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TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

TRANSCRIPT IN CONFIDENCE

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INDEPENDENT PLANNING COMMISSION

MEETING WITH APPLICANT

RE: WALLA WALLA SOLAR

PANEL: **ANDREW HUTTON**
ZADA LIPMAN

ASSISTING PANEL: **STEPHEN BARRY**

APPLICANT: **CLIONA GORMLEY**
TAREK ALSAMPAILE
MARK LOVE
SARAH STENT
BRIDGETTE POULTON

LOCATION: **IPC OFFICES**
LEVEL 3, 201 ELIZABETH STREET
SYDNEY, NEW SOUTH WALES

DATE: **10.02 AM, TUESDAY, 27 OCTOBER 2020**

MR HUTTON: So good morning and welcome to the meeting today. Before we begin I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging. Welcome to the meeting today for the Walla Walla Solar Farm project. FRV Services Australia
5 Proprietary Limited propose to develop a 300 megawatt solar farm approximately five kilometres northeast of the Walla Walla – of Walla Walla in the Riverina region of New South Wales. My name is Andrew Hutton. I'm the chair of this Commission panel and I'm joined by my fellow commissioner, Professor Zada Lipman. We're also joined by Stephen Barry from the Office of the Independent
10 Planning Commission. Steve has got his camera off, but he's on the call. In the interests of openness and transparency and to ensure the full capture of all information today's meeting will be recorded and a full transcript will be produced and made available on the Commission's website.

15 This meeting is just one part of the Commission's considerations of this matter and will form one of several sources of information upon which the Commission will base its determination. It is important for the Commission to ask questions of attendees and to clarify issues wherever it is considered appropriate and if you're
20 asked a question and not in a position to answer, please do feel free to take the question on notice and provide any additional information in writing which we will also put up onto our Commission website. I just want to remind everybody that before you speak if could just introduce yourselves for the first time. That's just so that we can catch that on Auscript, but also just be aware of who's talking and also
25 for all members to ensure that we don't speak over each other and we enable our – each person to make their point, to enable accuracy of the transcript.

Okay. We'll now begin. What I might do is, if you don't mind, just get your team to introduce yourselves and your role. That'll serve not only to assist Auscript, but help us as commissioners understand your role in the project. So, Mark, you're in the top
30 right-hand corner of my screen so I'll pick you to go first and then if we could just move around your team, that'd be appreciated.

MR M. LOVE: Thank you. Good morning. Mark Love from FRV. I'm a senior development manager of the development project on the planning community
35 and design side.

MR HUTTON: Okay. Thank you, Mark. Sarah.

40 MS S. STENT: Yes. Hello. I'm Sarah Stent. So my role with this project has been to assist with community and stakeholder engagement and ensuring the information that comes from that process is fed into the concept and planning process.

MR HUTTON: Thank you, Sarah. Tarek.

MR T. ALSAMPAILE: Hello Andrew and everyone, this is Tarek Alsampaile. I'm the head of project development for FRV responsible for the planning and the connection activities for FRV Australia.

5 MR HUTTON: Thank you. Welcome. Bridgette.

MS B. POULTON: Yes, hi. I'm Bridgette Poulton, environmental planner with NGH. I assisted FRV in preparing the EIS and the other approvals documentation.

10 MR HUTTON: And is it Cliona? Is that correct pronunciation?

MS C. GORMLEY: Yes. Hi, it's Cliona Gormley here. So I'm the development manager for the Walla Walla Solar Farm and have been involved in the planning, community and design of the proposal.

15 MR HUTTON: Okay. Thank you, everybody. Appreciate it. What we might do is I've – we've sent through an agenda with just some items that we were sort of keen to have a discussion about. Are you – have been prepared a presentation of any type that you'd like to give to us? Is that what you would like to do or – okay. That's a
20 yes.

MS GORMLEY: Yes. So, yes, we have a short presentation that we're happy to present at the beginning and then - - -

25 MR HUTTON: Okay.

MS GORMLEY: - - - follow with any questions and answers.

MR HUTTON: Yes, I think that that's appropriate. If you wouldn't mind just
30 sharing screen and doing that. What we might do also if you're okay with this is if we want to – are able to ask questions as you move through the presentation just to clarify points and then we'll leave, I guess, the bulk of the questions at the end. But we can – if we do need to pick up some matters as we move through it, you're okay with us interjecting and asking those questions?

35 MS GORMLEY: Yes. No problem. Jump in at any time. Andrew, I've just tried to share there and it says the host needs to just enable.

MR HUTTON: Okay. So I'll just defer back to Steve.

40 MR BARRY: I'll sort that out. Wait a second.

MR HUTTON: Thank you.

45 MR BARRY: You should be fine now, I think.

MS GORMLEY: Can everybody see?

MR HUTTON: Yes. I can see that. Thanks, Cliona. That's appreciated.

MS GORMLEY: No problem. So, yes, we're all going to be involved in the presentation. So Tarek's going to lead us for the first few slides and then we'll make
5 our way through the – the rest of the presentation.

MR HUTTON: Great. Thank you.

MR ALSAMPAILE: Yes. Thank you. So just a brief introduction on – on FRV
10 and FRV, we're currently developing the Walla Walla Solar Farm. Our model is a long-term ownership model. We start from early stages of development. We finance the project, we construct it, then we operate it and we perform the asset management as well on the long run. Currently FRV has over two gigs of – two gigawatts of solar and other renewable energy developments in Australia. This is going to be our
15 largest yet, the third project in New South Wales. We've recently commissioned the Goonumbla Solar Farm in New South Wales. That was approximately 100 megawatt peak and as well we are constructing the Sebastopol Solar Farm and – in New South Wales as well. That's about 115 megawatt peak and in 2015 we also commissioned the Moree Solar Farm which was approximately a 17 megawatt peak.

20 This map shows our plans that are under construction and fully developed. So we already have seven of those. I think it's worth to note that FRV came to Australia in 2010. It was the first international renewable energy developer to land in Australia and we had the opportunity to develop and connect the first renewable energy asset
25 to be connected in Australia on a utility scale and that was the Royalla Solar Farm in ACT, a size of 24 megawatt peak. Obviously, since then the technology has evolved a lot not only in Australia but also worldwide and the sizes are becoming larger, you know, in helping them transition from all the decarbonisation and – and the conventional coal and gas powerplants

30 MS GORMLEY: and so to provide everyone with some context, after Walla Walla Solar Farm the proposal is located approximately 35 kilometres north of Albury and is off the main Olympic Highway and is part of the Greater Hume Shire Council. The project is 605 hectares and of which only 421 hectares is proposed to
35 be developed. The land is privately owned and is across two landholders. The site is largely flat, cleared and predominantly used for grazing along with some cropping. The connection would be via the existing 330kV transmission line which located along the west of the project site. We anticipate a 30-year lifespan with an estimated 399 million capital investment. So FRV actually acquired this project from Bison
40 Energy in July 2019.

It was imperative for FRV to complete our own due diligence on the project and, in particular, our own community engagement to understanding the needs and the concerns of the neighbours and the other stakeholders and in response to this
45 feedback we received quite significant changes have been made to the design as a result. So from that we submitted the EIS to the department in September 2019. The public exhibition occurred in November 2019 and then following a review of the

submissions. FRV implemented further changes to the design and then the department made their final assessment and recommendation for approval in October 2020 so here we are today.

5 MR HUTTON: Quick question from me there.

MS GORMLEY: Yes.

10 MR HUTTON: When you acquired the project, how far along the EIS preparation public consultation process did the previous owners have the project? And I assume they were issues shares and you came in - - -

MS GORMLEY: Yes.

15 MR HUTTON: - - - sort of part the way through.

20 MS GORMLEY: So – yes. So the EIS process had significantly been progressed. So there was the design in place and the majority of the survey work already completed, but we kind of put the project on hold when we came onboard so that we could complete our own due diligence and get on the ground to speak to all the stakeholders involved in the project. So from that we noted we noted that for our standard of project a lot of changes had to be made and they were implemented to the EIS then being submitted.

25 MR HUTTON: Okay. Thank you.

30 MS GORMLEY: Okay. So this is the – illustrated is the design which has been recommended for approval. So I just think it would be beneficial to kind of go through some of the main concerns that the community and stakeholders had and how then this design has been changed. So I do have a table with kind of the main points and then how this has impacted the community, but I'll just use the design as a visual and I wonder if I can – let's see. Okay.

35 MR HUTTON: I can see the mouse pointer if that's – there we go. You've got the - - -

MS GORMLEY: There we go.

40 MR HUTTON: Yes.

45 MS GORMLEY: Okay. So from personally working on these types of projects I always find it really beneficial to kind of feel like as if I live in this area and what would be helpful and a practical change on a day-to-day level. So first of all one of the main things that we looked at was access and from talking to the neighbours, this was a main concern when we entered the project, as originally there was actually three main access points proposed for this proposal. So there was one here, one here and one right outside the res – R1 receptor. So obviously this would have caused

unnecessary traffic and dust and noise travelling along Benambra Road for these receptors. So what FRV did was close these and now we only have one main entrance point. So all traffic will come up off the Olympic Highway along Benambra Road and enter the project site at the first possible opportunity. So – and
5 then to get from the east side to the west side of the project there will just be two small access points on Schneiders Road, but all traffic will enter from this main access point.

10 MR HUTTON: So the traffic going to the western edge of the project will go through that point or do they enter that through Schneiders Road?

MS GORMLEY: So, no, they would all have to enter through - - -

15 MR HUTTON: Okay.

MS GORMLEY: - - - the main access point here in Benambra Road and then travel
- - -

20 MR HUTTON: Yes.

MS GORMLEY: - - - through the project site and then just across and then, of course, this then stops any traffic travelling up along this Benambra Road and, like, in front of these receptors.

25 MR HUTTON: Okay.

MS GORMLEY: Okay. And so then instead this means that this access point will be over 1.4 kilometres away from the nearest dwelling. So – and in this point as well, we also relocated the operations and maintenance buildings as they were
30 originally proposed to be over by the substation. So thinking of the long-term impact for these residences, we have relocated it so that it would be over by the main entrance as well. So that means that even across the 30 years of the project there's no requirement for construction or operation vehicles to be travelling up along the Benambra Road.

35 MR HUTTON: How will cross the creek line there to get across to the other side? Are you building some sort of permanent crossing or - - -

40 MS GORMLEY: Yes. So there is crossings already in place across. So it would be an enhancement of a crossing that's already existing.

MR HUTTON: Yes.

45 MS GORMLEY: Just along here. So the next major point that we found from the community was the protection of biodiversity. So we worked really closely with the local Holbrook Landcare and we developed a biodiversity enhancement strategy. So from this FRV made a number of amendments. So 15 out of the 17 farm dams which

are located onsite are now going to be retained. FRV have also committed to placing 120 nesting boxes throughout the site. We also will not have barbed wire on the top of the security fence and we also have made a conscious effort to implement tree planting in areas where we could connect to existing vegetation to create wildlife corridors. So, as you will see, the dark green is existing vegetation and the light green is then proposed vegetation by FRV. So we've been really conscious of looking at where this existing vegetation is and how we can connect. So this - - -

10 PROF LIPMAN: I just want to – sorry.

MS GORMLEY: Sorry.

15 PROF LIPMAN: You may be coming to this shortly, but I was just interested in the proposed subdivision in relation to biodiversity. There's 94.7 hectares of agricultural land proposed. Could you just point out where that is for me, please.

MS GORMLEY: Is that the setback for Orange Grove?

20 PROF LIPMAN: So - - -

MR HUTTON: I think it's the amendment that was made to remove the 94 hectares of farming – cropping land from the footprint – from the footprint.

25 MS GORMLEY: Yes. So this area here originally there was panels all proposed within this area as – but with – from the feedback from the department and the community as the Orange Grove Gardens is located to the southeast, it's now been setback. So the panels will be 1.8 kilometres from the Orange Grove Gardens. So this area will be retained for the agricultural purposes and the paddock trees that are existing will be retained. So this area is usually used for cropping and the farmer will continue to do so.

30 PROF LIPMAN: Yes. That was my next question was whether the paddock trees were to be retained on the property now.

35 MS GORMLEY: Yes, no. They will be retained.

PROF LIPMAN: Thank you.

40 MS GORMLEY: No problem probably at length over to just the visual screening then for those receptors. So there is three main receptors with dwellings within one kilometre of the legal boundary of this project. So R1, R2 and R5. So for these three main receptors, their main concern of this project is the visual impact. So for them we have provided 50 metre wide buffers. So, as you can see, they are implemented just along these areas, as I'm indicating and, again, that these will – the landscaping plans will be completed in consultation with the receptors and we have been utilising local Landcare groups as well to ensure that the species that we use will be effective for this area.

MS POULTON: Can I just add something, Cliona.

MS GORMLEY: Of course.

5 MS POULTON: As a consultant, it's pretty unusual to have a proponent who really
wants to add enhancement beyond what's required for offsets and things, but there
were three threatened species that were identified during the fauna surveys: the
squirrel glider, the brown treecreeper and the flame robin. In the landscaping plan
provisionally they're going to be utilising food source trees that would benefit those
10 species in particular and in – additionally, that connectivity is actually going to help
the squirrel gliders and things move within that locality. So there are some real
biodiversity benefits there.

MS GORMLEY: Thanks, Bridgette. And then we have also, just with that, to
15 protect the address of the surrounding agricultural FRV have implemented a strict
vehicle washdown for anyone visiting the sites including contractors or any visitors.
Another point that was really highlighted to us during all the consultation was fire
management. So consultation was carried out with the local RFS and as a result the
site will have a number of items in place. So there'll be the 10-metre asset protection
20 zone right around the perimeter of the project. We'll also include 60,000 litres of
non-potable water stored on the site purpose – like, specifically for firefighting. We
also have added multiple fire gates throughout the project as well and the RFS will
be invited for an induction to the project and the detailed fire management plan will
be done in consultation with them also.

25 So another – probably the last item that was raised was about how – what are the
benefits and financial benefits for the community themselves. So from that we took
that on board and we have been working really closely with the local council and we
now have in place a final form of a VPA which is offering 2.7 million to the local
30 community and that will be for the life of the project. Any other points anyone in
FRV want to raise just in case I've missed anything?

PROF LIPMAN: I just had a question in relation to – it's really a clarification. In
response to submissions you mention that R2 is 820 metres away from the array
35 whereas it actually – sorry – now, at stages has been 920, sorry, and is now being
referred to as 810. So have you actually gone closer to receiver number 2, R2?

MS GORMLEY: So from my recollection, R2, it's 820 metres to the legal
boundary. So that would be this point here and then, obviously, the panels would be
40 – I don't know offhand that exact measurement, but it was from my knowledge 820
metres to the legal boundary. So, as you can see from the map, then to the solar
array would be substantially more.

PROF LIPMAN: And the substation is about 820?
45

MS GORMLEY: So it was 820 to the legal boundary. So what I'm presuming that 900 metres is to the substation. But we can take that note and get the exact measurements for you.

5 PROF LIPMAN: I'd be interested in that because there's been a lot of contradictions because this question is supplied in relation to further information required pursuant the RtS and it was 920 distance from development footprint at that stage. It's now variously cited in the department's assessment report as being 800 to 920. So I'd just like to clarify what the accurate position is in relation to the
10 substation and the solar array

MS GORMLEY: No problem.

15 PROF LIPMAN: Thank you. And could you also please tell me what is the height of the substation building.

MS GORMLEY: So there's different component within the substation. Tarek, are you aware of probably the highest point or mark?

20 MR ALSAMPAILE: Yes. It's approximately 8, 8.5, the highest point of the substation. The majority of the structure is in the range of 4, four and a half metres.

PROF LIPMAN: Thank you.

25 MR HUTTON: Can I just a question in relation to the consultation process and methodology. So is someone able to sort of walk us through, I guess, the combination of methods used, whether there was face-to-face, community meetings and over what period that was undertaken prior to, I guess, the exhibition process.

30 MS GORMLEY: I have just popped the next slide and I'll let Sarah jump in.

MS STENT: Yes. Absolutely, Andrew. So as Cliona said at the start, FRV in assuming ownership of the project effectively stopped the clock. The purpose of that was for FRV to do its own due diligence into the project but also into the social
35 context, an understanding of who were the immediate neighbours and stakeholders, but also an understanding of this environment that in which we're proposing to build the project. The outcomes of doing that and running the engagement process that we did was to give residents, stakeholders sufficient time to be able to understand the project as it was proposed and to provide us with feedback that could then help to
40 inform the final concept design.

The view was that with that feedback we would be able to deliver an assessment ready development application. Something that included not just what is the project parameters, but how we'll be looking to mitigate what we had identified as legitimate
45 community and neighbour concerns. So the process that we used – and I think it's important to note too that it wasn't affected by COVID. So at the time that we were running the broadest elements of community consultation we could gather in large

groups and we could do face-to-face. We started with immediate neighbours. We had kitchen table meetings with those that were willing to meet face-to-face and that included all of the receptors within two kilometres and we kept most of our engagement with those stakeholders in face-to-face or on telephone following up only with email if required.

We then broadened out the engagement that Bison had done originally by incorporating a number of community groups. Those that we felt could help us build that image of what is the landscape in which we're looking to develop the project. So we talked with the Wall Walla Community Development Group. We spoke with Regional Development Australia. We met with the Gumlo Community Group that's doing restoration of a local swamp and all of that information was collected along the neighbours' feedback and concerns and was used to inform the concept development process. Where we moved to next was, perhaps, that broader community and we ran the two drop-in sessions. Bison had already done community drop-in sessions. This was an opportunity to talk about what we had made changes to immediately and where we were open to negotiating on further changes.

So the community information sessions were as you'd expect. We had information sheets. We had handouts. We made a presentation and we collected the names and numbers and addresses of people that wanted further information, setup meeting times and continued with the engagement. I think it's absolutely fair to acknowledge that there was a level of concern with this project and that concern was specific to the type of issues that Cliona raised, but it's also emotional and, as you'd understand, this is a proposal that looks to change the landscape in which people have lived for generations. It's also worth acknowledging too that they were coming to terms with a potential cumulative effect. So alongside Walla Walla there is a proposal for three other solar farms.

So that we understood that neighbours and stakeholders were looking at this not just what is the aspects of this project that will affect us, but how will all projects, if they go ahead, affect the neighbourhood. So that's the level of feedback that we looked to collect. It's what we looked to respond to and where possible we've put in place strategies through the design to mitigate some of those concerns.

MR HUTTON: Did that feed into the social economic assessment aspects as well, broadly? You know, the outcomes of the consultation drive some of the considerations around the socioeconomic piece and I'm specifically talking to those point around loss of or perceived loss of agricultural land and the impact that might have on stakeholders that work in the agricultural space and if you consider it cumulatively, there's 8200 hectares of solar farm projects proposed in the region that, presumably, will, you know, mean a change in land use, clearly, and a potential impact on ag-based employment opportunities.

MS STENT: Yes, yes. I'd have to say that sort of encapsulates what we hear from most stakeholders: that change to landscape and the impact on its conventional agricultural activities. So for me, this project has taken two streams. One in

explaining what are the merits of the project, what could be the potential impacts, but the second aspect of it was how it would be utilised as an agri-solar facility and that is a sort of a different conversation that we were having to have with stakeholders. That once constructed, once past that period of time when impacts are at their
5 greatest, the site would be returned to some form of agriculture and that the – the way we quantified that was through what the landowner would be expecting to do with the site once he was allowed to have access again after construction and his estimation was that he would largely be able to continue the grazing activities that he'd done with very little impact on productivity.

10

That in itself was how we were looking to explain the level of impact that this project proposed in the long term. That there would little in the way of long-term impact and, in fact, the project could be complementary to the activities that they were running on the other side of the fence.

15

MR HUTTON: Well, I note that, but is there any evidence – research evidence that supports the notion that the agricultural productivity will be the same? I mean, in a simplistic form you're putting a glass roof that follows the sun over the pasture. Are we to expect that you will have the same level of pasture growth, the same level of
20 lamb fattening and that sort of thing? Is that the expectation?

MS STENT: I don't think it's the exact expectation, but Cliona, you've had the discussions - - -

25 MS GORMLEY: Yes.

MS STENT: - - - with

MS GORMLEY: Yes. I think we can just jump, actually, to the next slide because I
30 think it covers quite a lot of - - -

MR HUTTON: Yes. Thank you.

MS GORMLEY: - - - what we're just discussing and I think Mark and Bridgette
35 have been heavily involved in this aspect as well. So we actually did a study to calculate what exactly is being implemented onto this land and it's noted that less than 15 per cent of the land is going to be utilised by the proposal meaning that 85 per cent of the land can still be utilised for agricultural purposes and as the land is already being predominantly used for grazing, this can still continue and it's been
40 showcased not only in Australia but across the world. That sheep grazing can occur alongside these projects. The grass grows underneath the panels as well and it's very much a project that can coexist with traditional agricultural purposes.

PROF LIPMAN: Could I just ask heat island effect from the solar panels and
45 you've quoted some of the studies as showing that it doesn't extend very far, 30 metres at most. Are those studies in comparable climatic conditions and could you just elaborate a little on those, please.

MS GORMLEY: Bridgette, would you take that one because - - -

MS POULTON: Yes. It's a - - -

5 MS GORMLEY: - - - in terms of the study for Victoria.

MS POULTON: Yes. It's a difficult one. There was that study in Victoria where the Victorian Planning Panel suggests that 30 metres was sufficient. So that's where that figure came from. There's been very little studies on the heat island effect in
10 Australia and it is very climate specific. Having been out to a number of solar farms, the circulation around the panels, particularly with the rotating panels is quite significant so the chance for heat to actually build up is low. I went out to a solar farm a few weeks ago when it was the warmer – the warmer weather and things were – you know, before we had this cool snap and putting your hands on the solar panels,
15 you could actually feel that there wasn't – that they weren't as hot as you might expect them to be. They were sort of like a lukewarm.

So – and then at the same time this particular solar farm the vegetation underneath the panels was really significant as well and, as you know, vegetation does have that
20 cooling effect as well. So, I mean, there isn't a lot of specific studies to absolutely rule out the fact that the heat island effect doesn't exist, but there's not a lot of evidence to suggest that it does either.

PROF LIPMAN: Thank you.
25

MR HUTTON: Okay. Cliona, keep going. I'm sure you're going to work through. I'm just keeping an eye on the clock. I want to leave a decent window of time at the end for some questions, please.

30 MS GORMLEY: Yes. No problem at all. Mark, have you any more points just on this land matter, especially with the soils and anything further to add?

MR LOVE: No, not really, Cliona. I think it's pretty clear and it's becoming very evident from existing solar farms that solar actually can benefit the land rather than
35 cause harm to the land by resting the pasture, grass on the existing that grass is growing right up to the uprights which actually Lilyvale Solar Farm and that's what all our studies and studies were based off, the fact that grass is growing right underneath the panels. The other interesting minor point is that not in our solar farm, but some with – further north have got a dew line which occurs which is
40 actually providing moisture for the land as well. So it's an emerging, I suppose, nationwide study that's beginning to show that more and more with agriculture.

MS POULTON: Can I just add to this, Mark, as well. There's another couple of issues. While we've looked at the land and soil capability mapping that's state – on
45 the portal state wide data that's available, the landholder has provided us with a history of the land use for this farm indicating that those – the majority of the development site hasn't been suitable for cropping. Also, there's two contractors

who wouldn't have necessarily benefited from the project if they'd lost their lease and things, but they've actually been offered more productive land that's a part of this farm and that's actually improved their opportunities to have those higher yields. They've written submissions in support of the project. So that's available amongst those submissions.

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10
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Additionally, this isn't an argument that's made very often, but in terms of the food security and the worry about future food security with the growing population of the world and things like that, solar farms do have a specific life cycle of 30 years. However, if the market changed or if there was an emergency, that land is still available to provide food if it was ever, you know, a life and death situation. It's not like other developments where, you know, that soil or that land availability is gone forever and, you know, a lot of – a lot has happened in the last 30 years and we don't know what's going to happen in the next 30 years. But, you know, these sorts of projects do keep our – as a nation our options open.

MR HUTTON:

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MS GORMLEY: And I think it's – sorry. I think it's important to note as well that the 95 hectares in the southeast corner that's now being retained was the area that was used for cropping by the landholder, the main area so – and that will now be retained as well so - - -

25
MR HUTTON:

PROF LIPMAN: the current site is that on which the array is to be placed is currently used for cropping.

30
MR HUTTON: Sorry, Zada, you'll have to ask that question again. I just broke up.

PROF LIPMAN: I was just asking the site where the array is going to be situated, is that currently used for cropping or just for grazing?

35
MS POULTON: Just bear with a second. I've got that information open.

MR LOVE:

40
MS POULTON: 35 per cent. That's taken from of the submissions from the contractors who have been utilising that land under contract from the landowner.

PROF LIPMAN: 35 per cent is used for cropping. Thank you.

45
MR HUTTON: Can I just change the questions slightly to talk a bit about this 30-year project life and then turn our mind to decommissioning of the facility. At the same time, I was keen to ask some questions around upgrades and the reason I mention decommissioning and upgrades is if you – when you're doing an upgrade, some new technology comes along and you're upgrading the facility, is it reasonable

to assume that'll be, effectively, a construction project again with the absence of the civils and the electrical but you'll be changing out panels, therefore, there'll be a large number of trucks coming to and from the site as part of the upgrade facility is part A. Part B, the same question around decommissioning.

5

In my mind, decommissioning is deconstruction. So it's the same amount of inputs, if you like, trucks, people to undo the construction or do the deconstruction and take it off the site. Is that an assumption that you use in your thinking around both the upgrades and also the deconstruction of the site?

10

MS STENT: Is this a Tarek question?

MR ALSAMPAILE: Yes. I'll take that one. First, on the first scale of the question, I've been involved in solar for the past 15 years and I can say that technology has evolved. The basis of the technology remains the same which is silicon. However, the efficiency of it throughout the years has increased significantly. I haven't seen yet in any part of the world any project to be upgraded so far and that's from the mid-2000s until today. Another note that confirms that is that the warranty of the manufacturers is given for 30 years already. So we know that this will operate under specific warranties for 30 years in the way that we expect it to be operating. So I don't expect any upgrade.

Another point to consider is that these projects are being project financed from a mix of equity and debt. The equity, of course, comes from FRV, the debt from several Australian banks, and during the tenor of the loan there is no possibility of doing any changes to the solar farm because it's already covered by some warranties the first few years given by the EPC contractor, then by the ONM contractor but, most importantly, over the lifetime of the project, the 30 years, it's already covered by the manufacturer. I hope that answered the first scale of the question.

30

MR HUTTON: Yes, it did. That's fine. You can talk to deconstruction and, in my mind, we're undoing everything that we do in construction and I'd be interested to get some feedback from the team around the assumptions that you would apply to decommissioning which I assume would include removal of all underground services and those sorts of things. I'm interested to understand a little bit about that as well.

35

MR ALSAMPAILE: Yes. So the current Act – of course, I can't speak what's going to happen 32 or 30 plus years from now, but I can that the current Act and according to all the kind of powerplants that are being constructed in Australia anything that is below the surface of the ground can remain. There is very limited cables – actually, three or four medium voltage cables that remain and they're buried under, I think, 600 millimetres and everything above the ground including the post will be removed. At the first glance it might sound like a very big job, but in the States there are a few plants that are being decommissioned that were pilot plants from the seventies and now they've been decommissioned and we've seen that the decommissioning period is equivalent, approximately, to one-third of the construction period.

45

So here if the actual construction takes approximately 12 months, the decommissioning should take around four months. It's harder to put things together because you have all the electrical installations rather than the moving things and, specifically, for the panels, they only come with a clip so their removal is done very
5 easy and it's been done manually. So two people, one clips from one side, the other clips from the other side and it's put in a pallet and then the same way the posts are being driven into the ground with a piling machine. In the same fashion they come out. So if we remove all the electrical works, that are the difficult parts of constructing any solar or wind farm, we're left only with what is called minor
10 mechanical works.

So I don't see it happening in 30, 32 years from now I don't see it being a big of – of a construction site. It's like bringing a wall down in a house. It takes a few days to take it up, but it takes only a few hours to bring it down.

15 MR HUTTON: But from a transport sense, the same amount of material will come off the site as what would have come on the site, albeit there's a waste product, presumably, rather than a – you know, elements to be built. So I think that's reasonable assumption. Yes.

20 MR ALSAMPAILE: Yes. That's correct.

PROF LIPMAN: Just on that, as a lot of the material is going to be left in the ground, you know, I notice that just

25 MS POULTON: Can I just – sorry, can I just - - -

PROF LIPMAN:

30 MS POULTON: - - - butt in there. I was going to wait for Tarek to finish. That would depend on the conditions of consent. Most of the recent solar farms that have been approved have required all underground infrastructure to be removed.

PROF LIPMAN: Can I just - - -

35 MS GORMLEY: And, yes, we have - - -

PROF LIPMAN: the current time.

40 MR HUTTON: Sorry, Zada, we missed your statement there

PROF LIPMAN: I said it wasn't in the – it's not in the conditions at the current time. That's why I'm asking the question.

45 MR HUTTON: Yes

PROF LIPMAN: And I'm just wondering if it's going to be returned to its previous condition and the land is to be used for cropping, would the underground material be any barrier to the planting and ploughing process?

5 MS GORMLEY: I would actually like to note that, yes, for majority of projects cables would remain, but we have actually committed within our EIS that the
underground cables will be removed for this project and that, obviously, is the
intention that the land area will be returned and restore to its original use subject to,
obviously, the – this is private land and the landowner will have the right, obviously,
10 to farm either grazing or cropping or how he so wishes.

PROF LIPMAN: Right. Thank you.

MR HUTTON: Right. Just got my eye on the clock. Just – the documentation talks
15 about 21 full-time equivalent jobs after construction. What are those roles and what
sort of activities would be undertaken during operation? Could you give us some
insight.

MS GORMLEY: Mark, would you mind just answering that one.
20

MR LOVE: Yes. Thanks for that. So, obviously, it's a very large site. It's very
busy. We have a permanent facility on the site and the construction compound
the operation centre. So you got people who are operating the site. There's people
that are maintaining the site if, for example, a panel or panels might break and need
25 replacing. You have people that have to clean that facility. You'd have to wash the
panels down maybe once or twice a year so there are facilities for that. There are
people that have to manage the grass and the state of the solar farm, then all the
electrical engineers who have to test – regularly test and inspect all the equipment.

30 Yes, it's a really – a very broad range of roles. You know, right from the sort of –
sort of part-time cleaning role right the way through to high level operational and
then on top of all of that we have what's called an asset management team. So the
asset has to be managed to ensure it's optimised and producing power as much as
possible so there's a separate asset management team as well that will be involved in
35 the project.

MR HUTTON: Yes. Okay. Again, one more question from me just in relation to
the offsetting arrangements under the revised BDAR. Have you given any thought to
40 what that might look like in terms of cash contribution versus a physical, you know,
offsetting arrangement? I'd be interested to understand what that might look like.

MS GORMLEY: Bridgette, are you happy to take that one?

MS POULTON: Yes, I am. We decided earlier in the project to pay into the offset
45 scheme. For this project we haven't ever discussed setting up stewardship sites.
There's a lot involved in that and it seems to be a little late in the day. So, I mean,
because the credits would need to be retired within, I don't know, two years of

construction or something, to have all those surveys and everything, to establish those stewardship type sites. That actually takes quite a long time because you need to do those surveys seasonally and that might take 12 months negotiations with landholders and there's a quite involved in it. So – yes – and - - -

5

MR HUTTON: That's fine. So paying into an offset scheme is the preferred approach.

10 MS POULTON: Yes. And, again, it's worth nothing that the clients are – the proponents are also voluntarily contributing to a lot of enhancement stuff to actually provide those biodiversity benefits at their own cost and any adverse impacts of it would be paid into the scheme.

15 MR HUTTON: Yes. Okay. Zada, do you have any remaining questions in your mind that you would like to ask the team?

20 PROF LIPMAN: Yes. Just one question. It's in relation to Orange Grove. I notice that after your amendment report that you moved the array back to 1800 metres. I'm just wondering if you have a montage that's an up-to-date montage of the impact on the premises.

25 MS GORMLEY: There isn't one for the 1.8 kilometres. There is one that was completed for – originally. So that could provide you, obviously, with a worst case scenario.

30 PROF LIPMAN: Yes. I've seen that one. I was just wondering. I – you know, normally when we go out on a site physically you have poles put up to give us an idea of what the impact is going to be on the receiver, but we understand it's not going to be possible in this case for some of the receivers and we were hoping that we could – well, at least I was hoping that we could get an idea of how significant the change would be.

35 MR LOVE: I think – I think we are, Bridgette, trying to get some kind of for you - - -

MS POULTON: Yes.

40 MS GORMLEY: The request was for the closest receptor, but if the IPC would like a sighting pole also from the 1.8 kilometres from the Orange Grove indicated as well, we are more than happy to put that in place if that's something that you would like.

45 MR HUTTON: If you're happy to do that, I think put it on the edge of the array at the closest point to the receptor, albeit 1.8 ks away at the four metres, I guess, if possible. That's – we've found that to be most helpful looking at other projects.

PROF LIPMAN: Yes. Very helpful. Thanks.

MS GORMLEY: Okay. No problem.

MR HUTTON: Yes. We've got about three minutes. Is there anything else, Cliona, that you'd like to – any other points you'd like to make in wrap-up? Just
5 mindful of the time, but you're welcome to – I know you probably haven't had a chance to get through all your slides. In actual fact, we would like you to send those slides to the office through Steve if you wouldn't mind and we'll make sure we – you know, we go through those in more detail, but if there's anything else you'd like to say, you're welcome to do that.

10 MS GORMLEY: No problem. Yes. No, we can send through the presentation. Just to note that, obviously, FRV have been involved with a number of projects within Australia and have been through this process and it is the case that we become the asset owners for the life of the project. So we very much want to become a part
15 of this community and we do know and have seen from previous projects the benefits that can be had by these proposals coming to these local and rural areas. So it's something that we – consultation will continue. If this project proceeds, it will occur not only now but also throughout construction and we hope to be part of this community for the long term.

20 MR HUTTON: Thank you, Cliona. Any other comments? Otherwise, I might take the - - -

MS POULTON: Yes.

25 MR HUTTON: - - - opportunity – sorry, Bridgette. Yes.

MS POULTON: Yes. I've got one, actually. I think it's worth noting that when
30 FRV took over the project they relocated the substation which was originally going to be up along that boundary near Schneiders Road and they undertook an impact assessment and they actually based it at its current location based on the topography and that's the location where it be would least visible to that receiver number 2.

PROF LIPMAN: I would look forward to seeing that at the site visit.

35 MR HUTTON: Yes, yes, and thank you for your communications with the office in terms of putting together a route for us and meeting points, etcetera, and we do look forward to catching up on Thursday onsite.

40 MS GORMLEY: Yes.

MR ALSAMPAILE: Thank you. We look forward to it.

45 MR HUTTON: Okay. Well, if there's no further questions, Zada, I might take the opportunity to thank you for your time this morning. Thank you for your presentation. As I said, if you can send that through, that'd be wonderful and we will

– we'll catch up with you again on Thursday as part of the formal site inspection and I'll formally close the meeting.

PROF LIPMAN: Thank you.

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[10.58 am]