



TRANSCRIPT OF MEETING

RE: HOMEBUSH BATTERY ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEM (SSD-77443244)

COUNCIL MEETING

PANEL:	ANDREW MILLS (Chair) DUNCAN MARSHALL
OFFICE OF THE IPC:	KENDALL CLYDSDALE ISAAC CLAYTON
STRATHFIELD COUNCIL:	PAUL REID RITA VELLA
LOCATION:	ZOOM VIDEOCONFERENCE
DATE & TIME:	11:00AM – 11:45PM FRIDAY, 10 JULY 2026

<THE MEETING COMMENCED

MR ANDREW MILLS: Hello, Rita. Hello, Paul.

5 **MR PAUL REID:** Morning.

MS RITA VELLA: Morning.

10 **MR MILLS:** Thank you for being with us. Before we begin, I'd like to acknowledge that I'm speaking from Gadigal land and I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of all the lands from which we've meeting virtually, and pay my respects to their Elders past and present.

15 So, welcome to the meeting today to discuss the Homebush Battery Energy Storage System state significant development application currently before the Commission for determination. The Applicant, Ausgrid, is proposing to develop the Homebush Battery Energy Storage System, a 200 megawatt/431 megawatt-hour battery and associated infrastructure, approximately 13 kilometres west of the Sydney CBD in the Strathfield LGA.

20 My name is Andrew Mills, and I am the Chair of the Independent Planning Commission and of this Commission Panel, and I'm joined by my fellow commissioner, Duncan Marshall. We're also joined by Kendall Clydsdale and Isaac Clayton from the office of the Independent Planning Commission.

25 In the interests of openness and transparency and to ensure the full capture of the 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.

30 It is important for the commissioners to ask questions of attendees and to clarify issues whenever it's considered appropriate. If you are asked a question and are not in a position to answer, you may take the question on notice. However, following the meeting, the Commission will advise you in writing of any questions taken on notice that the Panel considers a formal response. Any subsequent response or information provided to the Commission will then be published on our website.

35 I request that all participants here today introduce themselves before speaking for the first time, and for all members to ensure that they do not speak over the top of each other, to ensure accuracy of the transcript.

40 We'll get underway. Perhaps, Rita and Paul, if you don't mind, for the record, just simply recording your names and positions, please.

45 **MR REID:** Sure. I am Paul Reid, Director of Planning and Environment at Strathfield Council.

MS VELLA: Ah, Rita Vella, I'm the Manager, Planning and Place at Strathfield Council.

5 **MR MILLS:** Thank you both. We obviously have, as you're aware, the Assessment Report and draft conditions that have been prepared by the Department for our consideration. But I wanted to, in this meeting as much as possible, just hone-in on the issues that have been concerned to Council throughout the process. And in particular, perhaps as representatives of your local citizens, issues that are coming from local residents.

10 **MR REID:** Thank you. I think in, and Rita will obviously jump in anytime she feels fit, generally the Department have definitely responded to a lot of our feedback, which has been positive. I think we have two remaining sort of issues around the boundary fence and what that potentially looks like and how that presents, and then the landscaping treatment around that boundary fence.

15 And I think when we were all on site last week, well, a couple of days back, we did sort of briefly talk about that and I think the Energy Australia representative provided some feedback. I don't know if Rita wants to add anything.

20 **MS VELLA:** Ah, no, I think that sums it up. But yes, in terms of the conditions, Commissioner, we have gone back to them and advised that we would like to see more detail around those two issues. So, the boundary fencing and the landscaping that they've provided, essentially to try and provide more canopy – that was one of the things we ... And we understand that in terms of the nature of the application, but where they can provide additional planting, we would like to see that, and we would like to see that as advanced planting.

25 **MR MILLS:** Advanced planting, okay. Thank you. Just in terms of tree planting, we understood from the Applicant that there was to be some offset tree planting in a different location within the LGA.

30 **MS VELLA:** I think that was previously discussed, although we haven't determined where that additional tree planting would be.

35 **MR MILLS:** Okay. Is that – do you see that as something that Council would be directing more so than, or would it be something to be negotiated?

40 **MS VELLA:** I think, yes, I think we're at the point where we need to be negotiating that outcome. And we would expect the Applicant, because we understand that it's unlikely that they could probably get the amount of tree planting on the site that we would require, just because of the nature of that type of facility. It would probably be more working with Council's Tree Officer to determine, one, the location and, two, the type of planting that we would require.

45 **MR MILLS:** Right. Yes. Okay. And the boundary fence?

MS VELLA: That was essentially around the – we weren't provided with any detail as to what that fence would look like in terms of materials and finishes, and I think that

was something the Commission raised out on the site inspection. So, yes, we haven't been able to get any further information from Ausgrid or the Department in terms of what that finish is going to be for that boundary fencing, and what the visual impact from DFO would look like. So, I think they talked about on site landscaping, and we would support the perimeter of the fence being heavily landscaped. And I think Council would also support public art being incorporated into that fencing if it was visible from, say, the DFO building. Because really there's nowhere else that we're concerned about in terms of visual impact. But if in the future the DFO site were to be redeveloped, then we would want to ensure that any visual impact from that boundary fence was addressed as part of this application.

MR DUNCAN MARSHALL: Can I just clarify – we're talking about boundary fencing, but I actually think we might be talking about the noise wall rather than – because there appears to be a fence in addition to that on the perimeter. So, can I just clarify, is it one, the other, or both?

MS VELLA: It's essentially the noise wall which we consider would act as a boundary fence to part of that site.

MR MARSHALL: Mm.

MR MILLS: Okay. We have seen certain renderings of what might be proposed. Has that been something you've seen as well?

MS VELLA: Not that I'm aware of, Commissioner, no.

MR KENDALL CLYDSDALE: Chair, I can share that rendering, if you wish?

MR MILLS: Yes, I think that might be helpful. Thanks, Kendall. So, this is what we understand it's going to look like in terms of trying to get colours that blend in or camouflage might be one way of putting it.

MR CLYDSDALE: And I'll just note that (excuse me), obviously the final landscaping is not part of this rendering as well. But this is the indicative view from the DFO car park, the rooftop car park.

MR MARSHALL: But just to note that our current understanding is that the landscaping against the noise wall would only be as much as a metre high, wouldn't be much higher than that it seems. And that's an 8-metre wall.

MS VELLA: So, yes, we would still, I mean, we would have concern with the visual impact of that fence. In our previous correspondence to the Department and the Applicant, we had advised that we wanted some softening of the noise wall fronting back on – when viewed from, say, the DFO site. Yes, I was under the impression that the landscaping was more significant in terms of screening.

MR MILLS: No, that's not the way it's been put to us. But what has been put to us is that they are still in discussions in relation to what artwork might also go on that wall.

And there were discussions with the local Aboriginal community, as I understood it. Have I got that right, Kendall?

MR CLYDSDALE: That's correct, Chair. Yes.

MR MARSHALL: Can I just clarify. You mentioned redevelopment of the DFO site as a possibility and impacts on some future development of the DFO site. Does Council have an idea about what redevelopment might result in?

MS VELLA: At this stage, no, but there have been discussions in the past with the owners of that site. We haven't had any recent discussions with them, but we are seeing that some of these sites are looking to redevelop, and because of the proximity of Sydney Olympic Park and also Sydney Markets, like, we've currently got an accelerated rezoning for Sydney Markets where they're looking at turning part of that site into residential.

But there's nothing currently in the system, and we're not aware of them having any discussions with the Department of Planning to, say, accelerate a rezoning of that site. But in terms of it being a key site in our LGA, it's probably – it is a significant site for us.

MR MILLS: Are you thinking of a retail – sorry, housing topped retail which seems to be a trend ...

MS VELLA: Potentially.

MR MILLS: Yes, okay. All right. Okay. So, the other issue, I think, that may have been mentioned in passing was the Voluntary Planning Agreement that you are in negotiations with the Applicant for. You're happy where they're headed but as I understand it you would like to see that that's reflected in the conditions. Is that how I understand it?

MS VELLA: Correct. So, we have ... Ausgrid provided Council with a letter of offer, and we have been working closely with Ausgrid to refine that letter of offer. Our initial discussions with both Ausgrid and the Department of Planning, we were looking at that as being a Voluntary Planning Agreement.

We weren't sure how that was going to work in terms of the legislative process, but we had reviewed some previous consents that were issued for similar facilities and we were made aware that there was conditions included, or a condition included, tying the letter of offer into the consent. So, that was our concern, is how do we tie the letter of offer in if there isn't a condition of consent within the approval or the determination of this application.

MR MILLS: Okay. Well, we can take that on notice, that's fine, and we'll give consideration to that. Have you otherwise looked at the Department's Assessment Report and the conditions of consent?

MS VELLA: Yes, we've reviewed the conditions of consent or the draft conditions, and we're generally happy with those.

MR MILLS: Okay, thank you. Duncan?

MS VELLA: Other than the issue of the VPA.

MR MILLS: Yes, okay.

MR MARSHALL: I mean, I notice that you said you hadn't necessarily looked at the Assessment Report in detail, I think, but preferencing the conditions. But I was looking at Table 4 in the Assessment Report on page 12, and it sort of reflects a few issues that were raised. But I wondered, I mean, we've approached this question from another angle, but it seemed to me that there might have been outstanding matters that weren't fully resolved to Council's satisfaction in there. I mean, it doesn't say that, it sort of leaves them open. But the only one that you're pointing to is the VPA, but I just wanted to test that with you.

MS VELLA: The other issues were around the landscaping and the noise wall. And I think the draft conditions that were included reflect that they have now been sufficiently addressed. For us, the only outstanding issue is how is the letter of offer tied in if it's not a condition of consent, so that we can then progress to the – preparing the VPA.

MR MILLS: Okay, thank you.

MR CLYDSDALE: Chair, do you mind if I just ask a quick question?

MR MILLS: Please.

MR CLYDSDALE: Just on the VPA (excuse me), Rita, the letter of offer that came through to the Commission via email, that's the most recent letter of offer that if the Panel were of a mind to include it, that's what you would like to see referenced?

MS VELLA: Correct.

MR CLYDSDALE: Okay, great, thank you.

MR MARSHALL: And what would you like the condition to say if we were heading down that path?

MS VELLA: The condition ... And there was an example of Deniliquin where a similar approval was granted. So, it just needs to say that the Applicant and Council progress in pursuing the letter of offer via a Voluntary Planning Agreement, so words to that effect.

MR MARSHALL: Okay. And we don't need to define a minimum in that space, a sort of a low bar from which further things might happen, you're not seeking that?

MR MILLS: [Cross-talk 00:16:19] in accordance with the letter, don't we?

MR CLYDSDALE: Yes.

5 **MS VELLA:** Yes.

MR CLYDSDALE: There's some guidelines there that we'll adhere to with that, yes.

10 **MR MARSHALL:** Yes, yes.

MS VELLA: Because it was a monetary figure that they're offering and we're looking at negotiating delivery of facilities and other works, but we need ... We need somehow that letter of offer and the monetary figure included in the consent, so that we can then trigger the next stage of that process.

15 **MR MILLS:** I think that we're sort of probably exhausted most of the things because you have been able to negotiate throughout the process with the Applicant and get satisfaction on a number of the things you have raised early on. But just what doesn't necessarily come through, while the Applicant has received submissions from the
20 public along the way, has Council received anything directly, any representations from citizens at all?

MS VELLA: No.

25 **MR REID:** No.

MS VELLA: Not that we're aware of, no.

30 **MR REID:** Commissioner, it's probably worth just noting, when Council developed a letter of sort of submissions back to the Applicant, those actually go through our council meeting process and those actually get endorsed by the Council for us to send through and they become a formal document of Council. That got up by exception, which means it was all voted for it, so we've had zero negative feedback on it.

35 **MR MILLS:** Terrific. Thank you. Duncan, do you have any other questions?

MR MARSHALL: I do, and it's with regard to the draft conditions. When we were talking about off-site planting, and I mean, there's an overlap here between native veg
40 offsets and just landscaping offsets, I suppose. But as I read the conditions at the moment, the draft conditions, there's nothing in here which is reflecting on consultation with Council about potential offset landscape plantings of mature trees in other locations, leaving aside the native veg dimensions. I'm just wondering whether you have any comments on that point?

45 **MS VELLA:** No. We had raised it in one of our submissions. We actually, I think the issue around that was we need the Department to confirm what the trigger would be in terms of offsets, because we're not looking at it under any legislation. So, it was whether or not they could actually condition that to allow us to offset planting on another site.

MR MARSHALL: Mm. So, the landscape planting would be channelled into the biodiversity offsets space, essentially, and then whether the Council can claims some offsets with it?

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MS VELLA: Yes, claim that through, yes.

MR MARSHALL: Within its estate. Okay. That's all from me, Andrew.

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MR MILLS: All right, thank you. I have no other questions either. So, we've give you a little bit of time back in your day, unless there's some final comments that Paul or Rita you would like to make.

MR REID: No, I think I'm good. Rita?

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MS VELLA: None from me, thank you.

MR MILLS: Thank you very much for your time then, much appreciated.

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MR REID: Thank you, Commissioner. Thank you, everybody.

MS VELLA: Thank you.

MR MARSHALL: Thank you.

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MS VELLA: Thank you.

>THE MEETING CONCLUDED