Neil, all I can say is that will be countered when we have the public meeting so - - -

MR SOUTHORN: Yes.

MR WILSON: That's O.K. We appreciate your views.

DR COAKES: Yes. Yes. O.K. Any further questions, Richard and Chris?

MR WILSON: I just have one last question. Go, Richard.

MR PEARSON: No, no, you go, I'll finish up, yes.

MR WILSON: Just in terms of - there's a fair bit of debate in the processing of this application around the land classification. We understand it's now been determined that there is some class 3 land on site, like 22 percent of the site's classed as 3 land. I just want to put that in context in terms of class - or I'm trying to put that in context of class 3 land throughout Bathurst Regional Council and I understand that you're - so are you across like the land classification in your Council area in terms of, you know, what - how much class 3 land there might be and what percentage this might be - it's as long shot, I'm sorry.

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I'm just wondering, you know. If it was - if this 22 percent was 50 percent class 3 land Bathurst Regional Council would have a problem but obviously it's - I'm assuming but I haven't got any figures to back it up because it's quite a small proportion on what class 3 land is in the area, in the region.

MR SOUTHORN: I don't have an exact figure, do you have any data on distribution of the different land classes, Richard?

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MR DENYER: It possibly exists in some of the old strategies that we might have tradition - traditionally in Bathurst we don't have a lot of irrigatable agricultural land, irrigatable agricultural lands down along Macquarie River so that area is very, very important and then in the traditional Bathurst Valley, if you like, is where you'll probably find your class 3 in 2 and 3 class land which is effectively if you come down Browns and out you open up into the traditional Bathurst Plains and it's sort of that bowl, if you like, which sort of goes out to the rocks and sort of goes out to Wattle Flat and those sort of areas.

MR WILSON: And is there cropping out there, Richard, is there? Is there - - -

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MR DENYER: Beg yours?

MR WILSON: A bit of cropping out there or not?

MR DENYER: Yeah, look, I think it would be more cropping effectively and then - and your grazing country and that sort of thing. So is it 20 percent - - -

MR WILSON: That's O.K. I can find that out.

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MR DENYER: Yeah. Look, certainly nothing - - -

MR WILSON: An unfair question, sorry.

MR DENYER: Yeah, certainly nothing of that sort of level of impact.

MR WILSON: O.K.

MR SOUTHORN: And maybe I'll add again a perspective that goes beyond the Bathurst environs but started with the Bathurst landscape. So there isn't a lot of class

1, 2 and 3 land in the Bathurst LGA. It's dominated by the river floodplain, the Bathurst locality which is not able to be developed because it floods. That's where the productivity - productive lands are, most productive lands and traditionally there's been horticulture as well as lucerne grown. There is some class 3 land and there is some history of cropping. I'm going to suggest that it's not a huge contribution to the local economy, grazing of livestock probably more so. Particularly when you compare it to the wheat sheep areas not that far further west of Bathurst. So it may well be consuming a proportion of a valuable limited set of class 3 lands but does that, but does it's ability to grow a bit of wheat may be a bit of canola and run some lambs – is that a higher and better use than renewable energy.

MR WILSON: I get the point.

MR SOUTHORN: And is that not the decision of the land owner.

MR PEARSON: And also I think the potential to continue some level of agriculture use on the side in tandem with solar farming, albeit at a reduced intensity and not cropping but some continued grazing use, I think that's possible. I note the Applicant appears open to doing that so I think it is good to be able to do a dual use of the land, not just, not just one thing or the other. The kind of final question I had I suppose was, in terms of conditions, other than the vegetation and may be the waste conditions you were generally happy with the consent. Were you proposing to make another submission based on the Department's assessment report and recommended consent or will you address that at the public meeting or can we just accept the fact that you're largely happy with the consent other than may be those two areas for potential tightening that we've discussed.

MR SOUTHORN: I was largely satisfied Richard, you went through it in a bit more detail than me too.

MR DENYER: No, I think everything that you've said at the beginning of the assessment ticks off all those big issues that were raised at a broader level. So, there's nothing particularly that we would add or that is glaring at us that is not there I did just pick up a figure in our rural strategy back to Richard's question that says only 24% of council area comprises of prime crop and pastoral land so class 2 and 3 lands. That's from the shire local environmental studies so, that's in our broader rural area so.

MR WILSON: Thanks.

DR COAKES: Thank you. Well that's been a very informative meeting we do thank you for your time. Obviously any further input on the draft conditions post this meeting we would welcome if you would like to. We do note, I think, your Deputy Mayor Ben Fry was unable to join us so again we would also welcome Council's participation in the public meeting next week if that's something that you think you would like to do. So thank you very much. Thank you, Richard, Neil, David and Councillor Jennings, I think you might've also been on the call as well or listening and



so, yes, thank you and, I guess, if there's no further question from Chris or Richard we'll - - -

MR PEARSON: No.

DR COAKES: - - - call the meeting closed. Really appreciate your time.

MEETING CONCLUDED