



New South Wales Government
Independent Planning Commission

TRANSCRIPT OF MEETING

RE: TALLAWANG SOLAR FARM (SSD-23700028)

DEPARTMENT MEETING

PANEL: TERRY BAILEY (CHAIR)
SHELLEY PENN
ALISON MCCABE

OFFICE OF THE IPC: BRAD JAMES
GEOFF KWOK

DEPARTMENT OF
PLANNING, HOUSING
AND INFRASTRUCTURE: CHRIS RITCHIE
NESTOR TSAMBOS
CAMERON ASHE

LOCATION: ZOOM VIDEOCONFERENCE

DATE: 9:30AM – 10:30AM
FRIDAY, 8th AUGUST 2025

<THE MEETING COMMENCED

MR TERRY BAILEY: I'm just checking, Geoff, have we got everybody in?

5 **MR GEOFF KWOK:** Yes, everyone's in.

MR BAILEY: Thank you. Good morning and welcome, everybody. Before we begin, I would like to acknowledge that I'm speaking to you today from Gadigal land and I acknowledge the traditional owners of all the lands from which we virtually meet today and pay my respects to Elders past and present.

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Welcome to the meeting today to discuss Tallawang Solar Farm (SSD-23700028) currently before the Commission for determination. The Applicant, Tallawang Solar Hybrid Pty Ltd as trustee for Tallawang Solar Hybrid Trust, proposes to develop a 500 megawatt solar farm and 500 to 1,000 megawatt per hour battery, approximately 8 kilometres northwest of Gulgong in the Mid-Western Region local government area, and within the Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone.

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My name is Terry Bailey and I'm the Chair of the Commission Panel, and I'm joined by my fellow commissioners Shelley Penn and Alison McCabe. We're also joined by Brad James and Geoff Kwok from the Office of the Independent Planning Commission.

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In the interests of openness and transparency and to ensure the 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.

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This meeting is one part of the Commission's consideration of this matter and will form one of several sources of information upon which the Commission will base its determination.

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It's important for the commissioners to ask questions of attendees and to clarify issues whenever it considers 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 additional information in writing, which we'll also put up on onto our website.

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And as we commence, I request that all members here today introduce themselves before they speak for the first time, and for all members to ensure that not to speak over the top of each other, to make sure that we've got accuracy in the transcript.

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We'll now begin, and as part of that, I'll hand over to Chris in terms of giving the Department's introduction.

MR CHRIS RITCHIE: So, thank you to the Chair and commissioners. So, Chris Ritchie is my name, I'm the Acting Executive Director for Energy Resources in Industry Assessments, and I'll just let the other two staff members introduce themselves.

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MR NESTOR TSAMBOS: Thanks, Chris. I'm Nestor Tsambos, Acting Director for Solar and Battery Assessments at the Department.

5 **MR CAMERON ASHE:** And Cameron Ashe, Senior Environmental Assessment Officer with the Department.

10 **MR RITCHIE:** So, if it pleases the Commission, we have a presentation just to run through and to sort of run through the Department's assessment and some key findings and to outline some of the recommendations that we had. And I think as we go through our presentation, we're happy to take questions as we go through the issues or towards the end, so we're in the hands of the Commission.

So, over to Nestor and Cameron.

15 **MR BAILEY:** Thanks, Chris. We might step through the presentation relatively quickly so that we can then move into the agenda on the key issues. And that way we'll manage time to make sure that we get through all the key issues.

20 **MR TSAMBOS:** Yes. So, we've actually – we've got the key issues within our presentation, so we should be covering off them as we go through. But obviously, if you have any questions, there's things we can spend more time on or if you want us to spend less time on a particular section, we can do that. But we have tried to make sure that the presentation does cover those matters that were sent to us.

25 So, firstly, thank you Chair, thanks IPC. I would also like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we all join today and pay my respect to Elders past and present.

30 Next slide please, Cam. So, we'll got through this fairly quickly. As Terry noted, the Tallawang Solar Farm is a proposed solar farm in the REZ approximately 8 kilometres northwest of Gulgong, and the Applicant is Tallawang Solar Hybrid.

35 Next slide please. So, before we go into the assessment issues, which includes many of the matters that the Commission set out to us as key issues, we do just want to provide some strategic context around the project in relation to its location and access to the electricity network.

40 So, broadly setting the context, noting that all coal-fired power plants in New South Wales are scheduled for closure in the next 20 years, the project will assist in providing large-scale renewable energy generation to meet increased electricity demand.

45 The Department considers that the project is consistent with the relevant national, state and local policy documents which identify the need to diversify the energy generation mix and reduce the carbon emissions intensity of the grid whilst also providing energy security and reliability.

5 There are some other additional considerations from a regional context that the site benefits from. It has direct access to the electricity network via the approved 330 kilovolt CWO REZ transmission line. The project has very good transport links noting its close proximity to the Castlereagh Highway. Biodiversity and heritage impacts have been minimised through project design and are to be offset as necessary.

10 And the site itself has been confirmed as not containing any biophysical strategic agricultural land, or BSAL land, and is comprised mostly of land that is either LSC or land and soil capability Class 4 or Class 6, which is defined as having moderate to very high restrictions, so not higher order agricultural land, essentially. The land is currently used for grazing.

15 So, the project would provide flow-on benefits to the local community, including up to 420 construction jobs and contributions to Council, which we'll talk a little bit about later. There will be broader benefits to the state through the injection of approximately 1.3 billion in capital investment into the New South Wales economy. And overall, the Department considers the site to be appropriate for the project and is consistent with the Department's Large-Scale Solar Energy Guidelines.

20 Next slide please. So, the Department exhibited the EIS in October through November 2022, received 56 public submissions, including 54 objections, and also an objection from Mid-Western Regional Council. The common matters raised in public objections were listed on the screen there, but essentially social impacts, land use compatibility, visual and hazards.

25 Now, in response to that feedback from Council and the public and to address some of the potential cumulative impacts, the project was amended to introduce a workers accommodation camp, along with some other amendments which we'll talk a little bit more about later, within the existing site boundary, and this amendment was supported by Council.

30 Throughout the assessment process itself, the Department sought advice from a number of government agencies, including Council, and also visited the site and met with nearby landowners.

35 Next slide please. So, I'm now going to go through some of the key areas for assessment for us and the matters that were identified in the Commission's agenda. Like I said, please feel free to stop me if there's a particular matter that you'd like to speak on or ask a question around.

40 Next slide please. So, firstly, for us, energy transition. So, as I've already mentioned, it does align with a range of national and state policies. It is in an area which has direct access to the CWO REZ, which is good. Importantly, the project does have access rights, as announced by EnCo, to connect into the CWO transmission line.

45 It's located on land with abundant solar resources and where solar development is permissible with consent under the Transport and Infrastructure SEPP. It has a generating capacity of 500 megawatts which is enough to power around 212,000

homes and obviously this is consistent with the New South Wales Climate Change Policy framework.

5 Next slide please. So, land use compatibility. So, the project is located on land which is within RU1 Primary Production and SP2 Infrastructure under the Mid-Western Local Environmental Plan. Under the Transport and Infrastructure SEPP, electricity generating works are permissible with consent on any land in a prescribed non-residential zone, which includes RU1 and SP2. And accordingly, the project is permissible with development consent.

10 The project is consistent with local and regional plans, including the CWO Regional Plan 2041, which includes a clear objective to support the state's transition to net zero and deliver the CWO REZ which this is a key part of.

15 So, the project itself covers approximately, 1,300 hectares with a development footprint of approximately 1,016 hectares. The site is at the moment mostly just used for grazing. There have been some periods of some minor cropping in the past, but at the moment as we understand it it's largely grazing. And like I mentioned before, the development footprint is Class 4 and 6 land, so not in that sort of Class 1, 2 and 3 land
20 which is identified as the highest agricultural capability.

25 So, the combined development footprint of the project along with all other proposed approved and/or operational SSD solar farms in the Central-West Orana region totals to around 16,853 hectares. This loss of 800, you know, of around 16,000 or 17,000 hectares of agricultural land represents a very small proportion of the overall land currently used for agricultural output in the CWO region to the order of around 0.19% of that 8.9 million hectares of land.

30 Now, importantly, neither Council nor DPI Agriculture raised concerns that the project would compromise the long-term use of the land for agricultural purposes. And the Department considers that the loss of a relatively small area of agricultural land in the region must be balanced against the broader strategic goals of the government, including the economic and environmental benefits of solar energy.

35 Now, supporting that around land use capability, the Applicant prepared a land use conflict of risk assessment, or a LUCRA as we call it, as part of their EIS to assess the potential impacts of the project on land uses surrounding the site. The LUCRA concluded that potential impacts on surrounding land uses were manageable with the implementation of a number of mitigation measures, which are included within the
40 recommended conditions of consent.

45 The Department also notes that the project's location aligns with the relevant technical and commercial factors required for selecting sites for large-scale solar energy development under the Large-Scale Solar Guideline, and based on the findings of the EIS, that the project would not result in any unacceptable impacts on the local community or the environment. Overall, the Department considers that the project is unlikely to generate any significant land use conflicts and will be compatible with existing and future land uses, noting the advice from Council and DPI Agriculture.

Next slide please, Cameron.

MR BAILEY: Just as we step through, I might just halt there for a moment, Nestor.

MR TSAMBOS: No problem.

MR BAILEY: Just to check to see if there are any queries from commissioners on the land use component? I don't think there are, so we'll move into biodiversity, and I know that we've got some queries at the end of this piece that we'll touch on.

MR TSAMBOS: Sounds good. So, the project, as I said, is around, it has a development footprint of just over a thousand hectares. The vast majority of the site is Category 1 land, which is exempt land under the Local Services Act, and essentially cleared of native vegetation or assessed as having been clear of that vegetation.

So, the project itself will affect approximately 180 hectares of native vegetation; however, of that 180 hectares, only 17-and-a-half hectares is of a sufficient vegetation integrity quality to require offsetting under the New South Wales Biodiversity Offsets Scheme. So, while it does sound like a lot of native vegetation overall, the vast majority of this vegetation is in a fairly low condition. And then the credits have been generated only off of that smaller 17 hectare area.

The main community on the site is really the Box Gum woodland CEEC, which is a SAII entity. Again, similar to the rest of the site, the majority of the 120 hectares of Box Gum woodland across the site is low quality and does not generate credits. I believe it's around 110 hectares which is low quality and does not generate any credits.

Now, through the response to submissions stage and through the project amendment, the project actually removed the transmission line component from its assessment. That's essentially because this was captured by the CWO REZ approval, which was approved in 2024. So, because the transmission connection has already been approved and considered as part of that project, there's no need to double-count those impacts here, and so that was amended along with adding that temporary work is facility and making some minor boundary amendments across the site.

Now, while that resulted in a reduction of project area overall, there was an increase in development footprint. However, that increase in development footprint is almost entirely contained within areas which are very low biodiversity value or no biodiversity value, so it's essentially well sited areas for panels from a biodiversity perspective. And the amended project obviously requires a significantly lower number of credits than the original design.

Now, importantly, CPHR, then BCS as they were, provided comment on the revised BDAR and advised that it met all the relevant requirements. They also provided comments on the conditions of consent which were incorporated into the recommended consent. The project is an EPBC project or a Commonwealth project, and the Department has also consulted with the Commonwealth on the draft

Assessment Report for the project, and the Commonwealth had no comments to make on the Assessment Report.

5 So, the Department's satisfied that all of the issues raised by CPHR during the assessment have been adequately addressed, and there are recommended conditions of consent prepared in consultation with them. Accordingly, we consider it's unlikely to significantly impact the biodiversity values of the locality. I suppose, another minor note is also noting that the number and class of biodiversity credits that's being proposed to retire, is consistent with what's in that final BDAR, concurrence from the
10 New South Wales Minister for the Energy was not required.

I might pause there, if there's any further comments/questions around biodiversity?

15 Apologies, I think you're on mute, Terry.

MR BAILEY: Apologies. I'll open up to the commissioners and note that I've got a couple of questions it'll follow up as well. Alison?

20 **MS ALISON MCCABE:** Yes. I've just got – it's more factual. I'm just trying to understand, you mentioned that there'd been a reduction in project area but an increase in the array area. Is there a plan anywhere that overlays, just so we can understand factually that change?

25 **MR TSAMBOS:** There is. I don't have one within this presentation, but we're more than happy to provide you with one after the meeting.

MS MCCABE: Yes, that's good. I just haven't found it yet. I found some original stuff – so, just for factual, just to understand that area of change.

30 And I'm going to leave to Terry to ask all the hard biodiversity questions. But the one that I am a bit familiar with is, there were changes to the Biodiversity Act in March, but didn't have savings provisions about the hierarchy of avoid, minimise and offset. Did this document need any supplementation or clarification arising from those changes? Just wondering whether that's been kind of factored into the assessment.
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MR TSAMBOS: Not as far as I'm aware, but we may need to take that on notice and confirm if there were any.

40 **MR BAILEY:** Thanks Nestor. Can I just ask a couple of questions? I did just want to check in, I note the Assessment Report refers to the EPBC and Commonwealth response; this is at paragraph 31, "who raised no concerns or comments." But I think I've heard, Nestor, that was an affirmed "no concerns or comments", as distinct from a "no response".

45 **MR TSAMBOS:** So, they – I'd have to check the exact wording of it, but the email essentially says that "We don't have any comments on the Assessment Report."

MR BAILEY: Okay. I wouldn't mind just seeing that, if you could send it through, it's just in that language of "no concerns or comments raised" in the way it's written that it's a little unclear how that actually happened.

5 I just wanted to come back to a couple of other questions that follow on, and you might walk me through this a little bit, but I think this is ... There was an amended final BDAR that was prepared in May 2024.

MR TSAMBOS: Mm-hm.

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MR BAILEY: And in that, the then BCS raised a number of pieces and gave advice on the 17th of June 2024. And then what I might call the "final, final" BDAR was presented in August 2024. So, I think that's the flow and the timing.

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What I was curious to know is, what clarifications of the issues that were raised – and again, I think the Assessment Report says that they were addressed by the Applicant, in response to those BCS advices of the 17th of June, particularly around the use of the diagnostic definitions, that they raised the treatment of bluegrass, which was raised on the 17th of June. And then I think there's a little bit as well regarding the treatment of the Box Gum woodland in their correspondence of the 17th of June.

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As far as I could read in the Assessment Report, it noted that they were addressed by the Applicant, but I did want to confirm that they've also been reviewed by what was BCS and is now CPHR?

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MR TSAMBOS: So, I presume most of the information that we'll be talking about here would be provided in one of the RFI responses to us. I don't have the answer for you right now, but we're more than happy to take those and get back to you on notice. But essentially, the RFI responses are all made public, and the Department consulted with BCS following the provision of those RFI responses, including on the conditions which they provided commentary on, and the Department finalised.

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So, that's the broad-scale answer, but we're happy to look into those in particular and get back to you if there's anything outstanding on matters.

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MR BAILEY: Yes. And so, where I'm particularly keen to understand is it relates to your Assessment Report at paragraph 94 where the revised BDAR was reviewed and accepted, "subject to finalising an approach to assuming presence of one species (bluegrass) which THS has since finalised." So, what I want is just that affirmation, it would be good to see in writing that affirmation that those aspects were then re-reviewed by CPHR off the basis of that August 2024 –

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MR TSAMBOS: To my knowledge, that species, if we are talking about the same one, was assumed presence within the BDAR, but I will double-check that, as you say.

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MR BAILEY: And I just want to make sure that CPHR had the chance to review and affirm their confidence in that BDAR work.

MR TSAMBOS: No problem.

MS SHELLEY PENN: Just a quick one, Terry.

5 **MR BAILEY:** Yes, Shelley.

MS PENN: So, I don't know whether you finished – I don't want to interrupt your flow.

10 **MR BAILEY:** No, no, you're fine Shelley, go ahead.

MS PENN: It's just a simple question for clarification, just looking at this information in front of us here which is the overlap, I guess, between the cleared native vegetation and the Box Gum woodland CEEC. Is any of that SAII to be cleared or it just – I didn't understand ...?

MR TSAMBOS: So, there will be impacts on some amount of Box Gum woodland. There's 121 hectares of it overall which is being impacted. But of that, the vast majority of it is ...

20 **MS PENN:** I understand.

MR TSAMBOS: ... native grassland or low quality. So, of the Box Gum woodland itself, I believe it's 108 of that 121 hectares that doesn't generate credits. The balance of that being around 12 or 13 hectares which would be impacted, which is of a sufficient quality to generate credits.

MS PENN: Okay, sorry, I understood that. It was more, is any of that woodland cleared? I'm just trying to work out is there an overlap between clearing versus impact?

30 **MR TSAMBOS:** Yes.

MS PENN: Okay.

35 **MR TSAMBOS:** So, if it's impacted ...

MS PENN: It's cleared.

40 **MR TSAMBOS:** ... the project assumes full loss rather than partial loss, which is what the CPHR recommends as full loss.

MS PENN: Thank you.

45 **MR BAILEY:** And just one other piece as it relates to that Box Gum woodland. I note in your Assessment Report that you rely on Dr Driscoll's research, which actually indicates a more than 30-fold difference from what the Threatened Species and Scientific Committee hold for the Box Gum woodland. So, I don't have concern with

that, but I did wonder whether that work from Mr Driscoll's been peer reviewed at any point in time? For you to be relying on it in that way. Nestor.

5 **MR TSAMBOS:** We'll have to take that on notice, I'm not sure if the ...

MR BAILEY: No, that's fine, thank you.

MR TSAMBOS: Thank you.

10 **MR BAILEY:** Anything else from commissioners on biodiversity before we move on?

MS MCCABE: No.

MR BAILEY: Thanks Nestor. Let's keep moving.

15 **MR TSAMBOS:** No problem. So, traffic and transport. So, the haulage route for the project is from the Port of Newcastle via the Golden Highway and Castlereagh Highway. Like I mentioned at the start, it is a fairly well-located project in terms of that access route really avoiding impacts to almost any local roads.

20 There is one small turn-off where the Castlereagh Highway meets what is an unnamed local road, it's probably a generous description of it – it's certainly more of a track and it's very overgrown and, as I understand, not really used. But notwithstanding, it's referred to as the "unnamed local road," which is what Council confirmed to us, that it didn't have any other name. And that stretch basically just off the highway, about 50 to 25 100 metres into the site is the only impact to local roads. So, that's well-located from that perspective.

30 So, all heavy vehicles requiring escort will access the site via the Golden Highway, then Castlereagh Highway, and then the unnamed local road. But really, that's all part of the same access directly into the site. Noting that the Applicant is proposing to upgrade that intersection treatment at the Castlereagh Highway to provide a CHR or channelised right turn, and auxiliary left-turn shoulder (AULS), to accommodate the turning movements for the largest heavy vehicles. And that upgrade will basically 35 stretch essentially to the site access itself, but there will be some minor sealing along that local unnamed road that's required.

40 The proposed transport route has sufficient capacity for the predicted traffic generation, and again, it follows a fairly standard, let's say, route from the port to the site, travelling along many of the same roads within the Port to REZ works.

45 Now, there may be some temporary works that are required along the OSOM route only, so not for the general heavy vehicles but just for a small number of OSOM routes. There may be some temporary work such as the removal of signage and the temporary removal of a refuge island at some points, particularly I think in Merriwa, but that has been discussed with Council, who's comfortable with that work and has also given their landowner's consent for those temporary works. They may not even be required if they can demonstrate that the OSOM movement can actually fit through

without needing to remove it. But in the event that it does need to be removed, those works are considered for within the consent appropriately and Council's aware of them.

5 So really, subject to the recommended conditions, and noting no outstanding concerns from Transport and Council regarding the traffic and transport measures, the Department's satisfied that the project will not result in significant impacts on the road network capacity, efficiency or safety.

10 I might also note that the introduction of a workers camp also significantly reduces the number of trips which is required on a daily basis to access the camp, so that's another benefit of that project amendment.

Any questions on transport?

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MR BAILEY: Yes, thanks Nestor. I'll just check with the commissioners.

MS MCCABE: No, I'm good.

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MR TSAMBOS: No worries. We'll move onto visual then.

MR BAILEY: Thank you.

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MR TSAMBOS: So, the site is reasonably well-located from a visual perspective, with only 20 non-associated receivers within 5 kilometres of the project site. All of those are assessed to be either low impact or less, that's largely due to some existing screening vegetation across the site.

30

Now, the Department did visit the site last year and also some nearby non-associated residences to understand those visual impacts. And there are a number of mitigation measures that the project has introduced to address that visual impact, but in particular the preservation of key vegetative screening that runs sort of north-south through parts of the site does significant work in terms of the screening from a number of those residences.

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The Department does recognise that the introduction of a solar farm to a rural setting does result in a change to the local landscape, but the Department really considers that it is a limited impact beyond the project's immediate vicinity.

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Now, I suppose noting the age of the original application, the original visual assessment was against an earlier version of the Large-Scale Solar Guideline, however, it has been considered against the revised Large-Scale Solar Guidelines, including the current one from 2024.

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Really subject to the recommended conditions, the Department is satisfied that the visual impacts of the project are acceptable.

MR BAILEY: Right. I might just hold there and open the opportunity for commissioners.

MS PENN: No, keen to see on site, for me.

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MR BAILEY: Thanks Shelley.

MS MCCABE: Probably for me, I just wanted to understand – I was just looking for some factual information in terms of, probably in a plan more than anything else, just to understand all the boundary interfaces. So, I was looking at Pungan Road and just wanting to understand how far back and whether there were any mitigation measures along that road, as an example. Did you guys get a plan that just actually had dimensions as to what the setbacks were from all those interfaces?

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MR TSAMBOS: So, I suppose the exact dimensions was something to be finalised in detailed design. We don't have the sort of plans to that level. We can certainly have a look for you and see if there's some figures within the visual assessment that can assist in your consideration of the matter.

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MS MCCABE: Yes. I suppose I do, I think, from my point of view, I do like to see specificity in terms of where an array is or isn't, to actually be able to accept conclusions in terms of visual assessment. Do you know what I mean? There may or may not be a difference at distance, but for the receivers closer in, where there's something maybe 10 metres or 20 metres back, may or may not make a difference. So, I'm just interested in the specificity and the basis of that visual assessment. So yes, that would be good – and I'll ask the Applicant as well.

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In terms of Puggoon Road – and I hope I'm saying that correctly – do I take it that there's no, there wasn't a need for mitigation measures? Is that what the conclusion was; that there's no landscaping proposed along Puggoon Road?

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MR TSAMBOS: No, there's no landscaping along Puggoon Road is my understanding. There may be some existing vegetation, however, that is being retained. But I'm not certain off the top of my head, so we'll need to confirm that for you.

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MS MCCABE: Yes, that's all right, and as Shelley said, we'll have a look on site. I was interested, I note one of the receivers entered into, I think it's a [Remove of 00:30:31] Neighbour Agreement?

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MR TSAMBOS: An agreement, yes.

MS MCCABE: Yes. Do you know what the terms of that agreement were?

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MR TSAMBOS: I am not certain of the exact details of it, but I believe we may have discussed it previously with the Applicant. But I don't know any of the specific amounts of anything like that, if that's the question, sorry.

MS MCCABE: That's all right. I suppose I can ask the Applicant that as well. And you said you got to site – did you get to the heritage areas outside of Gulgong as well and, I think, is it Flirtation Hill area, did you get to have a look at from those vantage points as well?

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MR TSAMBOS: So, I wasn't on the site visit, but I do believe they were driven past, I'm not a hundred per cent, I'll need to confirm that with the attendees of the site visit.

MS MCCABE: Yes, I just wanted to understand where you got to. But we – that's all right, I don't need clarification, we will go, we'll pick the sites to have a look at. Thank you.

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MR TSAMBOS: No problem.

MR BAILEY: Thanks Alison. And just when you're looking at that vegetation piece, Nestor, could you just do the difference between what might be vegetation in Rudd Reserve versus vegetation on the property itself.

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MR TSAMBOS: Sure.

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MR BAILEY: Thank you. We might move onto the temporary workers accommodation.

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MR TSAMBOS: Thank you. Next slide please. So, as I mentioned, the project was amended to include a temporary workers facility, that was really to address the concerns from Council and the community in the exhibition of the application.

The amended application includes a proposed temporary workers accommodation facility which has got capacity for 400 construction staff. It's located within an existing corner of the site, essentially, so it didn't add any new lots or any additional parcels of land into the development; it was a reconfiguration that the Applicant undertook and located that within a section of their own site.

30

It is in the southeastern corner of the project area, approximately 5 hectares in size. I suppose, importantly, access to that camp is to be provided from the main access, so there's no separate access that involves Puggoon Road. There is an emergency access, I believe, onto Puggoon Road, but that's only for emergency entry and exit. And the site will be accessed entirely from that main access off the highway onto the unnamed road.

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As I mentioned, the camp itself does reduce the volumes of trips that are generated by the project and also very clearly reduces the impact on temporary accommodation and workers accommodation within the REZ and within the broader area.

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Now, the camp itself is located in a part of the site where it doesn't significantly result in any increases to the original noise or visual impacts that were proposed as part of the original project. And the Applicant has demonstrated that they have suitable means of servicing the temporary workers accommodation, including things like on-site

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medical centre with a qualified nurse and first-aid station. We consulted with NSW Health on that provision and they were comfortable with that approach.

5 Similarly, in addressing some concerns around public safety, the Applicant has committed to employing security personnel on site and also consulted with NSW Police who didn't raise any concerns with the project either. They're also committed to carrying out further consultation with the Police later on, as required.

10 The Department is satisfied that the addition of the temporary workers accommodation facility will reduce the potential cumulative impacts of the project and is well located within the existing site.

MR BAILEY: Thanks Nestor. I know there's a couple of questions, I think. Alison?

15 **MS MCCABE:** Yes. Look, I think this has been a good amendment to the proposal. I'm just wondering, and I know the provisions of the Mid-Western Regional – sorry, Mid-Western Council LEP that has criteria around temporary workers accommodation. And its name it is a temporary use. I'm wondering whether, and I note that your conditions have also required it to be decommissioned at the end of the – there is a
20 condition requiring decommissioning.

I'm just wondering whether there was any thought – and this will also be a question for the Applicant – as to what role this facility might play for the broader region, given there's so many solar farm proposals either proposed, approved or in the works. And how it might sit, I'm not sure, I haven't gone down the – looked into the work that EnergyCo might have done in terms of accommodation needs.
25

Was there any thought to hanging onto this for a bit longer so it could be used for other facilities that may already be approved or may in the future get approved?
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MR TSAMBOS: So, in terms of what was proposed under this specific consent, this isn't seeking approval for the use of the camp for any project other than its own. Now, in terms of the decommissioning of the site itself and the temporary workers accommodation, so I do believe that that condition does actually have Planning Secretary's discretion over that decommissioning.
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So, I think that does leave an avenue for it not to be, you know, not to be deconstructed and rehabilitated at the end of that period. But obviously subject to an application for essentially the Secretary's discretion, would be supported by a number of other information and documents to consider any alternate use. And of course, any alternate use may need to be covered by whatever other project that might be seeking to use it.
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I suppose that the answer is that the Department's conditions don't shut the door on it, but what is proposed under this application is what has been assessed, which is the use for this project only. And the Department's conditions set accounts for that.
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MS MCCABE: All right, thanks.

MR RITCHIE: I think maybe, Alison, if I can just add to that a little bit too. So, there is a body of work that the whole-of-government agencies are doing in terms of cumulative issues around the CWO REZ, including around and some of the focal points that the Department was responsible for, included housing accommodation as well as waste management and population.

So, there is a bit of collaborative work being done around what is the trends and themes for workers needs, what is the population growth expected to be, what's the waste requirements, what's the water requirements. So, a lot of this information, we've done a bit of that work now, and we're sort of just having those internal discussions and reporting up through that group around some of those activities that we've identified, and opportunities that potentially we've seen.

So, in terms of what you're raising, these are being factored in as part of a broader coordinated government consideration.

MS MCCABE: Yes, thanks Chris. Am I right in understanding, am I remembering correctly, was EnergyCo doing some work as well or involved in that work?

MR RITCHIE: Yes. Yes, so there was, from my understanding, some original work done by EnergyCo across a number of the REZ areas. Now, what we're focusing on at the moment is adding to that work. So, the Department's dealt with CWO, there's work that the Department's doing in the southwest and EnergyCo are doing New England. So, there is a bit of that phasing of that work at the moment, so your recollection is right – there were some original work but also some additional work that EnergyCo is doing in some other zones.

MS PENN: Can I just ask a couple of follow-ons from that, Terry. Just details, one is the, I guess, the counter to Alison's question is, just a clarification, is the decommissioning time bound? I think construction is three years or something, so do they have to have it done by four years – is that ...?

MR TSAMBOS: Yes, the wording of the condition B44 is that unless the Planning Secretary agrees otherwise within 12 months of commencing operation, the project, the Applicant must decommission and rehabilitate the temporary workers accommodation.

MS PENN: Okay, thanks. And the other one was on – sorry, Nestor, thank you, that's helpful – and the other one was on waste. I think, from memory, they were contemplating two options, which is treatment on site or removal from site and treatment in a facility elsewhere. What's the Department's preference – I mean, is it more just about stipulating requirements around either, if that's the case, or ...?

MR TSAMBOS: Yes. I don't think the Department has a firm preference. I think the Department's preference is something that works for the Applicant and for Council, in particular. We've conditioned a Waste Management Plan, obviously, to allow for that consultation. But as you mentioned, there are those two options.

5 But certainly, I'm not of the view that one is preferable to the other. I think we do hear from all the different councils throughout the REZ that they have their own preferences and situations in terms of waste facilities and so on and so forth, so I think it does really depend on that individual context, and obviously the condition allows for that to be finalised and in consultation with the Council.

MS PENN: Yes, thanks. Terry, you're on mute.

10 **MR BAILEY:** I think following on from that, Nestor, just a moment there is, there is some discussion in the documentation about that being in Dubbo, and Dubbo being uncertain around whether it can actually receive some of that waste. So, I just wanted to capture what your engagement with Dubbo might be on that, or whether that does influence a position from the Department about whether it's on site or off site?

15 **MR TSAMBOS:** So, I do believe that the Applicant has consulted with Dubbo Council and confirmed a number of the waste streams at particular facilities. And so, I think that there has been engagement essentially already around those potential options. So, from the perspective of whether that influences the preferred option, I would suppose only unless the situation has changed since the Applicant has spoken to Council around it. But we did ensure that the Applicant spoke to Council in proposing
20 their options, essentially, and it's not something that we've proposed without Council's input into.

25 **MR BAILEY:** Thanks Nestor. Any other questions on the TWA, because we want to move into cumulative impact? And I think we've covered a fair bit of waste, we'll do that very quickly in a couple of slides time, Nestor, but let's talk cumulative impact.

30 **MR TSAMBOS:** Yes, I was about to say, I think we've teed off on some of that. So, for cumulative impacts, I mean really the Department, I guess, acknowledges that there is a number of approved and proposed energy projects in the region. Really, the Department undertakes it assessment with reference to the Cumulative Impact Assessment Guidelines.

35 The Department has considered the potential cumulative impacts of the project in accordance with that Cumulative Impact Assessment Guideline and, really, we are satisfied that the project has been designed to minimise opportunities for those cumulative impacts. I mean, talking through some of them, obviously, cumulative transport is the key one, and really this project is well located from that regard, basically just going across the key parts of the state road network to have that capacity.
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In terms of noise, noise assessment's always undertaken from a cumulative perspective. I think in many of the original cumulative concerns that were raised in the exhibition, a lot of those have been resolved either by the amendment introducing the accommodation camp or subsequent information provided by the Applicant during
45 their RFIs.

And really, the nature of the Cumulative Impact Assessment Guidelines is now other applications that are proposing to develop in the REZ, need to take Tallawang into

account in their assessment and in all their studies, and that's really the way that that future proofing, I suppose, of cumulative impacts assessment is done. So, now that this project is in the system, any others that come through need to account for it in the design of their EIS and their technical studies.

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MR BAILEY: Thanks Nestor. I might just open up – I think there'll be a few questions on this, and I'll come back to one in a minute.

10 **MS MCCABE:** I probably don't. I'll probably wait until I get out there and get a feel for the site more than anything else, I think.

15 **MS PENN:** Me too, other than I think the implication of what you were just saying, Nestor, is that in a way if we presuppose this was to be approved, then others would have to consider it. But it's not yet approved, so ...

MR TSAMBOS: That they do have to consider it even though it's not approved.

MS PENN: Okay.

20 **MR TSAMBOS:** So, I guess the Cumulative Impact Assessment Guidelines says that you need to consider, so when you lodge your EIS ...

MS PENN: It's in the system?

25 **MR TSAMBOS:** Exactly. So, if it's been exhibited. Obviously, there's a number of projects that have SEARs, that are at early stages.

MS PENN: Yes, of course.

30 **MR TSAMBOS:** And really, there's no information on those projects. But if it's in the system at the time of which you lodge, the Cumulative Impact Assessment Guidelines say that you need to consider it.

MS PENN: Thank you.

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MR TSAMBOS: So, those projects will have been considering Tallawang.

MS PENN: Yes, thanks.

40 **MR BAILEY:** Thanks. Thanks Nestor. Thanks Shelley. I've got a slight crossover issue, Nestor, just as we go into the next one, in relation to the transmission project. But it does have a connection into the cumulative impact piece. Because I'm looking particularly at the response to the Native Title claimants, concerns around impacts on Aboriginal cultural heritage. And one of the components in the response from the
45 Proponent's work here is to say that in fact because the transmission line has been withdrawn, it's no longer relevant to this project.

So, I understand that technically, but I would like to get some understanding of what that means cumulatively, because it was raised as an area of great Indigenous significance to the Native Title claimants, and it's been withdrawn from this project so it's not being considered in this project. But how is that – so, it's a crossover between those two agenda items, between the cumulative impact piece as it relates to Aboriginal cultural heritage in this context, and that aspect around the transmission line being withdrawn from the project.

MR TSAMBOS: Yes, I suppose the key point is that while it was withdrawn from this project, it's only withdrawn because it was assessed and approved under the CWO REZ transmission project. So, that project would have considered Aboriginal heritage in detail and that's not just for that component of the transmission network, but obviously across the project more broadly. So, those impacts have been assessed but noting that they no longer fall within the area of this project, the assessment has considered the project as described, essentially.

Now, those impacts have been considered and ultimately approved, really, and that's the thing, this isn't something where it's another project that's potentially going to be approved or under assessment. It's a project that the New South Wales Government has already signed off on and in terms of those impacts from that transmission connection, so really, that, as far as we see it, is – if we are to assess those impacts again, that's essentially a double-counting.

And I don't mean that specifically for heritage, but for let's say biodiversity or anything like that, it is clear that [cross-talk 00:47:46] accounted through [cross-talk 00:47:48].

MR BAILEY: I understand the separation. I certainly understand that separation, Nestor, but it's the cumulative component that we're talking about and how that cumulatively consideration happens. So, what might be valuable for us is to actually understand that – if we could get access to that decision and particularly as it relates to the Aboriginal cultural heritage component, so that we can review that in the cumulative context for our decision making.

MR TSAMBOS: Sure. The Applicant had a – sorry, I might just address that. Look, I'm happy to do that, but the Applicant as part of the response to submissions, I believe, met with that Native Title claimant a number of times, and has – those impacts and their concerns have certainly been considered within our Assessment Report. Sorry, Shelley.

MS PENN: No, no, apologies, we've jumped in, it's the same thing, but I was also, I think Terry's point, I'm interested also from visual impact point of view – cumulative visual impact and so on. So, on page, I think, 5 of your Assessment Report, it shows the connection infrastructure which is on the site, but obviously it's been approved as part of that separate approval. However, it was – I just want to know what that looks like; is that pylons and overhead lines? Just so that we can understand, again, from a cumulative point of view, what we're seeing on the site, and it's really more about that from a cumulative perspective for me. I just wasn't clear from the Assessment Report.

MR TSAMBOS: No problem. We can take that on notice.

MS PENN: Thank you.

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MR BAILEY: Thanks Nestor.

MR TSAMBOS: Well, look, noting the time, I think I can skip over waste as we've already discussed it, unless there were any further questions on that?

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MR BAILEY: No, pop your next slide.

MR TSAMBOS: Next one please Cameron, thank you. So, for cultural heritage, so there were a number of sites recorded across the project area. The Applicant has committed to fencing three of the pads, I mean, that's all of the pads, it should say, prior to construction to avoid impacts to them.

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Some of the other sites of low archaeological significant may be salvaged in accordance with the approved Cultural Heritage Plan. And then some of the sites may be salvaged or may be avoided entirely, depending on the sort of detailed design, but if they're salvaged obviously that will be in accordance with the Cultural Heritage Plan.

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The Heritage NSW recommended a number of conditions of consent, including the Heritage Management Plan, which we've obviously adopted. They also requested a setback, a minimum setback of 150 metres from the temporary workers accommodation to any drainage lines, which the Applicant committed to. So, on that basis, that their feedback has been addressed, the Department considers that the project would not significantly impact the Aboriginal heritage values in the locality.

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MR BAILEY: Thanks Nestor. I'll just check with commissioners, the prominent question I had before related to that cumulative component and then the opportunity to conduct the site visit.

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MR TSAMBOS: Sure.

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MR BAILEY: Anything Shelley or Alison before we move on?

MS MCCABE: No.

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MR BAILEY: Thank you. Let's move to the last of the dot points.

MR TSAMBOS: Yes. So, decommissioning and rehabilitation. So, really, we've talked about this a little bit as well in terms of the accommodation facilities specifically, and yes, as I mentioned, there is that Planning Secretary's discretion of that particular condition that's recommended.

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Really, the operational life of the project is for 35 years. However, there is potential for it to operate longer if the solar panels are upgraded over time, which is permitted under

the recommended conditions of consent – or would be, rather. And with the implementation of objective-based conditions and monitoring requirements, the Department considers that the solar farm will be suitably decommissioned at the end of the project life or within 18 months if operations cease unexpectedly and that the site can be appropriate rehabilitated.

MR BAILEY: Thanks Nestor. I don't ...

MR TSAMBOS: So, yes, look, we do have some other points but I suppose noting the time and noting that those were the key ones on the agenda, I'm happy to keep going through some of those others, but also happy just to take questions more broadly if you ...

MR BAILEY: No, let's touch those very quickly if we can, we might go a bit over time but let's Nestor.

MR TSAMBOS: Yes, I can go in a rapid fire, that's no problem.

MR BAILEY: Yes.

MR TSAMBOS: So, noise and then very quickly, so there are some nearby receivers who will have some exceedances of the noise management level. All of those exceedances are sort of relatively minor, between 1 to sort of 16 decibels, and all of them are well below the highly noise affected criteria within the ICNG or the Interim Construction Noise Guideline.

The Applicant has proposed a number of mitigation measures to address that, including a management plan so that the scheduling of works and other mitigation measures that's consistent with the Noise Policy for Industry. Really, the operational noise, the project complies with all relevant criteria, as calculated in accordance with the NPFI or the Noise Policy for Industry.

Flooding, very quickly, so the Applicant – sorry.

MS MCCABE: Nestor, sorry, can I just – a quick question on noise. And I haven't done the [unintelligible 00:53:27] of knowledge in the Noise Report. I'm just conscious of the BESS. What were the noise mitigants – was there any noise mitigation required for that? And I think it's been a trending thing that we're getting walls around them. I just haven't ...

MR TSAMBOS: Yes, that certainly is a trend. That's really more of a trend with the sort of centralised batteries, where all the battery units are located in one place. As this is a distributed battery, the cells are sort of located evenly spaced across the site, and obviously that, well not obviously rather, but that does generally result in a lower noise impact as a result of that, rather than obviously having all of those noisy batteries together in one area.

So really, no mitigation was required for the battery, noting that their operational noise modelling just shows them complying with all of the relevant criteria in all circumstances. So, essentially, their mitigation is the design, really.

5 **MS MCCABE:** Yes, okay, thanks, I just hadn't got there, so I was just wondering. Thank you.

10 **MR TSAMBOS:** No problem. Look, very quickly, so flooding, look, there are some ephemeral water courses that traverse the site. The Applicant's modelled those flood events and obviously sited key project infrastructure clear of those areas. In particular, the TWA is clear of waters up to the 0.2% AEP event and is also raised up, and then only experiences a very minor amount of water in that scenario, which is the reasonably close to the PMF.

15 **SES** were consulted on the project and gave feedback on the conditions of consent, which we adopted, and the Applicant's committed to preparing a Construction Flood Emergency Response Plan which details their response to that.

20 Water sources, so I suppose similar to waste, there's a number of options in terms of where the water can come from. The Applicant's demonstrated to us that they've done engagement with available suppliers so that there are pathways available to them to source that water. And those water sources will be finalised in consultation with Council in a similar way to the waste.

25 Bushfire, very quickly, it's not mapped as bushfire-prone land, however, a bushfire assessment was undertaken. Obviously, Fire and Rescue and RFS were consulted throughout the project; neither of them raised concerns, they incorporated their sort of standard management conditions and recommendations in terms of asset protection zones and fire and safety studies and so on.

30 Glint and glare, essentially the Applicant has done an assessment to consider whether there would be any glint or glare impacts to some nearby receivers. The Department has, I suppose, conditioned a particular operating scenario which the Applicant identified where essentially by having the panels rest at a certain angle at certain parts of the day, you eliminate all the glare for all of those receivers. So, that's been conditioned appropriately in accordance with the situation the Applicant identified.

35 **MS PENN:** Can I have a quick one on that one, Nestor, sorry. I read that, and I wondered what are the implications for them as far as solar gain, and therefore money. Like, there must be some impact, I assume, and therefore is that a risk – or how is it protected?

40 **MR TSAMBOS:** So, I mean, I suppose the first thing is that this was a situation that they proposed to us as part of their assessment, which we formalised. Now, this might be more of a question for the Applicant, but my understanding is really the highest glare impacts are right at the end of the day and very early in the morning when the sun is coming from a sort of more horizontal angle and that's what creates that glare.

MS PENN: Sure.

MR TSAMBOS: And I believe those aren't really the sort of key generation times in any case.

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MS PENN: Thanks.

MR TSAMBOS: And notwithstanding that it's included clearly within our consent, so it's a matter for our Compliance Team as well.

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MS PENN: Sure, thank you. We can ask them.

MR TSAMBOS: No problem. VPA. A VPA has been agreed with Mid-Western Regional Council, which is excellent, the terms of which are included in the consent for you to have a review. And in terms of contamination, the Applicant provided a preliminary site investigation or PSI in accordance with the Hazard SEPP. On review of that, the Department considers the risk for contamination as low across the site and that the use is suitable for the – rather the proposed use is suitable for the site in accordance with the SEPP.

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And that was it. It was a little rapid fire there, if there's any other questions or ... Sorry, Terry, I think you're still on mute.

MR BAILEY: Thanks Nestor. I'll just check very quickly with the commissioners if there's any follow-up questions. And just as we're drawing to a conclusion, I just wanted to check with Brad and Geoff to see if they had anything that they wanted to clarify at this point?

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MR BRAD JAMES: Nothing from me, Terry.

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MR KWOK: Nor me.

MR BAILEY: Thanks Brad. Thanks Geoff. The recommended conditions, that's something we'll certainly come back as we get a little bit further through the project, Chris and Nestor. So, we will be looking at that, we will be going through that in some detail, obviously. We'll pick up some of those matters after the site inspection as well, that gives us a better understanding. So there'll be, I expect, some dialogue later in the determination process regarding the recommended conditions.

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The other I just wanted to let know before we do conclude is that there are a series of questions today or follow-ups, we'll work with the team in terms of putting those in writing and getting them across to you as quickly as we can in terms of responding. So, that will give us – we'll give you an understanding of the areas that we do want to ask questions in. There's a few that you've probably already picked up that'll be worth following through, that will certainly pop up.

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And again, just before we finish up, one last check if there were any final comments from the Department before there are any final comments from commissioners or IPC?

MR TSAMBOS: No, nothing from me.

MR ASHE: All good here.

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MR BAILEY: All good then. I wanted to say thank you for the presentation. Thank you for the responses. And we'll correspond over the coming couple of days, as quickly as we can to get those questions to you so that we can keep our work going. And again, recognising there'll be no doubt some follow up post the site inspection.

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So, thanks everybody.

[All say thank you]

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>THE MEETING CONCLUDED