



New South Wales Government
Independent Planning Commission

TRANSCRIPT OF MEETING

RE: THUNDERBOLT WIND FARM (SSD-10807896)

TAMWORTH REGIONAL COUNCIL MEETING

PANEL: PROF NEAL MENZIES AM (CHAIR)
DR BRONWYN EVANS AM
MS SUELLEN FITZGERALD

OFFICE OF THE IPC: CALLUM FIRTH
KYLIE DORSETT
STUART MORGAN

TAMWORTH REGI: CR RUSSELL WEBB (MAYOR)
CR MARK RODDA
CR PHIL BETTS
CR JUDY COATES
CR BROOKE SOUTHWELL
CR HELEN TICKLE
CR MARC SUTHERLAND
CR BEDE BURKE
GINA VEREKER
MURRAY RUSSELL
STEVE BRAKE
SAM LOBSEY
MITCH GILLOGLY
LISA RENNIE

LOCATION: NEMINGHA ROOM, LANDS BUILDING,
25 FITZROY STREET, TAMWORTH

DATE:

10:00AM – 11:00AM

TUESDAY, 12TH MARCH 2024

<THE MEETING COMMENCED

PROF MENZIES: All right. I've got a formal statement to read to kick us off and then an informal discussion following. So let me just get through the formal
5 statement. Before we begin, I'd like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet the Kamilaroi and Gomeroi peoples of the Kamilaroi nation, and I pay my respects to their Elders, past and present. Welcome to the meeting today to discuss the Thunderbolt Wind Farm case currently before the Commission for determination. The applicant, Neoen Australia Proprietary Limited, proposes to
10 develop a 192 megawatt wind farm located in the New England Renewable Energy Zone near Kentucky.

The proposed project involves development of up to 32 wind turbines with a maximum tip height of 260m, and associated ancillary infrastructure, including a
15 new substation and switching station required to connect the Transgrid's existing 330 kilovolt transmission line traversing the project site. My name is Neal Menzies. I'm the chair of the commission panel, and I'm joined by my fellow Commissioners, Bronwyn Evans and Suellen Fitzgerald. We're also joined by Callum Firth, Kylie Dorsett and Stuart Morgan from the Office of the Independent Planning
20 Commission. In the interest of openness and transparency, and to ensure full capture of information, today's meeting is being recorded and a complete transcript will be produced and made available on the Commission's website.

This meeting is one part of the Commission's consideration of this matter, and will
25 form one of several sources of information on which the Commission will base its determination. It's important for the Commissioners to ask questions of attendees and to clarify issues whenever it's considered appropriate. If you're asked a question and are not in a position to answer, please feel free to take the question on notice and provide any additional information in writing which will then put on our website. I
30 request that all members 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. So we may now begin.

Stuart's asked me one more thing, which is for you guys at the back, if you, you
35 know, want to engage in the discussion, if you could please come forward so that the recording captures your voice clearly so that we in the room will be able to hear you, but the recording won't do it. Okay. Russell, am I handing over to you?

CR WEBB: You can. First of all, we might do a very quick introduction. And we'll
40 start with Councillor Betts.

CR BETTS: Phil Betts, Councillor.

CR SOUTHWELL: Brooke Southwell, Councillor.
45

CR COATES: Judy Coates, Deputy Mayor.

CR WEBB: And myself was the Mayor. And you want to quickly run through all of the staff we've got here please. So we've -

5 MR BRAKE: So Steve Brake. I'm the Manager of Development Engineering.

MR LOBSEY: Sam Lobsey, the Manager of Development.

MS VEREKER: Gina Vereker. I'm the Director of Liveable Communities.

10 MS RENNIE: Lisa Rennie, Executive Assistant for Gina.

MR RUSSELL: Murray Russell, I'm the Manager for Transport Operations.

15 MR GILLOGLY: Mitch Gillogly, Team Leader of Strategic Planning.

PROF MENZIES: Thanks, guys.

20 CR WEBB: So, moving forward from where we sit. I guess my first comments are going to be about the VPAs. And we've got a position on that and we're sticking to that. And I think you guys are pretty well aware of what our position is. We're a part of that organisation of quorum, and we are pretty strong on our position with that. I am aware that Uralla has taken a different position, the Uralla Council, but that's their choice. Today in making comments and talking to you guys on suggesting that we hear from the staff, and then once the staff have made their presentation to the panel they may be some questions from us or some comments from some of the
25 Councillors. So we might start with the staff if that's okay with you?

PROF MENZIES: Perfect.

30 PROF MENZIES: Who would like to speak first?

MS VEREKER: Mister Mayor. I think it needs to be Steve our, as we had explained to the panel. So our biggest issue, other than the VPA, relates to the road matters. Steve.

35 MR BRAKE: Well, thank you for the opportunity to speak once again. I've already run through the issues from an engineering perspective, as we see them with this project. The first and possibly not an issue at all is related to any battery energy storage. I understand the description of this project is that there is no battery energy
40 storage. I find that surprising, but just on the basis that there might be, we would want to see some proper management of potential contaminants should there be a battery energy fire that suppressed by water. So that's fairly simple management stuff to introduce at the detail design stage if it's required. The second issue for us is one relatively easily managed I think, and that's proximity of wind turbines to our public
45 road network. In this case, we only have Green Valley Road that's in any proximity to the wind farm.

It's not being used for access which is good, but at least two of the turbines are quite close to Green Valley Road reservation. One of them is so close, potentially blades over hanging which would be unacceptable to us. There's a lot of research being done on that. The proponents have presented some of that research, which is
5 stochastic modelling, around the likelihood of people being in harm's way. A simple number that we would like to adopt for something as low key as Green Valley Road is to have nothing closer than 200m. Now, that number has come to my attention through my reading of some work that was presented by, I think it's the National
10 Commissioner for Energy Transmission in 2022. I'll clarify that for you. And he recommended 200m as an offset from anything that's relatively low key. So there's like a not a high likelihood of someone being in harm's way, but possible. I think we would adopt something like that as being reasonable for Green Valley Road, which is a low key unsealed road in our, in our total network. So a condition around that and probably in the suite of conditions around micro siting would be the appropriate
15 place to introduce that. So there's a capacity for the developers when they get onto site to micro site, their turbines based on whatever they encounter and a condition that reads along the lines of, in any event, no turbines shall be closer than 200m. Now that's measured from the staunch and the centre of the staunch and of the turbine, not the tip of the blade.

20 And then the third issue for us from an engineering perspective, and it's a it's a bigger issue and possibly more difficult to manage. Is that of transport of the components through Tamworth. So we're just one part of that total haulage route that's been assessed in the transportation impact strategy. But we're for us, obviously, it's our
25 focus. The report that's been presented in support of this project talks about a maximum component length of 65m. Components that long have been successfully brought through Tamworth previously along the state network. The report, in my opinion, needs to canvass the likelihood of larger components being needed to support this project.

30 All my discussions with all of the other proponents and indeed this particular project talks about a maximum turbine height of 260m, which translates to a maximum blade length of 90m. In the transport report. The strategy around that is to use what they call split blade technology. Again, my discussion with other proponents is that that's
35 unlikely. It adds an extra complexity to the construction. It adds an extra element of risk to blade row which would then change the statistics around the likelihood of people being in harm's way. My gut feel is that they will ultimately settle on a much larger. Component size, and that would render the current transport strategy, insofar as Tamworth is concerned irrelevant because you cannot bring 90 metre components
40 through the middle of Tamworth on the state road network.

There's just insufficient swinging space and it hasn't been set up for that. It's only been set up for 65 metre componentry, which was the normal size back in 5 to 8
45 years ago. They really use those size components nowadays.

The alternative routes would be a southern bypass through Tamworth, and we have discussed this with some proponents, not this particular proponent, but others have

started talking to us about how they would create an alignment that's acceptable for taking larger componentry to the south of Tamworth and then getting back onto the New England Highway out near Nemingha. That's got a couple of challenges. I think the challenge is there would be substantial that that matter should really be dealt with
5 across all of the projects and the logical organisation to sponsor that type of assessment and potentially the construction work that results from that would be Energy Co.

10 Otherwise, Tamworth City Council is going to be left dealing with individual proponents, none of whom have the grunt to be able to create a southern bypass of any, any long-term benefit to the community, but certainly en masse, all of the projects that are going to go through Tamworth sponsored or, you know, under the stewardship of Energy Co can and should be looking at that. And we do have an
15 alignment on our in our Blueprint 100 documentation, which is our, our roadmap to the future. There is an alignment that we would ideally like to see a southern bypass develop upon. And there's an opportunity here for a win outcome, I think. But probably not this one proponent would be well beyond their capacity. That's really it from an engineering perspective. Thank you once again.

20 PROF MENZIES: Thanks -

MR BRAKE: You got any questions?

25 PROF MENZIES: Well, I'll just note that we did a site visit yesterday. This will all go on our website, but we did visit the location of those two turbines that you're concerned about near Green Valley Road and then drove along Green Valley Road. So that was an opportunity to just sort of because you had mentioned it in our earlier discussion. So we wanted to make sure we had seen that.

30 MR BRAKE: So there's that weather gauging mast at the moment, of what we want to be. Yep.

CR SOUTHWELL: What were your thoughts on that having driven it and seen it, do you tend to agree with the comments being made or?

35 PROF MENZIES: So I think it would be inappropriate of me to prejudge what my colleagues and I are going to end up on. But I'll say that visiting the site is always really very useful. It doesn't matter how much you read or how many maps you look at, actually, physically going to the site changes the context completely in your mind.
40 So it was really useful for us to go there and to drive along and say here is spatially where we are.

CR SOUTHWELL: And I think what also helped is because of that call last week when Steve actually pointed out this was an area we looked at it quite critically as a
45 result. So it sort of added to our assessment. So it was very we really appreciated that opportunity to have a pre visit call last week and just hear the range of issues that your team brought up. So thank you.

PROF MENZIES: We've also appreciated when groups have provided us with suggestions as to what the condition should be. So Steve Council wanted to send us, you know, their preferred wording. I'm not saying that we will adopt that and use it,
5 but it certainly helpful to make sure we understand clearly where you would like it to land.

CR WEBB: We have met with Neoen a couple of times. And we've talked about a few of the issues. The voluntary planning agreement was still waiting to get a
10 response back from them, from their latest thoughts on it and where we sit. We did meet with them only a few weeks ago. They sent someone up, and we Uralla sat in the room with them. And I say we as the General Manager, myself and some planners, and we didn't really feel like we were listened to all that much, to be honest with you. But that's okay. They've got to now come back to us with, with their
15 position on that. And I'd just like to support what Steve said in terms of the road problems that are faced with our transport network, then I believe there needs to be a lot more clarification and a lot more to make us feel more comfortable.

With this, there needs to be a lot more surety and guarantees in the conditions of
20 consent that actually address the issues that Steve spoke about. And at the moment, there is no guarantees. There is no there's they're very wishy washy unless you actually get some actually some solid conditions that say this is going to be what it looks like. Then our staff and ourselves can't really you find it very difficult to support an application. And, you know, with wishy washy undecided outcomes.
25 Steve talks about 65m through town. The going the go now is a 90m and it will go into the future. We don't know what the future holds. So we really need to know exactly what they're planning.

We don't need to hear. Oh, well, it could be this or it could be that. We need to know
30 what they're thinking. If people are going to spend that amount of money on a project, then you can't tell me. They don't know what they're going to do. They need to know, and they need to tell us so that our staff can assess what their what those conditions actually really look like. And I think Judy wanted to say a couple of words. Did you Judy?

35

CR COATES: Yeah. I don't need to say now.

CR WEBB: Well, now's a good time.

40 CR COATES: Okay. Now, a good time. Sorry. I had quite a number of questions actually around it and comments, if that's okay. I guess, and I'll just progress through, as I've written them, this project, as well as most of these other renewable energy ones. The biodiversity offsets. I have concerns because, you know, the way an environment is what it is, and that's why we have particular flora and fauna living in
45 that area. And I do understand that, you know, with offsets and values and credits and all these things, they're supposed to compensate for that, but nothing ever compensates for removing the particular environment for that particular flora and

fauna at the time. That's probably more a comment than anything. I also I wonder about the I guess, the strength of self-reporting on the effectiveness of mitigation measures that are that's mentioned quite a lot in the conditions itself. And without sounding sceptical, but you know, what organisation is going to actually do themselves in. So I guess it's a transparency around that self-reporting on any effective mitigation measures that they have.

There was also on page 13, in the conditions there was a mention about a research program funding, but there wasn't much detail around that in terms of who determines the beneficiary of that. And I guess what that might look like, what the research program is, what are they looking for? Is it around this particular project or is it around renewable energies? You know, just in general? I did have a, the around the water supply tank for any dealing with any fire in that. And when you have a look at what they're talking about 20,000L, but 20,000L is the minimum requirement for just a rural property, not somewhere that's got this number of potential fire sources in terms of the turbines and that.

And moving on to, just the impact of the waste that's generated, because yes, they have to remove waste and they have to take it somewhere. But I just wonder what the impact will be on our waste facility, given that we're probably the biggest waste facility in the area, whether or not we're going to have to deal with that and what provisions, you know, what kind of waste are we going to have to cope with and what the provisions may be? In, in the conditions. I guess one of the biggies for me is the Accommodation and Employment Strategy. And this is, you know, at the moment there is just a proposal, but that has nothing substantial behind it. And when we start looking at the accommodation in our area, and if we look at Armidale and Tamworth as the two biggest centres, the most recent vacancy rates for those were around about 1.5%, and that's only early this year for Tamworth and 2.5% in Armidale.

Now that doesn't actually leave much room when we're talking about the numbers of workers that they're going to bring in for the construction phase of, this particular project. And I have concerns in terms of not just our local residents, people who are struggling to get accommodation already, but also the impact on our tourism industry as well, because we have quite a large number of events throughout the year that rely on being able to get accommodation. And if we start having our, I guess tourist accommodation allocated, we're not going to have much left. And yes, that may be okay for hospitality industry over the next 5 to 10 years. We have to actually have a look at what that's going to mean for Tamworth as a city and a destination into the future. So that was quite a it concerned me sort of quite a lot from that point of view.

And I guess the other side of it, the employment side, is that they were talking about prioritising local workers. However, we've already got a really low employment, unemployment rate in Tamworth.

It's only 2.3%. And we all know around this table here that trying to get tradies, as we might call them, and specialist people, it's near impossible. So by bringing

people, you know, trying to attract people out of our economy, I have concerns about the impact on our economy. Our ability to continue to develop other things and build other buildings and things like that. So I think for me, this one in particular has a really strong impact there. Moving on, the Planning Secretary's mentioned quite a lot in this, and it seems the Planning Secretary has quite a lot of power in that position and the ability to make decisions without any further consultation.

And when we talk about changes in how the project might be developed and things like that, I feel that as a Council, we probably I certainly I can't speak for the rest, but I certainly would like to see more consultation, at least with the governing body around any proposed changes that might have a significant impact for our region. So Steve's mentioned about the transport I had that going through, and I think probably you've heard enough from me.

CR WEBB: Just opining on the housing, we are doing a lot of work with government on some housing strategies, but everything is taking so long to get through the system. And there is just so much red tape and green tape that they've got to climb through before they can actually find ways of helping us with some of the funds that are out there and there are funds there, I think there was a \$750 million fund announced not so long ago, about helping us actually put services into areas where we might be able to actually put in some of this temporary housing but actually getting that off the ground. Let's take a bit of time and of course, the bill time, once you get that all, once you get approval to do some of that stuff, then there's a bill time.

And then what's the time of that, as opposed to what is a time where these people, if they get approval, they're going to want to come and start doing their work. We already have some massive projects happening in our region. One of the contractors only spoke to me last week, and they've taken up 200 of our accommodation rooms in this city for the next 16 months. That is a real concern and Councillor Coates is highlighted that as a real concern. We cannot afford to allow that to happen. With all of these renewable projects because our economy is hundreds of millions of dollars in tourism and events, and we just need to make sure that we're going to be able to cater for that into the into the future. We just can't let all of that accommodation for even half of that accommodation, or even a third of that accommodation get sucked up.

With worker accommodation, temporary worker accommodation or so forth, because this is one project and there'll be other projects coming along the way. So we just need to make sure that we can cater for that. So have you got any, if you've got anyone in government that you can talk to about actually pushing the button on some of these releasing some of this money for us to allow people like us and or communities like ours. I know Mid Western's ahead of us in many ways in terms of projects going forward, but, you know, we're not that far behind. So we need to be prepared. We need to have that stuff in place and we need it to be funded. And you're not going to get people to go and build demountables or whatever it might be accommodation, until they've got a guaranteed need. So it's a bit of a tough one there. We're people that may build and supply accommodation to the workers in

these projects. You're not going to start build it now and say okay, well when are you coming. And they say oh six months' time or 12 months' time. So there needs to be some timelines around all of this. And we need to know what those timelines are so we can pass that information on to those that may be interested in developing some of these projects. But the first thing first, we've got to get land developed and serviced in a proper way.

MS VEREKER: Mr Mayor I think you and Judy have certainly covered some of the things we spoke about last week, we're not sure from the team. Is there anything else we want to raise? I think, Mr. Mayor, we'd already discussed with the panel a range of batters. But I think between yourself and Councillor Coates have pretty well been covered.

PROF MENZIES: Yeah. We had we had a very good discussion with your team last week. And which I must say gave us a lot of questions to think about as we toured the site yesterday.

CR WEBB: And I think Steve's covered a lot of the real big, like the other issues. I don't know whether Bill or -

CR SOUTHWELL: No, just to reiterate some of the issues that have already been discussed, which is the VPA is very important for us because that's the way that we can provide funds back to our communities that are most impacted, obviously. So we want to make sure that that's clear and that we get the maximum benefit for our community so that we can give back to those people that are impacted by transport and every other impact that these types of construction projects bring into the community.

The transport logistics is obviously a big issue. And they're not it's not clear as to how that's going to happen. So, you know, around your conditions, having that 65m in place would be preferred. The other one that wasn't we discussed previously but wasn't mentioned today was just the potential safety issues around fire within the turbines themselves, and also ice throwing which can be an issue, a safety issue within the community for us is thrown off the actual blades. And then just reiterating what the Mayor has said around our events. So country music festival, as well as many other events, they're going to be around for the next 50 years. Plus, some of these construction projects are great. They're but they're short term.

So we want to make sure, like the customer experience from our tourism perspective, we don't want to lose those tourists if they come try to come to an event and they can't get accommodation. And they've been coming here for years and years and years. If they go elsewhere, it's very hard to reinvigorate that once these construction projects are finished and it's very costly for Council as well. So-

PROF MENZIES: Councillor Coates wanted to just mention -

CR COATES: Just a couple more things that. That's okay. One of them goes back to the water supply, and I did mention the 20,000L, but there's also There's no mention about reliability of water supply where they're going to get it. Should we have a drought? And that's quite you know, it's a possibility and given the length of the project, that could happen.

PROF MENZIES: So just for clarity here, this is water for firefighting or water for their construction phase.

10 CR COATES: Both.

PROF MENZIES: Okay.

CR COATES: Both. Because if they're doing the construction well obviously I'm assuming with two mobile minimum two mobile concrete plants on site, then we know that there's a fair bit of water that's actually goes into the making of that. And when I actually looked at how much concrete goes into one pad, it was amazing. Like it's like 850m³ up to that in one pad. And that's there's a lot of raw material in that, and water is part of that. So I guess - and they actually have to use potable water for that. I understand they can't just use anything. It's got to be fairly clean because if it's contaminated, all it actually impacts on the quality of the concrete. So I think that was something that it didn't actually mention where that was going to come from. And although that's a beautiful area up there, when you drive around, there's not a lot of actual water and it always looks quite dry.

So I'm not sure, they may have springs, I don't know, but I guess that that certainly wasn't mentioned there. And in one part I'll just finish with that, actually speak about the cumulative effects of all these renewable energy projects, but it doesn't actually mention and this is probably not just with this project, but it doesn't actually mention who is determining who's actually looking at the cumulative effect of all of these projects. Obviously Neoen are not going to necessarily mention it in theirs, but I think it's a key point that, who is actually going. Well. When we look at the workers here and the workers there and the impact on accommodation and the time frames, well, who's actually putting all that together? And that's where as communities, I believe we can come unstuck significantly.

PROF MENZIES: Councillor Coates, that was also an issue raised yesterday by Uralla Shire, who told us of the number of developments that are taking place in their shire. So they were also flagging the cumulative effect as an issue.

CR BETTS: Just one thing. Just following on from that, of course, is access to raw materials like gravel for concrete. We did ask the phone at some time ago. Had they did they have a plan in place to where they were going to access some of those raw materials, and they didn't. I mean, we sort of need to know where that's coming from because there's going to be an impact on our road networks again. Or could be an impact on our road networks if they're cutting that raw material for making concrete from other areas within our Council boundaries and Uralla would be the same.

They would want to know the same as well. It would be they may more likely get gravel from up within that shire and but they're going to be impacted on the negative way on their road network is going to be impacted negative way because there will be thousands of tonnes of raw material that will have to be sourced somewhere. And again, the cumulative impact on that with the other projects in the future, it's going to be quite massive.

CR COATES: And if I can make another comment on that, I believe - and Steve might sort of correct me on this - but I believe that, I'll call it the mix for the concrete, is quite crucial in terms of the conditions that they actually for concrete under it, etc., so they would actually have to have some idea of where they're going to get that amount of raw material at this stage. Otherwise, you know, it's because it's such a large amount. And then we, such as the Mayor said such a competition for that raw material. So I just feel that they've got to have some idea of where they're actually going to get that from. But there's no mention of and, and then having to cart that, that is, as you said, another impact on our roads that we're not even aware of at this point in time.

PROF MENZIES: And once again, Uralla Shire did raise this with us as an issue for them that. The potential impact on their -

CR BETTS: I guess if the Councillors haven't got any other question, we've and staff have met with you and raised the issues they've raised. And, you know, we've heard Steve again today talking about some of the they had. Bill spoke earlier too about, you know, the road network and what the impact of that would be because most of the roads in these rural areas are only built for light traffic. So anyway, look, thank you for coming. Thank you for listening. And thank you for hearing what we had to say in terms of issues that we see could front us into the future. But I will reiterate, if I may, the importance of having some guarantees around what those conditions look like before there's any approvals given. But as we see it.

PROF MENZIES: And just check with my fellow Commissioners whether we have questions for you while we have the opportunity to ask them. Suellen?

MS FITZGERALD: Judy raised the question of waste disposal and that Tamworth was a regional centre for waste disposal. I'm interested in whether you think that Tamworth would be the logistically, you know, the area for waste disposal from that side and generally what your capacity is at the moment.

CR COATES: I certainly am not able to answer that question.

CR WEBB: And I didn't actually hear it. I'm a bit deaf, so.

MS FITZGERALD: Oh, okay. Russell, it was around waste and waste disposal, and Judy had mentioned that Tamworth was, in a sense, a regional, a major regional facility for waste disposal.

I was interested to know whether the Council felt and perhaps, Judy, as you said, it's a question for the officers whether the waste disposal facilities in Tamworth would be the likely place for that site and what capacity they have?

5 CR WEBB: We would have to consider, first of all, what waste was going to be deposited at a facility. The other thing is our waste facility is in pretty good shape, and it's got a lifestyle like, you know, a lifespan. If taking the waste, large amounts of waste from some of these renewable projects was to shorten the lifespan of that waste facility that we've got considerably we would not be interested in taking that
10 waste. Because we've got a long term commitment to our community to be able to provide them with a waste facility. And whilst we have a time frame on how long that may last at the moment for us to find another site for a waste facility, they're saying now 18, at least 18 years in preparation, in all the studies you've got to do, all the work you've got to do to actually find another location.

15 And this is a waste. And this is a this is planning people saying this from government, by the time you do all of your studies, that's how long it's going to take you to actually find another site and actually get permission to set up a waste facility. Of course, we're trying to do everything we can to minimise the amount of waste that goes into landfill.
20 So if there was a considerable amount of waste that came out of a renewable project that could be recycled we'd be most definitely interested in talking to the proponents about how we might be able to manage that. But if we're talking about waste that might go into a landfill and reduce our life span of our tip we'd have to consider where we went from there and how we would deal with that into the in the short time.

25 CR SOUTHWELL: So and just to add to that, like you're probably aware, but to build a waste facility, you know, it's in the vicinity of \$10 million and up. So it's a lot of money for ratepayers to have to go to fund these types of things. When you've got companies like Neoen gaining all the profits and profitability of renewables. So they
30 would have to obviously either pay for that and we'd have to be looking at and reviewing our fees and charges around some of those materials and what that might look like in order for that cost to be offset somehow. Yeah.

35 CR WEBB: But again, that conversation needs to be had very early in the piece, and it needs to be had around what that material might look like.

40 DR EVANS: And again Councillor Coates, you made the comment around. At the moment, unemployment is 2.5%. I just wondered, what's the demographic in Tamworth? Is there a sizeable group of young people, young women and men coming through who may be interested in education and becoming part of the workforce? I was just interested in your view about that potential for the younger people in the region who are not yet in the workforce if there was some program of skilling and education.

45 CR COATES: And I think the Mayor will obviously have a lot more to say on this and what I can, but in terms of being able to take that younger generation and skill them we need the education opportunities here.

So we do have a university that's got quite a big presence at the moment the University of Newcastle. But we also have another university that has got a campus in Armidale as well as developing one in Tamworth. And I think, you know, there needs to be conversations in that space about how they can provide the relevant training and education if it is going to be targeted towards young people to be involved in these sorts of projects. So I think it's but that takes that also takes a lot of planning. And with some of these things, we, you know, we're not looking like we've got ten years to plan it.

10 You know, we're looking like it's probably going to be, you know, five years maybe. But I think that's certainly the younger generation has a higher unemployment rate than you go into the mid and the rise, but it's still not overly high. So it would be about specifically targeting and, and offering, you know young people opportunities for careers, not just a job but a career because I think otherwise we end up with they have a job and then. There's nothing after that. So it's got in terms of employment, there's got to be associated training to go with the employment opportunities.

CR SOUTHWELL: So add to that, I'd love to see as part of this, I don't know if it can be part of the conditions, but there is opportunities for younger people with either traineeships or apprenticeships. You know, talking about you know, high level university engagement, which is something we're working on as well. But we've also just developed a youth strategy, our first youth strategy. And within that there is an employment and training component. And we have a youth council as well that potentially could partner with organisations such as this or projects such as this.

25 We've also got some great organisations in town such as Joblink Plus, and they've already got lists of potential candidates who could move into traineeships and apprenticeships. So it would be great to actually I do see it as an opportunity with these projects to upskill and train people within the technical side of some of these projects. You've got electric electrical is another big opportunity as well as environmental and all sorts of things. So there's definitely opportunities there for our younger people and not so younger or people that may be wanting to get into employment and training. So it'd be great if companies like this could actually train people in some of these technical skills. Yeah.

35 CR WEBB: I'll just if I may just make a little comment on that, I find that it'll be very difficult for projects like this to take on young people and give them apprenticeships or traineeships or whatever, because the projects don't last that long and most of your expertise is fly in, fly out. So if you do employ young people here and it'd be great if we can do that. What's the longevity for that employment? We don't want those young people going and working for a particular company. But one year and then having to leave the area to go to somewhere else to complete their training.

45 CR SOUTHWELL: Yeah, it could be a stepping stone for them, though.

PROF MENZIES: It could be a stepping stone.

MS RENNIE: Yeah.

CR WEBB: The other thing is that we are very short of workers in this city, this Council, this organisation has nearly 100 positions short at the moment, nearly 100
5 vacancies. There are a large amount of our businesses in town, have vacancies everywhere. We're doing everything we can to try with migration from people from city or coast or wherever to try and get people here that have got skills that can help us in so many different fields. The building industry in particular mechanically, there's just a shortage of tradesmen across the board. There's a shortage of young
10 people across the board that will come and do the other work that may be non-trade or trade support. We just can't get people in our own organisation. The number of positions I'm talking about is not uncommon.

We've just had a visit to Albury and Wagga and both those organisations are very
15 similar in numbers of positions that are vacant. In both those Councils, it can be from planning, it could be from waste management sector. The water sector can be from engineering or the road building sector. There's just you just can't get the people. There's not enough. There's just not enough people to fill those positions. Our abattoirs out here often start their shifts with 100 short regularly. So they have got to
20 push on to bring people from overseas. And there's a big push to get people with visas to come over, and they spend 6 or 12 months working in the three abattoirs that we have in this city. And that's, that's just a fact of life. It's something that's crept up on us, I think Brooke don't it? In sort of Covid. It sort of came along and hit us. I think it was coming, but it hit us after Covid, it just seemed to happen with shortage.

25 CR SOUTHWELL: There is a shortage. I think there is a higher percentage of unskilled labour, though. And that's why I say, like getting people funnelling them into traineeships and apprenticeships.

30 CR WEBB: It'd be great.

CR SOUTHWELL: It'd be great. And so there's a lot of opportunities for skilled positions, which we don't have the skilled labour in town, but there is a higher unskilled labour, and that's where there could be opportunities for even trade
35 assistants and that sort of thing. Thank you. Yeah.

CR COATES: No, I think that's I mean, I think it could be a whole conversation around how these sorts of organisations could collaborate with local businesses and education facilities so that they at the end of it, there is still something for the young
40 people to say. Yeah, but I think that's a whole other conversation.

CR WEBB: If you could wave your magic wand as the IPC and get all of those organisations that are out there, those companies that are wanting to build projects, get them all together and sit them in the same room, get them thinking the same way.
45 You probably get some great outcomes with employment.

PROF MENZIES: I'm waiting for them to issue me with my magic wand, because there's a lot of good things I could do with it, but I'd like to thank you all for, you know, the clarity with which you've expressed your concerns today. So and, I particularly wanted to thank your team. The meeting that we had prior to coming was
5 good prep for us. And we have a lot of good information. I really stress the providing us with suggestions as to how you would like to see us express this in a set of conditions. That's very useful to us. Make sure that we've captured exactly what you're thinking. So Steve - job for you.

10 CR SOUTHWELL: Yeah.

PROF MENZIES: Yeah. So thank you very much. On behalf of my fellow Commissioners, it's been really useful.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you.

<THE MEETING CONCLUDED