



TRANSCRIPT OF MEETING

RE: YANCO BATTERY ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEM (SSD-67478479)

DEPARTMENT MEETING

PANEL: KEN KANOFSKI (CHAIR)
BRONWYN EVANS

OFFICE OF THE IPC: BRAD JAMES
ISAAC CLAYTON

**DEPARTMENT OF
PLANNING, HOUSING
& INFRASTRUCTURE:** IWAN DAVIES
SAM WYNN
MEGAN RAMSDALE

LOCATION: ZOOM VIDEOCONFERENCE

DATE: 1:30PM – 2:30PM
MONDAY, 15th SEPTEMBER 2025

<THE MEETING COMMENCED

[Audio gap until 00:00:13]

- 5 **MR KANOFSKI:** And before that though, I'd like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of land on which we're meeting, I'm on Wangal country, and pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging.
- 10 Welcome to the meeting today to discuss the Yanco Battery Energy Storage System (state significant development 67478479) which is currently before the Commission for determination.
- 15 ACenergy proposes to develop the Yanco Battery Energy Storage System, a 250 megawatt, 1,100 megawatt-hour battery and associated grid connection infrastructure. The project would connect to the existing Transgrid 330 kVA Yanco substation which is located directly to the east of the site. The project is located approximately 7 kilometres south of Leeton in the Leeton Shire local government area.
- 20 My name is Ken Kanofski, I'm the Chair of this Commission Panel, and I'm joined by my fellow commissioner, Dr Bronwyn Evans. We're also joined by Brad James and Isaac Clayton from the Office of the Independent Planning Commission.
- 25 In the interests of openness and transparency and to ensure the full capture of information, today's meeting is being recorded, and a complete transcript will be produced and made available on the Commission's website.
- 30 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. It is important for the commissioners to ask questions of attendees and to clarify issues whenever it is considered appropriate. If you are asked a question and you're 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 also put up on our website.
- 35 I request that 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 the accuracy of the transcript.
- 40 So, thank you. And I think we got your presentation pack through, so maybe that's a reasonable place to start, I think, if you want to walk through that and we'll kind of go with questions as we go, and then wrap up and see where we get to in the end.
- 45 **MR DAVIES:** Absolutely, yes, whatever works best for you, Ken. By way of introduction, I'm Iwan Davies, Director, Energy Assessments at the NSW Department of Planning. I am joined by Sam Wynn, the Principal within the team, and Megan Ramsdale, Environmental Assessment Officer.

Megan, if you could share your screen, please. Thank you. I'll just wait for that to pop up. And if we go into Presentation mode or style. Thank you.

5 So, good afternoon, I'm Iwan Davies, Director, Energy Assessments at the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure. I'd like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we all joined today's meeting. I would like to pay my respects to their Elders past and the present and extend that respect to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people here today.

10 Next slide, please. I'll provide a brief overview of the key assessment issues focused on those in the Commission's agenda, and in particular the key reasons for the Department's recommendation to the Commission to approve the project.

15 Next slide, please. Before I dive into the assessment issues, it's important to provide some strategic context about the project in relation to its location and access to the electricity network. Noting that all coal-fired power plants in New South Wales are scheduled for closure in the next 15 to 20 years, the project would assist in supporting the transition away from traditional power generation and towards renewable power generation by providing a firming capacity to smooth out peaks and troughs in
20 renewable generation.

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

There are additional considerations from a regional context that the project site would benefit from. The site is located adjacent to an existing 330 kilovolt substation. The site is in close proximity to the state road network with Irrigation Way located
30 1.4 kilometres to the east.

Biodiversity and heritage impacts are minimal. The site is located on land that is not mapped as biophysical strategic agricultural land (that is, BSAL land) and entirely on land that has a land and soil capability of Class 6, which is defined as having very
35 severe limitations. The land is currently primarily used for rotational grazing and irrigated annual winter cropping. There are no significant visual or noise impacts on non-associated residences.

40 The project would provide flow-on benefits to the local community, including up to 70 construction jobs, and contributions to Council. There would be broader benefits to the state through an injection of approximately \$297 million in capital investment into the New South Wales economy.

45 Next slide, please. Before we go to the key matters on the Commission's agenda, we'll talk to engagement. So, the Department exhibited the EIS in November and December 2024 and received 64 unique public submissions, consisting of 63 objections and 1 in support. The most common matters raised in public objections were renewables scepticism, and hazards including bushfire and contamination.

No public submissions were made by individuals from Yanco. Five objections were received from within 100 kilometres of the site, the nearest being 6 kilometres from the site. The remaining 58 objections and 1 submission in support were from more than 100 kilometres of the site, 17 of which were interstate.

The Department considers there is a low level of local interest or concerns towards the project, and there are relatively low levels of residual impacts associated with the proposal. Throughout the assessment process, the Department sought advice from 12 government agencies, in addition to Leeton Shire Council, and visited the site.

Next slide, please. I am now going to talk about what we found to be the key areas for assessment and the matters identified in the Commission's agenda.

Next slide, please. Energy transition. The project aligns with the range of national and state policies, which identify the need to diversity the energy generation mix and reduce the carbon emissions intensity of the grid, while providing energy security and reliability. The project is in an area with access to the transmission network with available capacity and on land battery storage is permissible with development consent under the Transport and Infrastructure SEPP and the EP&A Act.

The project has a delivery capacity of 250 megawatts and a storage capacity of 1,100 megawatts, which would provide enough energy to power about 100,000 homes. Battery storage is consistent with the NSW Climate Change Policy Framework of achieving net zero emissions by 2050.

Next slide, please. Regarding land use compatibility. The site is located on land within the RU1 Primary Production and SP2 Infrastructure zones within the Leeton LEP. The proposed development has no [unintelligible 00:08:40] permissible via the Transport and Infrastructure SEPP and section 4.383 of the EP&A Act.

The project is consistent with local and regional plans, including the Leeton LEP and the Riverina Murray Regional Plan 2041, which identifies the need to support well-located renewable energy industries and the consequent transition away from fossil fuels.

Regarding loss of agricultural land. The project covers approximately 11.45 hectares and comprises 7.23 hectares of agricultural land, all of which is Class 6 land, which is limited agricultural capabilities. The land subject to development would be capable of return to useable agricultural land following decommissioning of the project.

Neither Council nor DPI Agriculture raised concerns that the project would compromise the long-term use of the land for agricultural purposes. And importantly, the loss of a small area of agricultural land in the region must be balanced against the broader strategic goals of the government, along with the environmental and economic benefits of the project to support renewable energy.

5 The Applicant prepared the Land Use Conflict Risk Assessment (or LUCRA) as part of the 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 the proposed mitigation measures, including traffic management measures, weed management, rehabilitation, and decommissioning plans, and noise and dust mitigation.

10 The Department notes that the project is located adjacent to Transgrid's existing 330 kV Yanco substation and is in close proximity to the state road network. The project's development footprint accounts for a tiny fraction or 0.01% of the agricultural land in Leeton Shire LGA, and the Department considers cumulative impacts on regional productivity would be negligible.

15 Based on the findings of the EIS, the project would not result in any unacceptable impacts on the local community or the environment. Overall, the Department considers that the project would be unlikely to generate any significant land use conflicts and would be compatible with existing and future land uses.

20 Next slide, please. Regarding hazards. The Preliminary Hazard Analysis (or the PHA) found that subject to mitigation measures including minimum separation distances between the BESS, or BESS containers and off-site sensitive receivers, the project risks did not exceed acceptable criteria and propagation risks within the site were acceptable.

25 The Department is satisfied that the dangerous goods stored on site would be unlikely to exceed the threshold limits in the Department's Hazardous and Offensive Development Application Guidelines, applying set 33, and the project is not potentially hazardous.

30 The project would comply with the International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection Guidelines for electric, magnetic and electromagnetic fields. Subject to the implementation of a detailed Emergency Plan and emergency services information package, as required by the recommended conditions of consent, the Department considers that risks associated with the BESS would be minimal.

35 Regarding contamination. ACE conducted a Preliminary Site Investigation (or a PSI) which includes a review of historical land uses, review of public records and historical imagery, a detailed site inspection and soil sample collection and analysis. ACE advised there was no evidence to suggest past land uses had caused any contamination on the site. Soil sampling for contaminants indicated typical soil chemistry characteristics have not been significantly adversely impacted by contaminants. All soil contaminant levels were below levels considered to present risk to human health and did not require further investigation.

45 ACE found that the risk of contamination at the site is unlikely and no further assessment or remediation is required. Any risks would be managed as part of an unexpected finds protocol to guide responses to finds of contaminated, hazardous or unsuitable material during construction.

The Department considers that the proposed use of the land is not intensive and low risk, noting the low number of people required to access the site during operation.

5 Regarding bushfire. The site is not mapped – sorry, not identified as bushfire-prone land under Council’s Bushfire-Prone Land Map. RFS advised the Bushfire Assessment Report adequately addressed the requirements of RFS’s Planning for Bushfire Protection 2019.

10 The Department considers that fire hazards and risks, including bushfire risks, can be suitably controlled through the implementation of standard procedures and recommendations made by Fire and Rescue NSW and RFS, including asset protection zones, preparation of a fire safety study in consultation with Fire and Rescue NSW, development of a comprehensive Emergency Response Plan, development of an
15 emergency services information package, and development of an emergency responders induction package.

20 Regarding other issues. The Department also conducted a detailed assessment of all other matters and concluded that there would be no significant impacts.

25 Next slide, please. In summary, electricity generating works on the site are permissible, with consent, in accordance with the Transport and Infrastructure SEPP. The overall agricultural productivity of the region would not be significantly reduced. The site is located adjacent to the 330 kV Yanco substation and has access to the road
25 network.

30 The project has been designed to largely avoid site constraints, including nearby non-associated receivers, agricultural land, water courses, remnant native vegetation, and Aboriginal heritage sites, while maintaining its ability to utilise the existing electricity infrastructure and road network.

35 The project would assist the transition of the electricity sector from coal and gas fired power stations to low emission sources and is consistent with New South Wales policy. It would provide 250 megawatts and 1,100 megawatt-hours of energy storage to dispatch energy to the grid when the energy generation from renewable energy resources is limited, which is enough to power 100,000 homes in peak demand.

40 The Department considers that the project achieves an appropriate balance between maximising the energy security and reliability and minimising the potential impacts on surrounding land users and the environment. Through job creation and capital investment and a planning agreement with Council, the project would also stimulate economic investment in renewable energy and provide flow-on benefits to the local community.

45 On balance, the Department considers that the project is in the public interest and is approvable, subject to the recommended conditions of consent.

Thank you, and happy to take questions.

MR KANOFSKI: Okay. I'll just start – I've only got a couple, but just, I mean, a lot of the submissions for this and other renewables projects talk a lot about fire risk. I'm just interested in the Department's view on the battery storage systems generally and how you regard the kind of fire risk issue.

MR DAVIES: Absolutely. Great question, and hence why it's one of the key issues that we assess in all battery projects, but also the majority of renewable energy projects now, given that wind farms and solar farms generally are submitted with a battery on site.

So, it's clearly an evolving space with many technological advances. The Department works closely with Fire and Rescue NSW and RFS, importantly, in developing our conditions of consent. Not only do we consult with both agencies throughout the assessment process, that's from scoping and SEAR stage through EIS, response to submissions, and the draft conditions. But we also work separately with both agencies in developing a standard set of conditions that would minimise or mitigate the potential hazards or fire risk from batteries.

Both agencies are comfortable with the conditions that we have, and hence why we also have strict post-approval requirements, particularly for the Emergency Plan and the Fire Safety Study that have to be undertaken in consultation with those agencies when they wish, and they are detailed plans that our post-approvals team works through at that stage.

MR KANOFSKI: Okay. Thank you. Bronwyn, anything else on fire?

DR BROWNYN EVANS: No, that's very helpful. Thank you.

MR KANOFSKI: Just moving on to a couple of other issues. The 70 local jobs, and just one of the big issues with a range of these renewables projects is the capacity of these towns to accommodate remote workers, essentially. Do we have a sense for, on this, it strikes me there's probably a lot of quite generic labour in this construction. Because the batteries come in, you just bolt them on, right? I'm simplifying it, but it's really about building a yard to put batteries in, which I would imagine probably could use quite a lot of local labour. Is that the Department's view?

MR DAVIES: Look, I don't have the detailed breakdown of the type of labour force or the skillsets required across those 70 construction jobs, whether that's engineers, electricians, general construction workers, fencing contractors, haulage contractors etc., and site office personnel. But ultimately for this project, that is being supported by a study by the Applicant, which I can't talk to directly, but we worked closely or look to understand from Council if there are any comments or concerns there regarding employment or accommodation. Now, noting that there are – it's still 70 workers, so it's still a good, and it's a big number, but compared to perhaps other types of SSDs, is a little lower, where often now other types of projects include an accommodation camp on site.

But our understanding, or I think it's factual, that Council has not raised any significant –

MR KANOFSKI: [Cross-talk 00:20:24] Council aren't concerned about impacts on local accommodation – which is a feature of some of these other projects, right?

MR DAVIES: Yes, yes, certainly, yes, and hence why we've gone with the accommodation and employment strategy as a condition of consent for this project, in consultation with Council.

MR KANOFSKI: Yes, okay. Bronwyn, anything more on that before I move on to my last point?

DR EVANS: Yes. Iwan, is there any role or has there been any role of EnergyCo in this project in looking at broader impacts in this particular region?

MR DAVIES: Given the project sits outside of a Renewable Energy Zone, I believe that's correct, EnergyCo has not had a role, and noting that they are remitters is within the Renewable Energy Zones.

DR EVANS: Okay, thanks.

MR KANOFSKI: The last issue for me is noise. So, you're comfortable supported by the studies that the mitigation for operational noise is adequately dealt with?

MR DAVIES: Yes. Another key matter, Ken, particularly for battery projects, particularly for battery projects as we see traditionally they have been located in the middle of, say, solar farms or wind farms, many kilometres away from receivers.

This project in itself is located a sufficient distance from non-associated receivers, but it's clearly a key issue for us, particularly as more urban developments are proposed, we do have a number of batteries now being proposed in Sydney and Newcastle, for example, with a number of different types of receivers – whether that's industrial or residential. But we are comfortable that this project does not exceed the operational noise criteria at non-associated receivers.

MR KANOFSKI: So, just as a matter of interest, and not for this project, but if you were going to put this in a more densely populated area, you'd have to put it in some sort of acoustic shed, wouldn't you?

MR DAVIES: There are multiple mitigating measures – noise walls are one. One is potentially some type of building, but they're clearly – batteries need to have that air conditioning. There are different types of fans and technology that I understand projects can utilise. But also, there's a power rating or curtailment at certain times, whether that's night-time, you know, if a project –

MR KANOFSKI: [Cross-talk 00:22:59] Yes, so you can turn it down at night.

MR DAVIES: Yes, so you don't have to operate at full capacity at 24/7. It's ensuring that those noise limits are met.

MR KANOFSKI: Yes. And it strikes me that there will be construction noise here, but it doesn't look like it's anything out of the ordinary.

MR DAVIES: Nothing out of the ordinary. I think there are maybe some exceedances but nothing – bear with me two seconds while I just – just two seconds, yes.

MR KANOFSKI: [Cross-talk 00:23:30] ... exceedances.

MR DAVIES: So, up to 4 decibels. Bear with me one second. For the road upgrades, apologies, so that's just for two weeks. So, we're comfortable with the potential construction noise impacts here, noting that they are temporary and for a very limited period over those two weeks.

MR KANOFSKI: Okay. Bronwyn, anything questions on noise or anything else?

DR EVANS: Not on noise. And I think we'll see tomorrow when we do the site visit, one of the other areas that often comes up for communities is visual screening. And we heard from the Applicant that they've got in place some native vegetation screening as well as a noise wall, so we'll understand that more. But just in terms of, if you think about community concerns, it's noise, it's fire, it's contamination, and it's screening. So, I think you've covered those.

MR DAVIES: Thank you.

MR KANOFSKI: Okay. Is there anything else, Brad, that I've missed, that I should have covered?

MR BRAD JAMES: Nothing from me, Ken.

MR KANOFSKI: Okay. Anything else that you want to raise, Iwan?

MR DAVIES: No, that's it, thanks very much, Ken. We think it's an approvable project, and thanks very much for your time, ultimately.

MR KANOFSKI: Okay. Thank you.

MR DAVIES: Okay. Thank you.

DR EVANS: Bye. Thank you.

>THE MEETING CONCLUDED