New South Wales Government
Independent Planning Commission

TRANSCRIPT OF MEETING

RE: HUME NORTH BATTERY ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEM (SSD-61842974)

APPLICANT MEETING

PANEL:	NEAL MENZIES (CHAIR) MICHAEL CHILCOTT
OFFICE OF THE IPC:	BRAD JAMES ISAAC CLAYTON
APPLICANT REPRESENTATIVES:	ARASH ZARAFI (Foresight Group) ALEX PARK (Foresight Group) ETOSHA MILNER (Foresight Group) THOMAS MUDDLE (Jacobs)
LOCATION:	ZOOM VIDEOCONFERENCE
DATE:	9:00AM – 9:45AM WEDNESDAY, 26th NOVEMBER 2025

<THE MEETING COMMENCED

MR MENZIES: Great. Okay. So, I'm Neal Menzies. I'm chairing the Panel, and my fellow commissioner, Michael Chilcott. Guys, we kick off with me reading a formal statement, then I know you guys have got a presentation you want to make. So, I'll get through my formal statement and then we'll move to a bit more informal interaction. We certainly welcome your presentation, but we're almost certainly going to interrupt you during it and ask questions, so be prepared.

MR ZAFARI: Looking forward to it, yes.

MR MENZIES: All right. I'm just getting all my screens in order so I can find the bit of information I need. Right, so opening statement. Before we begin, I'd like to acknowledge that I'm speaking to you from the lands of the Jagera and Turrbal people here in the Brisbane River Valley. I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land from which we're all meeting virtually today and I pay my respects to Elders past and present.

Welcome to the meeting today to discuss the Hume North Battery Energy Storage System, a state significant development application (SSD-61842974), which is currently before the Commission for determination.

The Applicant, Infrastructure Capital Services Pty Ltd, proposes to build the Hume North Battery Energy Storage System, a 75 megawatt, 150 megawatt-hour battery, and associated grid connection infrastructure near Lake Hume Village, approximately 10 kilometres east of Albury in the Albury City local government area.

My name is Neal Menzies. I'm the Chair of this Commission Panel, and I'm joined by my fellow commissioner, Michael Chilcott. We're also joined by Brad James and Isaac Clayton from the Office of the Independent Planning Commission.

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.

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

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

Finally, I'd request all participants here today to 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.

Okay, now we can get into it. Who's making the presentation?

MR ZAFARI: I am happy to do that. And my name is Arash Zarafi, I'm a Development Manager, Foresight. We're just going to do a round out for everyone else. Alex, do you want to go next?

MR PARK: Morning, everyone. Alex Park. I'm based in Foresight's Melbourne office, I'm a Senior Development Manager with Foresight.

MR MILNER: And good morning, everyone. My name is Etosha Milner. I'm also at the Melbourne office of Foresight and I'm a Development Manager as well.

MR MUDDLE: Thomas Muddle, Principal Environmental Planner with Jacobs, have undertaken the environmental assessment of the Hume North Battery Project on behalf of Foresight. Take it away, Arash.

MR ZAFARI: Right on. So, can you guys see my screen?

MR MENZIES: We can.

MR ZAFARI: Right on, thank you. So, we'll just start off by just introducing the company. Foresight is a mid-market fund manager headquartered in UK, London, with about $23 billion worth of assets under management. We've got about just under 400 employees worldwide and about 70 employees in Australia. In Australia, we manage the Australian Renewables Income Fund, which owns the entity Hume BESS Project.

Just broader in terms of the assets that the company has in Australia, we've had a broad and established presence here through eight wind farms in SA, Victoria and WA. We've got three existing hydro-power stations, Hume, I guess this is an audible one, which is in the vicinity of the Hume BESS Project. And we've got, yes, infrastructure assets reflecting kind of our investment strategy and mandate across Australia.

We come back to Hume again, I think, in the next slides. This one is a hydro-power plant, it's about 58 megawatts and has been in operation for about 50 years. So, we'll talk about that a bit more.

Going down to the specific project, I guess, when we say Foresight, it's Infrastructure Capital Services as trustee for AFIR Hume BESS Holdings Trust, which is the entity that is basically the Proponent for the project. As you said, Neal, this is a 75 meg, 150 megawatt-hour project near Lake Hume. It's actually 700 metres away from the Hume hydro facility and for clarity, this is a completely independent project from the hydro facility.

So, the reasoning for us to site this project where it is, is because of the vicinity to the 132 kV line that you can see on the right-hand side, you can see the Transgrid easement there, the vicinity to the Hume hydro as well. We feel like we know the area and we know about the access, so we wanted to site the location of the battery that was near road access, transmission lines and also within Foresight owned land, the 32 Trout

Farm Road, which is RU2 zoning. And the BESS's position within the existing non-residential land uses, so we've got a trout farm on the west side, we've got the Albury City Council's wastewater facility on the right-hand side (or the east side) on this photo. And we've got the Water NSW assets to the south side, which is effectively the Hume Hydro Power Station.

I think that was it, in terms of this slide. Did you guys have any questions about this before I move on to the next slide?

MR MENZIES: I think move on, it's fine.

MR ZAFARI: Thomas, did you want to add anything else to the contents of this slide additionally?

MR MUDDLE: No. Am I on mute?

MR ZAFARI: You're good.

MR MUDDLE: No, nothing to add there.

MR ZAFARI: All right. So, since the EIS, we've amended and refined the project's design to kind of reflect the community, Council and regulatory feedback that we got during the EIS. On the right-hand side, I think we've made a comparison between the original design versus the Amendment Report that was submitted in August '25.

So, we've tried to reduce the overall environmental impacts, mainly by reducing the services – by the "services", I mean the cut-and-fill, retaining more vegetation, building most of the project assets within flatter ground. So, what you'll see is that, for example, we've changed the access road routing going in the middle of the project site during the EIS, going following the existing access road that's on site. This has meant that we reduced the retaining walls, that also reduce the visual impact on the project on the south side as well.

We've taken the community concerns over squirrel glider habitat. So, we moved the O&M compound from the southeast location, which was originally shown in pink, and we moved it to the northwest. That was part of the feedback, in terms of the squirrel glider habitat and connectivity on this site is mostly on the southeast and west side, southwestern side of the site. So, we've tried to work around that and minimise disturbances in those areas.

From the Council, we heard that visual amenity from Riverina Highway looking down to the site is quite important. So, we've tried to shift the site south and retain the northern vegetation boundary that's on the northeast side of our site, to kind of minimise that visual impact of the site. As well with this new design, and it's in small print, but number 4 is the hollow tree, so we've tried to save that one and kind of reduce our offsets with this new design.

MR MENZIES: That's number 4 on your image?

MR ZAFARI: Number 4 on the right-hand side. Thomas, did you have anything else that you wanted to add onto this before we open for questions?

MR MUDDLE: No, I think you've summarised it well. It was just the slope on the site is from east to west downwards and it drops off quite significantly heading towards the west into the trout farm. So, the overall compression of the switchyard area allows us to move the project further to the east and avoid significant cut-and-fill, which is the, yes, good outcome of the amendment.

MR MENZIES: One of the issues. So, we talked to Council yesterday. One of the issues that they are concerned about is the gliders, and we appreciate you've already made a lot of changes to deal with the gliders. You've also said that you wouldn't use barbed wire except where it was sort of legislative requirement. Is there any legislative requirement to use barbed wire?

MR ZAFARI: There is, so I guess the legislative requirement that we are referring to is the Transgrid contestable assets that's shown in yellow on the right-hand side. You can see kind of the cut-in of the transmission line going there. This is kind of the assets that the project can develop – we can self-perform, we can get Transgrid to do. If we do self-perform it, we have to follow the design specification to the T that Transgrid provides. And this being kind of a critical infrastructure, Transgrid does not allow us not to have barbed wire for this section.

And I think generally, like, you know, for projects like this and with the batteries and high-voltage lines in the vicinity, to the extent that we can, we'll try to avoid it, but I think we can't avoid legislation and specific design requirements from Transgrid. So, that's what I would say. Thomas, did you want to add anything else to that?

MR MUDDLE: No, it's a design requirement, so. I think, I mean, on the glider habitat, it's recognised that they are active in the area. This site is not particularly on a corridor to anywhere in particular; it's a kind of outlier on the fringes of the retained vegetation. There's no large, wooded vegetation to the north. So, while there has been activity recorded in the past across the site and in the boxes, particularly the installed boxes in the south of the site, we're not breaking or interrupting a fundamental corridor for the gliders in this area.

MR MENZIES: Yes, thanks for that. It was just a clarification because the language was not sufficiently specific that we could look at the map and say, "Oh, okay, they're talking about this part here." So, thanks for that.

MR MICHAEL CHILCOTT: And just to add to that. When we're out on site, you'll no doubt take us through that on the ground so that we can sort of understand, not just from the aerial photographs and the maps here, but what it looks like on the ground. That'll be helpful, thank you.

MR ZAFARI: Sounds good, will do. So, just moving onto the next slide, unless if there's any other questions?

MR MENZIES: Just one other quick question before we move on from that image. The slope is, as you say, down image and towards the river, and water movement will be in that direction. You haven't really indicated retention ponds or how you're going to control water movement in this image. Do you have a subsequent image where you talk about that?

MR ZAFARI: You can see it on this image, there are two stormwater retention ponds actually to the – in the middle of the site, you can see kind of a light blue area, and then another one within the pink area, which is going to be the laydown area. So, we have allocated two stormwater retention ponds, and again we'll cover these separately. These were different from, I guess, the line – first flush containment system that we have for fire water. So, these two retention ponds are strictly for stormwater. Did you want to talk a little bit more, Thomas, about design and mitigation impacts?

MR MUDDLE: I think, I mean, there is a figure in the Amendment Report that shows the high-level concept drainage that we have modelled. And there's also a commitment around detailed design, finalising a drainage plan to result in a fairly balanced outcome for stormwater and flooding in particular. So, I think, yes, we do have basins provisioned for within the footprint. I think the specific sizing of those aspects will be subject to the detailed drainage design as it unfolds. But yes, there is provision for retention of the areas where the most change in permeability results in increased flows.

MR MENZIES: Okay.

MR CHILCOTT: Neal, if I can just. Thomas, you mentioned – you described it as "balanced outcomes". You may be coming to what the balance is, trying to strike down the track. But I'd like to understand what you mean by "balanced outcomes". And secondly, I'd like to understand, is there a reason why you're leaving these design elements to a later phase rather than bringing them forward at this point?

MR MUDDLE: I'd probably take the design aspect then on notice to some extent, but I would, as a Planner, expect that the procurement of the construction company that's ultimately responsible for finalising all of those design plans and the drainage design and all of that sort of stuff, is contingent on having confidence in a project approval. So, that is my understanding of why we have modelled on the information that we have access to at the moment. We've undertaken the modelling on a preliminary solution to demonstrate that a solution is possible within the disturbance footprint, but finessing what the actual solution becomes, we want to leave that open for the best possible outcome from the design, as opposed to enforcing something on a future construction and layout at this point. So, that's how I've approached it.

The balance that we're talking about, the way the footprint is laid out and the existing case from the flood model does send water to the north and west. There's already some condensed flows down Trout Farm Road as a result of the road and the upgradient development.

What we're seeking to do in the drainage design is make sure that we're not taking all of the water from the north and sending it to the east, and we're not taking all of the water that sheet flows off the east and putting it into single drainage lines. We're trying to spread that out to reflect what is currently happening. We can't do it perfectly, we can't perfectly replace what's happening, but we can design to achieve the outcomes that are associated with not increasing the flood hazard category of off-site receptor land to the west. That's what I mean by "balance". We try to reproduce through the detailed drainage design what's currently happening.

MR CHILCOTT: And you mentioned there "fire water". What did you mean by "fire water"?

MR MUDDLE: I think we've got extra slides on fire water.

MR CHILCOTT: Okay, that's fine, if it comes to the answer, that's fine. Thanks.

MR ZAFARI: Was there any other questions before we move on?

MR MENZIES: No, happy to move on at this point, I think.

MR CHILCOTT: Thank you.

MR ZAFARI: All right. So, the PHA. I guess what we want to highlight in this slide is that all credible hazards remain within the site boundary on the worst-case modelling. So, I'll just say this, that the adopted PHA confirms that the project poses no acceptable risk to the surrounding land, and all identified hazards fall within the acceptable standards have been assessed against the New South Wales HIPAP (or the Hazardous Industry Planning Advisory Papers).

But I guess what I want to highlight here is the biggest risk you talked about is the potential thermal runaway and fire and smoke. I'll start off by saying that part of the reason why we chose Tesla as the technology provider, because they have been involved in Australia, they have a probably longer track record in Australia than anybody else. I just want to also highlight that thermal runaway probabilities is below 1% based on the number of installed projects that are on site and the events that have occurred.

Part of the reason why we chose Tesla is because when thermal runaway in the unlikely scenario has occurred, for example, the Victorian Big Battery projects, there has been a lot of case studies done on that, and a lot of literature produced on that. So, we could answer questions specifically on the fire risk and, I guess, different scenarios that can happen.

The reason why I've got the Tesla Megapack 2 XL on the right-hand side, is I want to focus on mitigation measures on the technology itself, and on the next slide we'll go through mitigation measures within the project and not just technology itself.

So, the Tesla Megapack battery packs are, they're compartmentalised, so there are fire-resistant barriers between each cases, you can see on here. And there are also vents on the top of the Megapack to vent gases during thermal runaway events. And the casing itself is fire-resistant. And there is also what's called a battery management system, which monitors temperatures and operation levels of the battery and just makes sure it shuts down immediately and separates it from all the transformers.

So, all things considered, I guess, what we want to also highlight with Tesla is that from the experience of VBB and in the past, dousing battery fires with water is not recommended. And this is what we want to focus on, and we'll also talk about it in the next slide.

So, emergency response requirement can be fully managed on site through BESS-specific Emergency Response Plan and coordinated with Fire NSW and Rescue. The water supply that we've got on site is not to douse battery fires, it's for the things like bushfire mitigation measures and any other fire events that happen, and we'll talk about that as well. But we have not set fire tank sizing to douse battery fires, because that's not recommended per the technology manufacturer's recommendation.

I'll maybe stop there and see if there's any other questions. But on the next slide we're going to talk about project mitigation measures, such as containment and transfer bunding and a few other things. But maybe I'll just stop there.

MR MENZIES: Sure. I fully understand you don't douse with water. What do you douse with – anything?

MR ZAFARI: So, the recommendation is to let it burn in place. So, again, the design talks about emergency shutdowns, we talked about it, and separation – separation between the units and other electrical equipment to avoid the, I guess, spreading of the fire. But it's just leave in place is the recommendation …

MR MENZIES: Let the one that's caught on fire burn out.

MR ZAFARI: That's right.

MR MENZIES: And prevent it from getting to neighbouring pieces.

MR ZAFARI: And shut down everything. Obviously, shut down the site automatically by automatic controls, but yes, effectively you just let it burn.

MR MENZIES: Yes. Look, the reason we'll be pursuing this, both Michael and I are going to be asking you questions about this specific thing, because the Council's primary concern was about what happens if there's a fire. And I don't think they were so much worried about your piece of infrastructure; they were very worried about what might be done that either immediately or in the fullness of time (decades later) might result in contamination of the river and their water supply.

So, you know, they were very worried that the response to a fire would be you douse it with a lot of fire-fighting chemicals that get into the aquifer and emerge later. These are my words rather than the Council's words, but they were very exercised by the idea that the response to a fire might cause a long-term problem.

So, in answering our questions, if you can just sort of keep that concept in mind, that that's our motivation for continuing, and we will continue to pursue what happens when it catches on fire. Does that make sense?

MR ZAFARI: That makes sense, yes. Thomas, did you want to add anything else?

MR MUDDLE: Yes, I think, just to reflect and clarify a little bit, and Arash you might need to correct the record if necessary. But my expectation is Tesla has learnt from the Big Battery fire, and this is not the exact same technology, and every iteration of technology of every battery provider takes steps to respond to past failures and past incidents so that they, you know, the chances of them repeating are reduced.

So, I think every developer and every community appreciates that these incidents have happened in the past, no one can emphatically say something won't happen again in the future. But the risk profile of them happening continues to reduce. The understanding of management continues to improve and the DPHI has a branch releasing more and more work around response to battery fires. And this Response Plan is consistent with that one, i.e. it's not recommended to douse the fire, it is recommended to have safe separation distance so that if something does go wrong in a unit, it doesn't spread to the neighbouring unit.

So, with all of those increasing confidences in place, the prospect of the whole place burning down or the whole place needing to be flooded with water to manage risk gets reduced. I think, Arash, you might want to check with Tesla if there's any internal dousing systems and what they involve, and if there's any chemicals involved.

But essentially, the expectation is that in the event of an incident, whether that's a spill within the BESS compound or a fire within an enclosure or a cell or a unit within the enclosure, the drainage system around the BESS would be closed. Any water that gets into that system in that process would be captured and testing and disposed off off-site as opposed to being left on site or running off the facility.

MR ZAFARI: And I can talk about more, I think the next slide I've actually specifically put forward talking about the drainage system, separation of this drainage system from the stormwater system. And so, I'm happy to talk through those points here next.

MR CHILCOTT: Just before you do, Arash. Did you say the drainage system is yet to be designed?

MR ZAFARI: So, we've done the preliminary design, but …

MR CHILCOTT: But that's not what you're seeking – it's not a specific design you're seeking approval for. You seem to say, and correct me if I'm wrong, that while you've had a preliminary concept, you're leaving the details of what it actually will be until post-approval and you engage the supplier of the technology. Is that correct?

MR ZAFARI: No. We've already engaged Tesla. It's not the supplier that does the designs on the drainage plans. It's actually the constructor that does it, so …

MR CHILCOTT: Okay, sorry, my apologies. So, until you get the constructor on board. So, you don't have a final design for the drainage.

MR ZAFARI: We don't have the final design but it's within the industry and the preliminary design. I mean, this concern about thermal runaway and containment is across every battery project now. So, the design of the line system, the first flush containment system and it being separate from the stormwater drainage system is quite – it's becoming quite standard actually. And without having that constant laydown, I think, yes, it'll be hard for us to progress and be able to obtain approvals.

I think it is always a dynamic that Thomas alluded to. That for us to do the IFC (Issued for Construction) designs, 80% designs, where you go down to the exact location of where the drains go and what the specs are, you know, those need to be done post approval. I think that dynamic of having to do a full design and procurement before having a development approval, it's kind of a dynamic that we struggle with, similar to other developers. But we are confident about, we're not reinventing these conceptual designs, this is, you know, the first flush containment system has graded drains around the BESS skids. So, on the platform, and I'm happy to go back up to this slide.

So, on the blue area, most of the battery packs sit. We are calling that the BESS platform. There is going to be graded drains around these skids, individual skids. So, imagine there is 42 skids on this platform, they're separate from the rest of the transformers on the right-hand side. Imagine there is underground pipes and a contained tank that's fully lined, and meaning that …

When I say "fully lined" means that underground on that first flush, if there is a response to fire or if there's a leakage from a thermal runaway, on that first response, on the first flush what happens is that because the containment system is fully lined, there is no infiltration, there is no off-site discharge, and that the tank can be isolated during the incident, as Thomas alluded to. Once that water or, you know, runoff is captured, then it can be tested and popped out by a licensed contractor.

Again, that's what we mean by this system, on the first flush, can isolate itself from the stormwater system. So, I mean, this concept has been tested and applied on many projects, because yes, we do understand that thermal runaway has been a concern of projects of this nature, I think, yes. It's not recent, it's been a few years, so we feel confident with the preliminary solutions that we've got worked out on the site.

MR CHILCOTT: Neal, would you permit me to just have a follow up?

MR MENZIES: Yes, Michael, absolutely. I think this is our key set of questions, so let's get stuck in.

MR CHILCOTT: Yes. Thanks. You refer to the "first flush", but earlier you said that the technical advice is not to add water. So, what is in the first flush?

MR ZAFARI: I can, for the actual technical details, I can take this back on notice. But first flush, I would say that any runoff from the material itself, I don't know if the material is going to be solid or liquid, but I'm happy to take that on notice to provide you with an exact definition of what the first flush contains.

MR MUDDLE: I think, Arash, it recognises the potential that a thermal runaway could be happening in the event of rainfall, and therefore it might not be a dry environment. So, whatever the case is, the drainage around the battery can be isolated such that whatever's going on in that footprint can be shut, so that it doesn't flow out.

I don't think, like, we're not suggesting that it's not dousing with water, it's dousing with something else, it's just not dousing. Does that make sense?

MR MENZIES: Yes.

MR MUDDLE: There may be a process going on within the enclosure that you take on notice and get from Tesla about whether they spray anything within the enclosure in the event of a fire. Different batteries have different processes for that. But yes, the first flush just recognises that we can't promise that if something unexpectedly goes wrong and there is a thermal runaway event or a spill, that it's not also raining.

MR CHILCOTT: Yes, because that was going to be a question I had. In the event of rain, what's the capacity to deal with impacts of rain through the City of … You've touched on it at least conceptually. Thank you for the clarification. I was a little bit – I was trying to reconcile this first flush versus the 'we don't use water'.

MR MENZIES: And one last question on this one. Containment's normally a sort of polymer lining, which would be susceptible to fire. How do you reconcile that one?

MR ZAFARI: I'd have to take that on notice for the exact material that the liner's made. I'm sure this is something that we can come back with. I'm sorry I'm not into that much detail at this time. Unless Thomas, did you have any idea about that one?

MR MUDDLE: I'm fairly confident from battery layouts and designs, that there's no liner sitting directly under a BESS enclosure that might catch fire. It would be a drainage system like any normal drainage system with a tank or containment pond or whatever it becomes in the detailed design, sitting separate from the infrastructure itself. It's not an individual polymer bunding system around every individual battery enclosure, would be my suggestion. But I'm happy to come back to that, come back with information on that.

MR MENZIES: Once again, this is just pursuing this idea that this is 500 metres away from the biggest river system in Australia. And so, not quite like just any other battery enclosure that might be tens of kilometres away from a comparable water course. So, if something soaks into the soil and gets into the river in 20 years' time, it's still a concern to us.

MR MUDDLE: I think, yes, I think that is very appreciated and it has been the concern of the community and the Council. And I think that the design is well placed to respond to that, but we'll get further details around the specifics. But yes, again, the – it's not, it wouldn't be common practice for any battery impact assessment at this stage to have a detailed design of anything to rely on for assessment purposes. So, we have pushed and I believe that Foresight has gone further in specifying who their technology provider is than most projects at this stage to have that level of confidence and that level of access to specific control measure information, so than other projects at this stage. So, I think we can come back with something on that.

MR ZAFARI: Yes, and just on the vicinity to the drinking water source. I think we asked the Council and we've engaged them two or three times already in writing, they put their concerns to us.

I think airborne emissions was another concern of them, like we talked about the water containment system, but in terms of the airborne emissions, I think there were concerns about toxic plumes, I think was the terminology used by the submissions. So, we just want to highlight that based on the testing on standard Dual 9540 that Tesla has done and what the case studies on the VBB fire (Victorian Big Battery fire) showed a similar product of this one, but there is no detected hydrofluoric acid or hydrogen cyanide that would affect the toxicity of airborne emissions.

I think what we are saying is that the main gases released are carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide and hydrogen and methane, which is typical of any other fire, for example, wood or plastic combustion.

We also did part of our modelling, and I think the last bullet point on this slide talks about plumes and the probability of settlement in the nearby water. So, we've done that study and provided our responses to Council as part of our engagement with them early in 2025.

MR MENZIES: Mm-hm.

MR ZAFARI: I also want to add that aside from the batteries themselves, again, a project of this nature has electrical equipment including transformers, and they always sit on site with bunded containment ponds designed to capture any oil leaks or fire-related discharge. And again, those are another fire that is not doused with water. So, transformer pond water is tested and dewatered separately and again, similar kind of treatment as that containment system that we talked about for the batteries.

That's it on the control measures. I'm happy to answer any other questions you have and go into additional details.

MR MENZIES: Michael, are we happy to move on?

MR CHILCOTT: Happy to move on. I look forward to getting that further information that the Applicant's provided to seek and to provide to us.

MR MUDDLE: Could I just make one more comment. The way that, like, the way that this project and a lot of other projects goes is, yes, we've done a preliminary hazard assessment, we're conditioned to do a detailed fire safety study that adopts the final designs and the final technology provided. And that's the catch-all that goes through the identified risks and squares them away with the actual controls. And that's conditioned, so it's not that we are speculating on designs and drainage or anything like that, we are conditioned to do that, and we can't get to construction without having that fire safety study squared away.

And there's also a condition around an operations water condition around provision for interception removal of contaminations from detention basins in the event of fire damage. So, again, there's conditions that require the design to be progressed to that level of confidence before works commence.

MR CHILCOTT: And those are to be reviewed and signed off by …?

MR MUDDLE: Yes. The …

MR CHILCOTT: That was actually a question. What's the proposed sign off on those?

MR MUDDLE: The fire safety study submitted to the Planning Secretary for approval prior to commencing construction of the battery storage facility. And prepared in accordance with Department's Hazardous Injury Planning Advisory Papers. Unless otherwise agreed by the Planning Secretary, construction of the battery storage facility must not commence until the Planning Secretary has received evidence that Fire and Rescue NSW has confirmed in writing that the fire safety study meets the requirements of condition B29 and the study has been approved by the Planning Secretary. And it must be implemented.

So, that's an industry-wide expectation, that plant PHA gets done to identify the risks and let the assessment progress to this stage. And then condition that, any uncertainty recognising at this point, technology providers are often left to retain competitive tension for proponents so that they're not stuck with one solution and then taken/held for ransom for the costs around it. So, that's the catch-all and that's the standard practice.

MR CHILCOTT: Thank you.

MR MENZIES: Okay. We're going to run out of time, so we might, as we move on, if there's issues that either Michael or I are concerned about, we'll ask you to just jump

forward. That way we're spending our time on the things that we're really concerned about, so.

MR ZAFARI: Okay. I'll go quickly on the next slides, and yes, please stop me if there's specific concerns about the content, so we can focus there. Again, we want to highlight for the bushfire impact assessment, that even though the project sits on grassland bushfire-prone land, it's mostly cleared and gently sloping. But there's very limited permanent vegetation and we've tried to, I guess, reduce and mitigate any bushfire impact by applying a 15-metre asset protection zone around our assets, the site boundary, to the fence boundary, and that will be maintained for the life of the project.

And as well we have included a dedicated fire-fighting water tank and that's what the water tank is actually for, is protection of the outside boundaries of the APZs and some of the equipment, not for dousing equipment themselves, as we mentioned before. And we've also provided an all-weather Category 1 access road to the site.

So, what we want to say here is that overall, the project doesn't materially increase the bushfire risk to the community, and fire risk to the BESS itself can be effectively managed through the mitigation measures that we propose. Was there any questions on this slide before we move onto the next?

MR MENZIES: I'm happy on this one. Michael?

MR CHILCOTT: Yes, same.

MR ZAFARI: So, on the construction traffic, I guess what we want to highlight and we've said it in the amended and the EIS Report, we're anticipating about 47 over-size/over-mass vehicles to bring in the equipment to site. The preferred transport route for the major components, including a transformer, is from the Port of Melbourne, coming up to the north.

We've obviously engaged Transport NSW extensively around bridges and culverts and other restrictions, which TNSW has confirmed that no bridge and culverts require upgrading. What we want to highlight that the vehicles, the over-size/over-mass vehicles avoid travelling on local roads during school bus hours. I think that was a concern with the TNSW and DPHI and the Council. So, this requirement applies to the Lake Hume area, including Trout Farm and Murray Street.

And then we just want to highlight that even though we've engaged FNSW, we'll go through a routine process of obtaining NHVR permits for these vehicles to travel on Murray Street and Trout Farm Road which are local roads. That's all I wanted to say on this slide. Was there any questions specific to this?

MR MENZIES: No, I'm okay on this one. Michael?

MR CHILCOTT: No, I'm good. Thanks.

MR ZAFARI: And decommissioning and rehabilitation. I think what we want to highlight here is that the scope and impacts and mitigation for the decommissioning phase is consistent with the construction phase, so we applied the same mitigation measures. But broadly, it's removal of all aboveground infrastructure, batteries, inverters, transformers, switchgear, fencing, O&M building, and cabling.

The traffic and construction activity will not exceed construction phase intensity. Water use and disturbance will be lower than during construction, and yes, we'll follow the Hazardous Material Handling Procedures for safe removal, storage and transport of battery units, electrical components during this phase. Any questions here before we move on?

MR MENZIES: Once again, I'm good with this one. Michael?

MR CHILCOTT: I am, thank you.

MR ZAFARI: Etosha, did you want to jump in for the stakeholder and community engagement?

MR MILNER: Yes, absolutely. So, yes, just turning now to the stakeholder and community engagement. Our approach has been focused really on demonstrating early, consistent and meaningful interaction with the Lake Hume community.

So, I suppose what Arash mentioned at the top of the presentation, we have 50 years of local operating experience through the Hume Hydro Power Station. And that long-term presence within the area and in the community has given us a rather deep understanding of community expectations. And building on that foundation, we began early outreach in June 2023, well before the exhibition, really to provide clear information and address these emerging questions.

We then established a comprehensive stakeholder database capturing near neighbours, Albury City Council, Lake Hume Resort, Discovery Parks, and key landholders. Alongside this, we also set up a dedicated Hume BESS enquiries mailbox to give the community a reliable and central point of communication for any updates, and for them to provide their feedback.

Moving on from there. Ahead of the EIS exhibition, we held two community information sessions in April and May of 2024, ensuring the public had advanced access to project details. Throughout both the initial exhibition and the subsequent amendment phase, fact sheets were published to communicate refinements and respond directly to the issues raised.

We've also been engaged with the Albury City Council quite regularly. First in early 2024, and again in mid-2025. We were addressing the topics raised, including things such as local traffic and visual impacts. Water protection, as we've mentioned, is quite an important issue that they're concerned about. And other place-specific concerns.

Importantly, we worked collaboratively with the Council to shape VPA allocations that aligned with community value to services and infrastructure. And beyond the formal processes, we've also established a near-neighbour program which involves actively engaging with the adjoining landholders. This communication meant that we were able to hear feedback, particularly from our northern neighbour, and they've highlighted opportunities for environmental stewardship, including conservation initiatives, and we're continuing to explore those together.

But yes, overall, our approach has been to maintain open channels, respond early, and integrate community perspectives throughout the project's entire evolution.

MR ZAFARI: Thank you. Is there any questions on this slide?

MR MENZIES: None from me.

MR CHILCOTT: No, that's fine. Thank you, I think we have a sense of what the community's principal concerns are from the material we've got.

MR ZAFARI: Okay. And then on this slide, we'll just talk about benefit sharing programs. So, we've allocated $450,000 towards once construction starts through the community benefit program, and this is in line with the NSW Planning Guidelines in terms of the amounts should be there.

We also allocated grants, existing grants. So, before we even get to construction or get to the NTP, we have allocated grants to the Woolshed Thurgoona Landcare Group, that's also involved in, has been involved in working on that connectivity for the habitat of the squirrel gliders near the area. So, we've also consulted with them a few times and wanted to just do something meaningful for the squirrel glider habitat, especially on the connectivity piece which has been to the south of the project.

We sponsored the Lake Hume Rotary Club with two sponsorships of $5,000. This club raises funds for the Albury-Wodonga Regional Cancer Centre Trust Fund. And with the funding, with the $450,000, I think our intention is to allocate $350,000 to the Albury City Council and another $100,000 for continued community programs that matter to the local community.

And really, with that $350,000 for the Council infrastructure projects, our hope is that we work with Council proactively to really allocate them to the infrastructure projects that go into the improvement of Lake Hume Weir projects that are specific to the community that's nearby our project and not just general infrastructure projects that are implemented in other places.

That's what I would say about the benefit sharing program that we've got. Was there any questions here before we move on?

MR CHILCOTT: Just one. If I understand it, you say the 450, that you've provided a letter of offer of some sort to Council; is that correct?

MR ZAFARI: Yes. And we started early, engaging Council early, we call it a VPA initially, we just provided a terms sheet and we talked about it when we met with them mid-2025, again, to also address all the other concerns they had about water quality.

At the time, we started working collaboratively to just identify the projects that this could go to, and some of the preferences that the Council had. For example, if you want to allocate this 350 out of the 450 to the Council, they would rather have it in one go than it being a split payment over 20 years, because that probably doesn't go far when we look at infrastructure projects.

So, we worked with them and prior to the DPHI giving us the conditions of consent, we couldn't sign that terms sheet, so what we had to do separately is just provide a more brief letter of offer consistent with that terms sheet to the Council. And so that they have it in writing that we are allocating $350,000 to the Council. So, that's been done, yes.

MR CHILCOTT: And the specific allocations to Council and the balance 100,000, those decisions of where they go are for the future – they haven't been made as yet?

MR ZAFARI: So, those are based on the project getting to NTP, so there are conditions on the project getting to NTP, so that's why we're committing to … So, once the project goes to construction and gets all of its approval and gets NTP, those will be committed and allocated to respective parties.

MR CHILCOTT: That's what I mean, they're actually future decisions to be taken; not decisions that have been taken already.

MR MUDDLE: That's, yes, my interpretation of that is, that's correct, so there's the letter of offer is conditioned as appendix 5 of the consent. And it splits the payments, Foresight, I don't think from reading that, has control over how Council will use its 350,000, but the intent of how Foresight would like it to be used is specified. And then for Foresight, the 100,000 is a bit more specific about how they will direct that, community benefit partnership, initiatives supporting education, environmental and social programs. But no, there's not specific earmarked projects or proposals that these will pay for.

MR CHILCOTT: Thank you. That's helpful.

MR MENZIES: Okay. And if we could just quickly talk about the conditions of consent change.

MR ZAFARI: I think with the time that we have left, I mean, this slide wasn't intended to be … We didn't intend to have an answer for this slide in this meeting, we just wanted to say that there is a couple of conditions of consent that we'd like to discuss with you in more detail when the time is appropriate. So, that's what …

MR MENZIES: We might talk about them during our site visit, would probably be … The site visits really help us to understand the context of the development. It is really

hard just looking at maps and Google Earth, so we're looking forward to joining you next week to assess the site.

MR ZAFARI: And likewise, we're also looking forward to that. I think we'll stop there. Maybe if you want to summarise any, is it closing remarks or takeaways for us, ahead of the site visit would be helpful.

MR MENZIES: Michael, any last questions from you?

MR CHILCOTT: No, I'm looking forward to the – no, no questions. I'm looking forward to the site visit and dealing with some of the matters we've talked about on the way through to that.

MR MENZIES: Yes. All right. Well, look, from my perspective, and I'm sure from Michael's, that was a really useful conversation. There were a few things in there that we wanted greater clarity on. There's a couple of issues that you are going to come back to us with information. Brad will write to you in due course just to give you clarity on exactly what the things we're looking for feedback were. But yes, we look forward for that additional information to help us understand what's going on. And we'll see you early next week. So, thank you very much for helping us with this.

MR CHILCOTT: Thank you.

[All say thank you]

>THE MEETING CONCLUDED