New South Wales Government
Independent Planning Commission

TRANSCRIPT OF MEETING

RE: POTTINGER WIND FARM (SSD-59235464)

APPLICANT MEETING

PANEL:	RICHARD PEARSON (CHAIR) MICHAEL WRIGHT SARAH DINNING
OFFICE OF THE IPC:	JANE ANDERSON GEOFF KWOK
APPLICANT:	FELICITY STENING TIM MEAD ANGELA ROZALLI JAMES NICHOLAS DEREK POWELL JONATHAN AMBLER HAN TAY DIANNE MUNRO
LOCATION:	Zoom videoconference
DATE:	11:30AM – 12:30PM MONDAY, 26TH MAY 2025

<THE MEETING COMMENCED

MR GEOFF KWOK: Here we go.

MR RICHARD PEARSON: Hello everyone.

MR JONATHAN AMBLER: Good morning, how are you?

MR PEARSON: Good, thank you. Sorry for the short delay, we had a few technical issues, but I think we're good now. Is this everyone from the applicant team?

MR AMBLER: I can't see – oh here we go. Someva are there in the room, I think so.

MR TIM MEAD: Is Felicity on the line?

MS FELICITY STENING: Yes. Hi everyone.

MR MEAD: That's everyone from our side, thank you.

MR PEARSON: OK, great. Well look, let me just begin with an opening statement. So before we begin, I would like to acknowledge I'm speaking to you from Yuin country, and acknowledge the Traditional Owners of all the land from which we virtually meet today, and pay my respects to their Elders past and present.

Welcome to the meeting today to discuss the Pottinger Wind Farm, SSD59235464, currently before the Commission for determination. The applicant, Pottinger Renewables Pty Limited, a joint venture between AGL Energy and Someva Renewables, proposes to develop a 1,300 megawatt wind farm located approximately 60 kilometres south of Hay, within the Hay Shire and Edward River local government areas, in the South West Renewable Energy Zone.

The project involves the development of up to 247 turbines with a maximum tip height of 280 metres high, a 500 megawatt battery energy storage system, connection to the Project Energy Connect transmission line, which is currently under construction and other ancillary infrastructure.

So my name is Richard Pearson, I'm the chair of this Commission panel, and I am joined by my fellow Commissioners, Sarah Dinning and Michael Wright. We've also got Jane Anderson and Geoff Kwok from the Office of the Independent Planning Commission with us.

In the interests 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.

The 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. It is important for Commissioners to ask questions of attendees and clarify issues whenever considered appropriate. If you're asked a question and not in a position to answer, please feel free to take the question on notice and provide any additional information in writing, which we will then put up on our website.

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

So with those opening words, we will now begin. We did circulate an agenda, which starts after the opening statement with applicant introductions and a brief overview of the project from the applicants. So I will pass it over to you, applicant, to do that, please.

MR MEAD: Thank you. James, would you mind sharing the presentation? We've put together a short presentation today as requested to provide an overview of the project. We'll run through this presentation and please, if you've got any questions, please jump in at any time, or if you'd like to save them to the end, we'll leave that to the Commission, that's fine.

MR PEARSON: We probably will do it as we go. I think it seems to work better that way. So yeah, we'll interrupt politely as we have questions.

MR MEAD: No problem. Firstly, for some introductions on the Someva side. So my name is Tim Mead. I'm Development Director at Someva. In the room today, I've got James Nicholas, who's Development Manager, and Derek Powell, who's Project Director. Also on the line from the Someva side we have Felicity Stenning, who's Director of Community and Government Engagement. And I can't see on my screen, but do we have Dianne Munro online as well? Yes. Dianne Munro is Technical Director of Environment Approvals from RPS. Dianne led the preparation of the EIS for this project, and was the REAP on this project as well.

Just before I hand to our JV partners and AGL, just a quick background on Someva. We're a New South Wales-based renewable energy developer. We're very focused on wind development, and particularly in New South Wales as well. We do also develop large-scale solar. I'll just hand over to Jon Ambler from AGL.

MR AMBLER: Yeah, thanks Tim. Yes, my name's Jon Ambler, I'm the Group Manager of Power Development at AGL. Just with me virtually is Han Tay, who's our Senior Manager of Development, and the AGL Project Manager for the Pottinger Project.

A bit of background for the team on AGL. AGL is obviously a large retailer and generator in the NEM and also in the WEM. So with many over four million customer accounts across the country, our involvement in this project is very much

based around our energy transition commitments that we've made in the last few years, which is for us to generate, or to develop up to 12 gigawatts of new renewable projects by the time we close down our final coal-fired power stations, which is planned for 2035-36. So that's just a bit of the background as to why we are here with Someva. We've been working on this project with Someva for the last two years.

MR MEAD: Thanks, Jon. In terms of Someva's context on the project, we originated the project and have been working with local Councils and in the community for over four years now. And as Jon said, we partnered with AGL about two years ago.

Next slide, please, James. So I just want to start our presentation today with an acknowledgement of country. Someva and AGL acknowledge the traditional custodians of all the lands and waters upon which we work, live and play. We would like to acknowledge and respect the traditions of the Wamba Wamba, Perrepa Perrepa, Nari Nari and Wiradjuri peoples, and respect their continued special relationship with the land and waters of the area that the Pottinger Wind Farm is proposed. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

And also, I just want to draw your attention to the artwork here. This artwork, the project has licensed this artwork from a local artist around Deniliquin by the name of Marbie, and this artwork's called *Emus*. And we love this artwork, because we do see emus out on our site, and hopefully we may see some next week.

So agenda today, as I said, it's a short agenda, and we want to leave as much time for the Commission to ask the questions you have. We wanted to focus today on Manny Pottinger, who's a brief piece around the naming of this project. We've got a project overview, a summary of EIS public submissions, and then we'll touch on visual biodiversity transport and noise. And as I mentioned earlier, we welcome any questions as we move through.

So just to begin, a bit of context. I'll spare you from trying to read that article on today's meeting, but we can circulate it afterwards. But the project was named after the Manny Pottinger family, which was one of the first families to install and maintain windmills in this Conargo region. The adoption of this wind power in the early 1900s helped to develop a thriving local agricultural scene, whereby sheep were able to be watered and to graze what was otherwise a fairly difficult drought prone country at that time. So from our perspective, we loved that synergy with this new industry. And so, our project seeks to build on that legacy through clean, affordable and reliable energy.

In terms of a project overview, as was touched on earlier, the project is seeking approval for up to 247 turbines or 1,300 megawatts of clean energy. There's also a battery energy storage system of 500 megawatts times four hours, so up to 2,000 megawatt hours. We've estimated jobs up to 900 through construction and approximately 50 through operations. And there's obviously a large volume of homes powered and large community benefits annually of approximately $1.3

million.

This region is a very unique region in New South Wales for renewables. It's obviously within a REZ, the South West Renewable Energy Zone, but it's unique for many reasons. One being it's on the Hay Plain, so it's incredibly flat, and the Commission, if you've not travelled to this area before, you'll see that next week. The wind profile is very strong and very laminar, or smooth. So the wind resource is very strong in this region, and hence why it had been declared a renewable energy zone.

The dwelling density is incredibly low in this region compared to other regions around New South Wales for renewables. And this has led to, I think that the nature of the land profile has led to many large scale projects, and the majority of which are all gigawatt scale in this region.

In terms of what the project is seeking or the context of the project, the community – or sorry, I'll start with the land. The site is approximately 26,000 hectares. It's in the locality of Booroorban, which is approximately 60 kilometres south of Hay in New South Wales, and it's wholly located within the South West REZ. The site is approximately 50-50 across both the Hay Shire Council and the Edward River Council. And as I mentioned before, it's incredibly flat with an approximately 90 metre elevation. We estimate a 35-year initial design life, given those laminar or smooth environmental conditions that I mentioned just before.

Our landholders, we have two local farming families to host this project; the Morona and the Hooke families. Again, for a project of this scale to have just two local farming families suggests just the sheer scale of the farm holdings in this area. And the area itself is very much a broad acre, open grazing context. From a community perspective, we have just nine neighbours within 10 kilometres of this project, which again is very unique for wind farms in New South Wales.

We've offered a neighbour benefit program to near neighbours. We have VPA terms agreed with local Councils, and we offered these VPA terms in line with the new New South Wales guidelines. Although the New South Wales guidelines were formalised after the EIS was submitted for this project, we knew what was in the draft conditions or the draft guidelines, and so we ensured that the VPA aligned with those.

And as part of those VPAs, we've agreed a dedicated First Nations fund for an allocation of that. $1,050 per megawatt is carved off for a dedicated First Nations fund, which has been agreed with local Councils as well. We've also got nine MOUs with local community and First Nations groups, where we've co-designed community benefits in a dedicated $500,000 pre-construction community fund. So all of those MOUs are also partnerships that have been agreed with nearby local community groups.

In terms of grid connection, the primary pathway for grid connection for this project is the currently-under-construction project, Energy Connect. That line

travels through the north of our site, and is actually under construction at the moment on our site. So we may see at least some poles, I think, next week on site.

We've touched on the South West REZ, obviously an important overlay for this region. The project's wholly located within the South West REZ. You're probably aware that the New South Wales government declared that the South West REZ was an access scheme. And so AMO Services and Energy Co ran an access rights tender for the South West REZ last year, which concluded early this year. Pottinger has been awarded an access right for a capacity of 831 megawatts of wind, and a 400 megawatt four-hour BESS for connection to PEC, Project Energy Connect. And we intend for this access right capacity to be all delivered in one stage as an initial stage for this project. We estimate the construction of that stage should commence in about Q4 next year, subject to approval, and we think a commercial operations date is estimated for Q4 2029.

MR PEARSON: OK, can I just ask a question on that? So you have approval for 831.2, a very specific number, you're seeking approval for 1,300. So I suppose two questions. One, you've said you deliver the 831.2 as an initial stage. Does that – that presumably equates to X number of turbines of the 247 that you're seeking approval for? And so that's my first question, I suppose. So how many turbines would you construct in the first stage? And what happens if you don't get any future approval for the 400 or so megawatts that you don't have an approval for at this stage?

MR MEAD: Yeah, thank you. So in terms of the first question, we're currently undertaking a procurement process for turbines at the moment. But at the moment in the market, turbines are anywhere from about six to eight megawatts. So we get the range of turbine numbers for this initial stage, anywhere from about 110 up to about 120 or 125 turbines approximately. So that would be initial stage.

In terms of what happens with the balance of the approval, I think I would say as a general note, the industry are all considering that question. Because obviously the dust is just now settling on the first access rights tender for the South West. I think EnergyCo have been clear that there is a pathway for them to undertake a headroom assessment in future. And if that headroom assessment determined that there was extra capacity available within this REZ, then they would then run a tender for that extra capacity. So Pottinger would seek to make a submission to that tender.

There are other considerations. There are existing connections within the South West REZ, existing transmission infrastructure, I should say, which is not the subject of the access scheme. So that is available to other projects who are unsuccessful for the access rights, albeit that is probably a small capacity.

I think once we get through this next 12 months and we've moved towards financial close in this first stage, we will obviously monitor EnergyCo's further submissions as to whether there's likely to be greater capacity. It may require network augmentation to achieve that. And so I think it is fair to say that the

pathway in the future is uncertain, but there are some opportunities for expanded capacity.

MR PEARSON: OK, thank you.

MR MEAD: No problem. I was just going to, just before we jump to here, I was just going to say, just in terms of the host's current agricultural practices, at the moment, as I mentioned before, the location with which the infrastructure is proposed is broad acre grazing context. And you'll see that next week on the site inspection. There are some smaller irrigated areas on the northern host site, but those areas have been completely avoided for our project infrastructure.

MR WRIGHT: Hey Richard, just before we move off this slide, could I just ask a question about that pre-construction community fund. That's separate to VPA arrangements with the two Councils, is that correct?

MR MEAD: Yes, that's correct. Yeah.

MR WRIGHT: OK. And that is for both local community and First Nation groups, there's a single $500,000 pre-construction community benefits fund administered by the joint venture, yep?

MR MEAD: Yes, that's correct. And within which we've already signed nine MOUs with local groups. Yeah.

MR WRIGHT: OK. Thank you.

MR MEAD: I should just say on the back of that question, a question that also comes up a lot is around the REZ access fees. And so it's important to note that the REZ access fees are in addition to any VPA contributions. So those REZ access fees for the South West, similar to the Central West, are a total of $2,300 per megawatt per annum. So that is in addition to the VPA.

MR PEARSON: Yeah. Sorry, can I just ask one final question before we jump off this page? I know we're only on the first page. You've got 830,000 homes being powered. The Department's figure is something more like 570,000. Can you explain that discrepancy?

MR MEAD: No, I can't actually. We'll take that on notice and we'll come back to you in writing on that one.

MR MEAD: Yeah, it's quite a different figure from the Department. I don't have the exact figure, but it was something like 570,000, still a lot of homes, but yeah, I would be interested in the origin of the 830,000, so we can take that – you can take that one on notice. Thank you.

Yeah, we will. I'm not sure whether the Department may have prorated it for the initial allocation of access rights, I'm not sure, but we'll come back to you.

MR PEARSON: No, they told us they hadn't done that, I'm pretty sure. So yeah, anyway, we'll allow you to take that one on notice if you would.

MR MEAD: No problem.

MR AMBLER: I think it's worth saying there that there's not necessarily a universal assumption on your average New South Wales home. But so yeah, we'd certainly have to look into as well what the assumptions that the Department has used. Yeah. I mean, it's a pretty simple, it's simple mathematics at the end of the day.

MR PEARSON: Yeah. You're just multiplying it by –

MR AMBLER: Depending on what you consider an average home uses. Yeah.

MR PEARSON: Yeah. OK.

MR MEAD: So this is just an image. Obviously you'll get a better feel next week, but it gives you the sense of that, the very flat Hay Plains region. The elevation difference from one end of our site to the other is a matter of a few metres. So it's not even discernible to the eye. And in terms of the context, what we're looking at, we're looking east here, and you can see the transmission line, which runs mostly through the northern part of the site.

This is the existing transmission line. Project Energy Connect will be built alongside this to the north. And what we're looking at here is towards the – we're looking east over the site. So there is this creek line here that does have some wooded vegetation, but that's not where the structure is broadly proposed. It's proposed on the other side in this sort of low-lying grass land, bushland area.

Just some layout figures. I appreciate it's hard to see at scale, at this scale, but I'm sure you have the project layout available, and we can send it through if you don't, on the left-hand side here. Just on the right hand side, we just wanted to show this in terms of the land ownership map. Firstly, as I mentioned, there's two landholders associated with this project, one in the north, one in the south. But I think you also get the sense of the sheer scale of the land holdings in this region. Each colour determines a farm under a neighbouring land ownership. So you get the sense of just the sheer scale of the area and the land holdings in the area.

This just shows the regional context. So in the middle there, you can see the project area in red. You can see some dashed lines which are showing infrastructure, transmission infrastructure. You may or may not be able to see that, but we're basically fairly equidistant between Hay to our north and Deniliquin to our south. And as mentioned, we're wholly located within the South West REZ, which is shown in pink. The South West REZ effectively runs from on the western side, the South Australian border, and on the eastern side up to Dinawan substation, which is to the east of our site.

A summary of EIS public submissions. So the EIS was exhibited in June last year. We received a total of 75 supporting submissions and 83 objections. No objections were received for the project within 20 kilometres of the project site. And of the 83 objections, 77 of those for the project were located greater than 50 kilometres away from the site, including a number from interstate. The objecting submissions raised issues regarding biodiversity impacts, general lack of support for renewable energy impacts on agriculture, and visual impacts. The supporting submissions raised alignment with state energy targets and energy security, strong site selection, economic benefits to the local community, and creation of jobs for the local economy.

I mentioned earlier that given the nature of this site and the very low dwelling density compared to other typical wind farm sites, that really the assessment here has yielded quite low impacts that are otherwise typically available on wind farms, including visual and noise. We've just pulled out a few, I've pulled out the map from the LVIA that Moir produced last year, and I just wanted to take you through some high-level observations.

As I mentioned earlier, there's only nine neighbours within 10 kilometres of this site. What you can see here is the old Visual Bulletin lines. So as I mentioned earlier, the new New South Wales wind energy guidelines were formalised after the EIS was submitted. So this project, the assessment was prepared under the old Bulletin. But you may have noticed in the Department's assessment that they did also assess some of the key matters against the new guidelines, which included visual. But these are the old Bulletin lines.

So in black shows 3.75 kilometres from the nearest turbine, in blue is 5,500 metres, and in purple is eight kilometres. So within those distances – I should note that when this was prepared in May last year, NAD 3, which is immediately to the east of the site in the right hand corner of the project area, so that's NAD 2. NAD 3 and NAD 6, which are two houses to the west, sort of the mid-west there you can see just near the black line, all those three have since signed neighbour agreements, so they're associated with the project.

So that actually leaves only one dwelling was identified within the black line. That dwelling is NAD 14, you can see in the south west corner there. It's an unoccupied, derelict dwelling. So Moir did go to that dwelling, but they were unable to get in through the gate into the curtilage, because the dwelling has been unoccupied for a long period of time and is overgrown. But they did do an assessment from the northern side, or the north eastern side of that dwelling. The nearest turbines to that location are approximately 3.1 kilometres away, and that, as I said, is the only dwelling that was located within the black line of this site. All remaining non-associated dwellings within eight kilometres of this project were assessed as low or negligible visual impact.

Biodiversity. So native vegetation covers approximately 90% of this project site and, as we talked about, is predominantly broad grassland, shrubland areas subject to long-term grazing. There are some sparse wooded areas, wetlands and riparian

areas on site, but mostly not the subject of any infrastructure proposed for the project. The project lodged a BDAR with the EIS in May last year – sorry, that should read May 2024, that's an error – and we subsequently updated this a further two times in response to CPHR, which was previously BCS, feedback.

The disturbance footprint would be approximately up to 1,069 hectares for the full site, of which just 11.94 would be impacts to TECs. We spent a lot of time avoiding and minimising biodiversity impacts through redesign of this site through all of the stages of this project, including scoping, EIS response to submissions, and the final RFI phases of the project over the last nine months or so, and those changes are all detailed in the BDAR.

We did spend particular effort focused on reducing impacts to the Plains Wanderer. So that was the one species that was potentially at risk of SAII associated with this site, and so we spent a lot of time looking at the Plains Wanderer important mapped habitat layers from the New South Wales government, and avoiding as much impact as we possibly could to those layers, and we also made a nature positive commitment to offset Plains Wanderer habitat in addition to the typical offsets that are calculated for the project.

We've provided a draft bird and bat adaptive management plan for the project ahead of the recommendation, and that was reviewed by CPHR. And just in terms of our biodiversity offset strategy, that work has commenced and we are seeking to offset the impacts of the project through nearby biodiversity stewardship sites.

MR PEARSON: Just a question, if I may, on the Plains Wanderer. From the Department's assessment report, you're going to clear about 13 hectares of Plains Wanderer habitat, I think about 2.6 important habitat. Is there a reason why that can't be avoided? It seems quite a small area in a big site. Can you just talk to why that 2.67 hectares in particular is not avoidable?

MR MEAD: Yeah, sure. We can provide subsequent written information to visualise this a bit better, but as an example, if you have a look at those snips that we've taken out of the BDAR at the bottom of this screen, there's some plates, there's a series of plates within the BDAR that describe a series of design changes that we've made. I believe that what we're looking at here is the pink areas – sorry, it may be pink or orange, I'd have to come back to you on that – showing where the important mapped habitat is. These are layers that are fixed and provided by the New South Wales government, so they're not subject to our onsite surveys.

So there are instances where predominantly either – we've got a 300 megawatt micro-siting and development survey area associated with this project, which is already very large compared to other projects, typically other projects are 100 metres that defines the micro-siting area from turbines and the overall survey area. But we've surveyed up to 300 metres from every location, which provides a lot of flexibility from our perspective to micro-site and avoid impacts, which is great. But there are still patches of important mapped habitat that either cover a chunk of

those areas and we can't micro-site around them even within the 300 metres, or there are some instances where we sought to just upgrade existing disturbed tracks onsite, and sometimes these existing disturbed tracks go through these important mapped habitat areas. And so from an overall disturbance perspective, it's much less to just widen the existing disturbed tracks rather than go all the way around, sometimes many hundreds of kilometres around certain patches of GIS.

So that's typically why there is still a relatively small impact to those important mapped habitat areas. But we've tried to balance all of those aspects. And I should say there are other constraints on site that we obviously need to focus on, not least heritage, and so sometimes we're trying to micro-site away from high-value heritage areas as well.

MR PEARSON: OK, sure, so it's little bits of habitat, rather than a whole 13 hectares or 2.5 hectares of relevant habitat, it's a collection of little bits and pieces that you're having to impact on, is that what you're saying?

MR MEAD: Yeah, absolutely. We can demonstrate this through written submission, but we certainly, for example, wherever there's large hectares worth of infrastructure, whether that be turbine locations or ancillary infrastructure, substations, connection, etc, we've always tried to micro-site that away from this important mapped habitat.

MR PEARSON: Thank you.

MR MEAD: No problem. So next, transport. So again at a high level, the oversized over-mass transport route proposed for this site is from Port Adelaide. So the first part of this transport route is through South Australia. It goes up, it travels north and then east, and then crosses the border near Broken Hill. It goes via Broken Hill, and then it travels down south, down the Cobb Highway to site, to Hay and then to site.

There are approximately nine local intersection locations that require generally minor widening works for our infrastructure deliveries. The one to call out would be the bypass proposed in Broken Hill. So there's an inset on the left map here which shows Broken Hill. We can provide these figures for you if you don't have them in greater detail.

But when we originally undertook a route survey to this site, to be honest, given the central but remote location of this site, many different ports were potentially available to this region, including Geelong, Newcastle, Adelaide. So we looked at all of them, but our transport experts determined that at this stage the path or the route with the least constraints on it was via Adelaide, and so we selected Adelaide. But along that route one of the, well, the major constraint was Broken Hill. And we obviously consulted with Broken Hill Council, and where possible want to avoid going through centres of towns, and so we came up with this bypass, which goes through a Council-managed lot before getting to Broken Hill. And as you can see on that inset on the left, it travels then south and then east towards the

southern part of Broken Hill, so it avoids the city itself.

On the right hand side, if you can see that at scale, there's four site accesses for this project proposed. Again, you'll see next week the site context is incredibly flat, so there's no terrain issues for site access for a project like this. And just given the sheer size of the project, we determined four site access points for this site, which were spread out around the site, giving flexibility for construction delivery.

MR WRIGHT: So –

MR PEARSON: Just on – sorry, Michael.

MR WRIGHT: Sorry Richard, I was just going to ask about RSLM again, because I think in the response to submissions report, there was a suggestion that you might be using, in addition to Port Adelaide, Port Newcastle. But it sounds as though that's not the case, is that right?

MR MEAD: No, so the context there is, yes, to be very clear, the route that we are seeking approval for in this application is via Port Adelaide only. But the context that you're referring to there is that, obviously, this is a REZ, and EnergyCo are responsible, obviously, with the whole of government, including Transport for New South Wales and the Department of Planning, to consider cumulative impacts, and one of those is obviously transport.

You'd be familiar with the Central West, where there's the concept of the port to REZ upgrades via Newcastle. So I think the reality is the Central West is more advanced from a whole of government perspective in looking at coordinating those upgrades for that REZ. The South West doesn't yet have a coordinated solution for a transport route. So given the timeframes that we have made committed to under the REZ access rights tender to deliver power for New South Wales, we have to proceed with our own viable route. But we are in consultation with both EnergyCo, the Department of Planning, and Transport for New South Wales currently, and we're aware that they are looking at an alternative optimised route for the South West REZ.

So the context that you're referring to there was we did have conversations with the Department through the assessment phase where we said, we need to select this viable route that we can deliver the project with. However, if the government comes up with an alternative route that is more beneficial to the project than our current route, and it's approved in time, and it's suitable for use, then we would be open to using that route. And at the time –

MR WRIGHT: I see.

MR MEAD: Sorry, I was just going to finish by saying at the time, well, originally we were talking about potentially Newcastle, that is an option, but we are aware that Transport for New South Wales is looking at an alternative route

out of Port of Adelaide for a site like this and the South West REZ.

MR WRIGHT: OK, thank you.

MR PEARSON: Just Wilcannia and Ivanhoe, do you go through town there, or what's the situation?

MR MEAD: They – let me come back to you, but I believe that they are very small towns if we go through towns at all, and they haven't been the subject of this concern under the assessment. So let me come back to you, because I want to make –

MR PEARSON: If you would, yeah, thank you.

MR MEAD: No problem. OK, we also just pulled out the noise contours from the Sonus assessment in the EIS, and again this is really just to demonstrate the low risk nature of noise on this site. The orange contour here is the 35 decibels, so that is the performance criteria, and all non-associated dwellings are outside of that, and there are only a small handful that are within even 30 decibels. And as I noted earlier, NAD 2 and also NAD 3 and 4 are all associated – sorry, NAD 2 and NAD 3 are associated with the project, not NAD 4, so they are also now not, non-associated, so that leaves only NAD 4 and NAD 6 as occupied dwellings that are within 30 decibels and very close to 30 decibels.

This is just a photo that was taken last year at a signing ceremony that we undertook with the community and local Councils, so this photo is showing Someva and AGL reps with both local Council representatives. We had a signing ceremony for those community MOUs that I talked about earlier, and the VPA MOUs with local Councils, so all those terms were agreed in principle and MOUs signed. And yeah, just noting that to date and ongoing, our engagement with both councils, Hay Shire Council and Edward River, has been exemplary. It's been really enjoyable from our perspective, highly constructive and collaborative, so it has been a joy to get to this point of the project, and may that continue.

Thank you.

MR PEARSON: Well, thank you for that. There are a grouping of other sort of, I guess, lesser issues, if you like, on our agenda that we haven't touched on through this presentation.

We've definitely touched on biodiversity, traffic and transport, visual. But noise, did you have any comments you wanted to make around that issue? Both from construction and operational.

MR MEAD: OK, yeah, so this was just a noise contour from an operational perspective. But equally from a construction and operational perspective, there were no noise exceedances concluded out of the Sonus report, so we view that as a low risk project, but we just wanted to demonstrate that through these contours

here.

MR PEARSON: Commissioners, feel free to jump in here, but we also had Aboriginal heritage, soil and water, hazards and risks, social and economic, I'd probably like to talk about the workers' camp there, decommissioning, cumulative impacts, and also we'd be interested in hearing about your community consultation program that you've undertaken as part of where you've got to, to date. So maybe if we could hear from you on community consultation, and how you're proposing to deal with the construction workforce requirement.

MR MEAD: Sure, OK, I'll start and then I'll hand over to Felicity, who's our director of stakeholder engagement. As I mentioned earlier, we've been in the community for over four years now, and that's included both, obviously, starting with host landowners, but obviously nearby neighbours, local community and local community groups and Councils, and it's all been a very positive experience to date.

So during the development or the assessment of this project, we've consulted with many nearby stakeholders, we undertook community info sessions around the EIS, so that's detailed in the EIS. But we spent time in both Hay and Deniliquin with pop-up information sessions on the project.

I think this is, as I mentioned earlier, it's very unique in the context of wind farm developments, this site, in that Hay and Deniliquin are – Booroorban itself is not a town, but there are some neighbours around, but in terms of the nearby towns, Hay and Deniliquin are over 60 kilometres away, so it's very remote from the nearby town centres. So in fact, actually, the interest from the community in the projects is actually a lot lower than what we typically experience. However, we did get out into region and run information sessions to try and raise awareness of the project, and that did obviously result in some submissions, although very few local submissions within 100 kilometres.

In terms of, you asked about local workers and local content. I think given that this project is within a REZ, that definitely brings forward a lot of time and effort and thinking around local workforce and local content that otherwise might not be available to this stage of a project, and might otherwise be efforts that are undertaken post-approval, But we can talk a lot to that.

So we, in terms of local workforce, we have – Felicity will correct me – but I think it's approximately 17 packages of work for this, the construction of this site that are listed on ICN Gateway, which is a portal for local contractors. We had many hundreds of responses from local contractors on that ICN Gateway. We're supporting EnergyCo this week in local roadshows, both information hubs and local roadshows for local workforce and tender-ready workshops.

And I think you mentioned, I might just hand over to Felicity and then we'll come back to the accommodation aspect of that.

MS STENING: Thanks, Tim. Hi, Commissioners, it's great to meet with you today. Just adding on to the local content that Tim was talking about, we've worked with groups, including the Industry Capability Network, and have the 22 packages on that site. That's generated about 500 businesses interested in working on the project, about 40, over 40 First Nations businesses. We've also worked with Supply Nation and the New South Wales Indigenous Chamber of Commerce to really ensure that First Nations representation in businesses able to tender for the project is there.

We have spent a lot of time in the community working with First Nations groups and community groups and the Councils. And the voluntary planning agreements that we would – or planning agreement that we would be looking to sign with Hay Shire Council and Edward River Council has around 85% of that 1,050 per megawatt funding allocation. The reason for that is that we've carved out 15% of that into a specific First Nations fund. And we've also, within those letters of intent that are the precursor to the planning agreements, we have agreed with Councils that 20% of the funding would be allocated within a 20k radius of the project site for the first five years.

So we really tried to look at the local needs of the community. We have a separate First Nations fund, rather than Councils managing all of those 1,050 per megawatt funds. In the planning agreements, we have a separate First Nations fund, as we heard very strongly from a number of the First Nations groups that they did not want to be mission managed. So we have that carve out for the First Nations groups that would be administered by us through the project construction and beyond.

We looked as well around the $500,000 fund. We really wanted to look at that pre-construction fund, getting funds into the community. And we like to look at what are the specific needs in the community. So a couple of things that came out were mental health in youth. Some mental health challenges for young ones in this part of the Riverina, in these regional areas.

Bushfires, so a couple of rural fire service organisations we have MOUs in place with for equipment and radio gear and fridges and other, flares and the like to be available for the RFS. We're supporting two youth organisations. One is a training organisation for looking at renewable energy modules in education programs through Hay Inc. And one is a group called Giz a Break, which takes young ones out into the Victorian mountains and teaches them bushwalking and fire lighting and rock climbing. So a chance to connect with different social workers and different people outside their community, which is really important in that mental health space.

And a number of First Nations groups as well, recognising that ranger programs and knowledge centres and First Nations people getting back onto country and sharing their knowledge with younger First Nations people is also really important.

So we like to look at ways of structuring the funds that go into the communities by not who have a grant writer sitting in their organisation and is well funded already, but really what are the specific needs in a community that we could help to address? Appreciating we can't address all of the needs in every community, but we have really tried to understand what are some of the specific areas where we could support.

So I'm particularly excited about being able to, now that we have our access right in the South West REZ, being able to distribute these funds into the local community under that $500,000 program. Part of that as well is a decarbonisation program for farmers. So recognising that supporting local farmers with how to decarbonise, how they can look at their own operations and really future proof is also important. So we structured a program for the nearest neighbours to participate in a decarbonisation program, and partnered with a group called Energy Link to look at delivering decarb plans.

So I might stop there and hand back to Tim, or if there are questions, happy to answer them. We also – sorry, just one last thing – we also have an AGL energy office. So we're keen to ensure that through the planning agreements, the wider community can be supported, and there'll be community consultative committees that are stood up to support that with community and First Nations – or sorry, not First Nations in this event, but community and Council, and develop a representation on those CCCs.

But we also have an AGL affordable energy offer that we'll look to release into the two districts for Edward River and Hay Shire Council as well, to provide more affordable energy offers into the community also. Thank you.

MR PEARSON: Thanks, Felicity. A quick question from me. You mentioned renewable energy modules with TAFE. Is that about trying to improve the capacity of local people to work on the construction of renewable energy projects? Or what's the focus there?

MS STENING: Yes, it's a couple of areas. I guess we've been engaging with Hay TAFE as well as Hay Inc, and also their country university model as well that would utilise the Hay TAFE location to run university courses. So through Hay Inc as part of the $500,000 fund, they're looking at with us bringing in a renewable energy module. So that would be for school leavers or people who, kids who've left school before completing their HSC and really looking at understanding what jobs are available in the renewable energy sector.

And we're talking to Hay TAFE about how to upskill people in the local community to take advantage as well of the jobs that will come through construction operations.

MR PEARSON: Thank you.

MR WRIGHT: Hey, Richard, I might just ask Felicity a question. Felicity, in

terms of local impacts and demand on local services, things like education for worker families and medical services, etc, it appears as if that might be supplied at the on-project site accommodation precinct. But some of these people will be living, I presume, in some of the local towns. Any thinking about how that increased demand, particularly through the construction period, is going to be managed?

MS STENING: I'll mention a few things and then hand back to Tim on that front, Michael. Yes, we recognise that health, police, education, childcare is all going to be under some more pressure than currently, including the housing side of the equation as well.

We have been in discussions with Hay Shire Council on some housing solutions and some legacy housing solutions as well, and are recognising that some of the workforce may choose to live in the town of Hay or surrounds, and some may be in the workers' camp that we're looking at. And Tim may talk to that in terms of whether that's an existing one or one that we bring to life on the project site too. So I might just hand to Tim for some more context around that.

MR MEAD: Yes, thanks, Felicity. Yes, so probably to answer the two questions that were raised, one on accommodation, one on services. So in terms of accommodation strategy, as you probably have noted, we are conditioned, subject to approval, to produce an accommodation strategy post approval. The way we have tackled this and the way we have thought about this for a project of this nature, which as we've talked about is quite remote, is that we have included an accommodation strategy onsite, or an accommodation camp onsite. However, we are still open to the best way to deliver accommodation outcomes for both our project and the local towns.

And I say that because we have an accommodation camp already in situ for the Project Energy Connect, which was the camp that Elecnor are using, who are engaged by Transgrid to deliver Project Energy Connect. They've got a number of camps and one of them is quite close to our site, approximately 10 kilometres away near Booroorban. So that is an existing camp, and we understand that they will only need to use that camp until around the end of this year, so certainly well in advance of our construction. So we think that makes sense as a possible option.

And as Felicity said, though, we've been consulting with Council for many years now, particularly Hay Council, around their legacy housing strategy. I think it's well understood between us, the applicant, and local Councils that the many hundreds of construction, peak construction staff, won't be housed by a permanent legacy housing strategy within Hay or Deniliquin. However, where we can assist both endeavours, we would like to do that.

And I think a legacy housing strategy for Hay, which they are currently working on and they've consulted with us on as recently as last Friday, would make sense for our project from an ongoing operational jobs perspective, I think, when our operational workforce is recruited locally and is embedded in the local

community.

I think there is an option for the construction staff to be housed within the local towns as well. However, I think just given the sheer kilometres that are required to travel to this site, as we've talked about, sort of 60-odd kilometres from either Hay or Deniliquin, that's a lot of kilometres per day for workers to be travelling both directions.

And so for that reason, we think there's a strong chance that either the existing project Energy Connect camp, or our own onsite accommodation camp will need to be utilised to make sure that the project can be efficiently delivered, but also safely delivered, given that travel for our staff onsite is one of the key risks for construction. So I think that's how we're thinking about accommodation, and we definitely will continue to do so and start preparing that management plan subject to approval quite quickly.

In terms of services, obviously, that's a big issue for one single project to solve, but we have been consulting with local Councils for many years on that now. And I think I'd just like to say that we as a project are very keen to be at the table with both EnergyCo and local Councils working through those sorts of issues to ensure that there's not an undue burden on local services for the local community.

MS DINNING: Richard, could I just ask a quick question? I know we're close to time.

MR PEARSON: Yes, of course.

MS DINNING: Yep, thank you. Can I just get clarification on two sort of pots of money, so to speak, and I'm looking at my screen here. So there's the $500,000 per construction community fund. That is not dependent, is it, on the number of turbines and the amount of megawatt hours that you do, that's the amount? Whereas the figure of up to 585,000, whatever it is, for each Council is dependent on the installation?

MR MEAD: Yeah, that's absolutely right. So the first 500k bucket is just a voluntary project bucket that will be allocated. It's not subject to capacity. The second bucket, being the VPA bucket, is $1,050 total per megawatt, which is spread between the two Councils, and that's per annum, and has the 15% allocation for the First Nations fund. And then the third notable bucket is the REZ access fees bucket, which is another $2,300 that each project that's successful in access rights per annum allocates – sorry, $2,300 per megawatt per annum that we allocate to EnergyCo, and EnergyCo administer that. But I know that $600 of that allocation is for employment strategies, which is on public record from Energy Co.

MS DINNING: Yeah. So with that figure that we saw as a headline figure of 585,000, that is not likely to be realised. I mean, when is that likely to be realised?

MR MEAD: So those numbers that we provided were on the full project that

we're seeking approval for, the 1.3 gigawatts. So we can only guarantee that the first stage subject to the access rights of 831.2 would be realised, and that the subsequent funding would only be realised subject to greater capacity being available for the project in the future.

MS DINNING: So do you mind doing the maths for me what that 831.2 megawatt translates to?

MR MEAD: Yeah, sure. Why don't we do that and we'll send it to you in writing so you've got it there, yep.

MS DINNING: Yeah, because what the Councils will be getting is that the amount and assigned to that 831.2, and the rest of it may not be realised for a long time, or maybe. Nobody knows yet.

MR MEAD: Yeah, that's correct. And I would just say that we've, in our consultation with Councils, have been very transparent and clear around that point, and I think they'll be aware of that. But yes, we'll follow up with the final numbers for you.

MS DINNING: Great, thank you very much. Thank you, Chair.

MR PEARSON: Thank you. Well, we are at time. Was there anything further from Commissioners?

MR WRIGHT: I might just - one last question, Richard, going back to the start of the meeting. In terms of that first stage rollout of WTGs, I think the suggestion was it'd be up to 110 or 125 to align with the access right that EnergyCo has delivered. If, all things being equal, would that 110 to 125 turbines be what we'd see on the ground come Quarter 4 2029, which I think is when the project is proposed to go live?

MR MEAD: Yeah, that's correct, Michael. That's all we've got visibility in terms of certainty on right now. So any future capacity, we don't have certainty on.

So we would seek, if we were successful, to have a second stage in future. But right now, we don't have certainty on that.

MR WRIGHT: OK. And a second question on that; in terms of the maps we see with the location of turbines, is there a map which shows that set of 110 to 125? So do you know which turbines you wouldn't construct?

MR MEAD: No, that is all subject to detailed design approval. So there is a condition for a final layout map where that will be clearly shown, but that will be post-approval subject to detailed design.

MR WRIGHT: OK, thank you.

MR PEARSON: Thank you. I think we've covered most of the issues on the agenda. The only thing I know we haven't covered is the Department's recommended conditions of approval, which is, it's a bit premature to be getting into any detail there prior to the Commission holding public meetings and site inspection, etc, and considering its position. But did you have any broad comments on the recommended conditions? Is it something you'd been consulted on? Are you having any particular concerns?

MR MEAD: Yeah. So our broad comments would be – so firstly, we'll definitely provide a written submission here for the Commission's consideration.

MR PEARSON: Good.

MR MEAD: But our broad comments are that we're predominantly satisfied with the conditions, and, yeah, we do thank the Department for consulting with us on those conditions before referring the project. So we have seen them and had had an opportunity to consider them.

There are some minor things that we will provide in written feedback on. From our perspective, timing of delivery for this project, subject to approval, is essential from our perspective. Obviously, we as I said, we've made commitments to the New South Wales government under the REZ process, which is the government's, key targets for the road map rollout. So it's very important from our perspective that we've got a set of conditions that work efficiently for the rollout of the project.

But, I would say, as a general note, I don't think that there's anything largely contentious in what we're coming back with. And I think it's mostly drafting and clarifications to ensure the efficiency of the development of the project.

MR PEARSON: Thank you, Tim. OK. Well, we're slightly over time, but pretty much on time. Any final question or comments, Commissioners?

MS DINNING: No, thank you.

MR WRIGHT: No, thank you.

MR PEARSON: And Jane or Geoff, did you have anything that you – we've got a few questions on notice that we'll formalise and come back to you on. Anything from you, Jane?

MS ANDERSON: Nothing from me, Commissioner.

MR PEARSON: OK. So I'd like to just thank you all, applicant, for your time and the presentation and answering the vast majority of our questions. We've got a few on notice that we'll finalise with you. And, otherwise, I guess we'll see you next week in Hay and Deniliquin.

MR MEAD: Fabulous. Thanks a lot for your time, and look forward to seeing you next week.

MS DINNING: Thank you.

MR WRIGHT: Yep, likewise.

MR PEARSON: Thank you.

MS DINNING: Thank you. Look forward to the meeting.

MR PEARSON: Thank you. Bye.

MR MEAD: Bye.

>THE MEETING CONCLUDED