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CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

Clause 240(4) of the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005 requires Council to refer any business to be considered when the meeting is closed to the public in the Ordinary Business Paper prepared for the same meeting. Council will discuss the following items under the terms of the Local Government Act 1993 Section 10A(2), as follows:

ITEM 1 CARRYING OF COMMITTEE RESOLUTION INTO CLOSED COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING

Procedural

ITEM 2 INNOVATION & TECHNOLOGY UPDATE

(d) (iii) commercial information of a confidential nature that would, if disclosed, reveal a trade secret (Commerical loan interest rates dislosed.)

ANNEXURE ITEMS

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ITEM 1 - APPLICATIONS FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE

REPORT IN BRIEF

Reason For Report	To allow tendering of apologies for councillors not present.
Policy Implications	Nil
Budget Implications	Nil
IPR Linkage	1.2.2.1a - Facilitate Council and standing committee meeting processes.
Annexures	Nil
File Number	\\OFFICIAL RECORDS LIBRARY\GOVERNANCE\COUNCIL MEETINGS\COUNCIL - COUNCILLORS LEAVE OF ABSENCE - 1589840

RECOMMENDATION

THAT any apologies tendered be accepted and the necessary leave of absence be granted.

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

A call for apologies is to be made.

ITEM 2 - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

REPORT IN BRIEF

Reason For Report	To allow an opportunity for councillors to declare an interest in any items to be determined at this meeting.
Policy Implications	Nil
Budget Implications	Nil
IPR Linkage	1.2.2.1a - Facilitate Council and standing committee meeting processes.
Annexures	Nil
File Number	\\OFFICIAL RECORDS LIBRARY\GOVERNANCE\COUNCIL MEETINGS\COUNCIL - COUNCILLORS AND STAFF DECLARATION OF INTEREST - 2023 - 1589841

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Declarations of Interest be noted.

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

A call for Declarations of Interest.

ITEM 3 - DECLARATIONS OF POLITICAL DONATION

REPORT IN BRIEF

Reason For Report	To allow for an opportunity for Councillors to declare any Political Donation received.
Policy Implications	Nil
Budget Implications	Nil
IPR Linkage	1.2.2.1a - Facilitate Council and standing committee meeting processes.
Annexures	Nil
File Number	\\OFFICIAL RECORDS LIBRARY\GOVERNANCE\COUNCIL MEETINGS\COUNCIL - COUNCILLORS DECLARATION OF POLITICAL DONATIONS - 1589843

RECOMMENDATION

THAT any political donations be noted.

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

A call for declarations of any political donations.

ITEM 4 - ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES UPDATE

REPORT IN BRIEF

Reason For Report	For the information of the committee
Policy Implications	Nil
Budget Implications	Nil
IPR Linkage	3.2.1.1a - Provide domestic waste collection services and local recycling facilities.
Annexures	Nil
File Number	\\OFFICIAL RECORDS LIBRARY\GOVERNANCE\COUNCIL MEETINGS\COMMITTEE BUSINESS PAPERS 2023 - 1596216

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the information contained in the report be noted.

DEPUTY GENERAL MANAGER - CABONNE SERVICES REPORT

The following report provides an overview of the services provided by the Environmental Services department of council:

Domestic Waste Contract

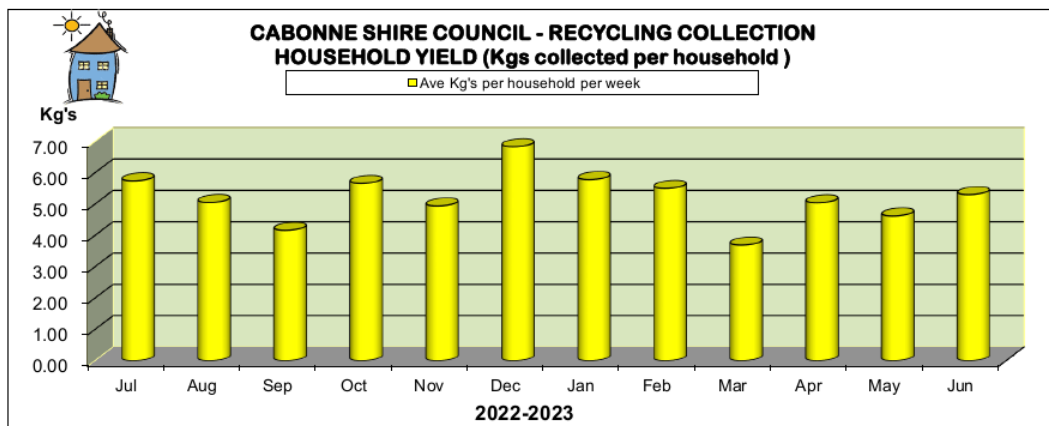
The following figured have been provided by council's contractor JR Richards relating to the domestic waste service for the past financial year.



**CABONNE COUNCIL - RECYCLING COLLECTION
HOUSEHOLD YIELD
(Kgs collected per household)**



Recycling						
2022-2023	Weeks	Ave Kg's per household per week	Service Base	Total Kg's	No. of Bins Collected	% of bins collected
Jul	5	5.74	3,793	54404	7,127	75.16%
Aug	4	5.05	3,796	38315	5,014	66.04%
Sep	5	4.16	3,800	39516	5,225	55.00%
Oct	4	5.66	3,803	43014	5,277	69.38%
Nov	4	4.94	3,809	37651	4,827	63.36%
Dec	5	6.83	3,815	65183	8,114	85.07%
Jan	4	5.78	3,824	44223	5,459	71.38%
Feb	4	5.50	3,827	42099	5,707	74.56%
Mar	5	3.69	3,828	35267	5,479	57.25%
Apr	4	5.04	3,833	38668	5,358	69.89%
May	4	4.62	3,838	35475	5,050	65.79%
Jun	5	5.30	3,844	50961	7,361	76.60%
TOTAL	53			524775		

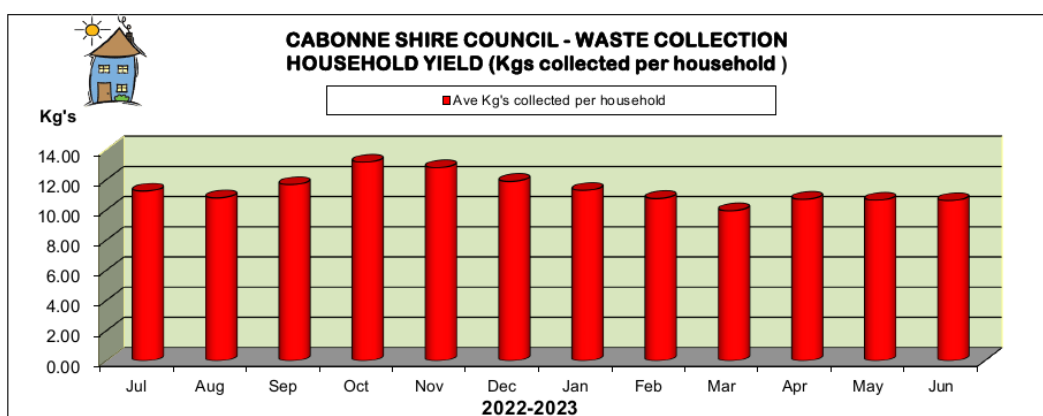




CABONNE COUNCIL - WASTE COLLECTION HOUSEHOLD YIELD
(Kgs collected per household)



Waste						
2022-2023	Weeks	Ave Kg's collected per household	Service Base	Total Kg's	No. of Bins Collected	% of bins collected
Jul	5	11.24	3,790	213,080	14,247	75.18%
Aug	4	10.79	3,796	163,850	11,466	75.51%
Sep	5	11.67	3,800	221,720	14,477	76.19%
Oct	4	13.16	3,803	200,240	11,943	78.51%
Nov	4	12.80	3,808	195,040	12,072	79.25%
Dec	5	11.88	3,815	226,570	14,917	78.20%
Jan	4	11.29	3,824	172,720	10,591	69.24%
Feb	4	10.75	3,827	164,560	11,852	77.42%
Mar	5	9.94	3,834	190,520	13,878	72.39%
Apr	4	10.70	3,839	164,250	11,952	77.83%
May	4	10.64	3,844	163,540	11,726	76.26%
Jun	5	10.61	3,850	204,320	14,630	76.00%
TOTAL	53			2,280,410		



CABONNE COUNCIL RECYCLING FIGURES
JULY TO JUNE 2022

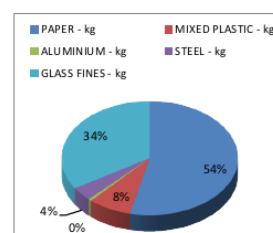


MONTHLY

	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	TOTAL
PAPER - kg	29,692	20,287	21,785	22,730	20,234	34,640	23,779	22,578	18,912	20,665	18,862	27,135	281,300
MIXED PLASTIC - kg	4,792	3,270	3,132	3,576	3,351	4,639	3,103	3,100	2,616	3,126	3,085	3,938	41,728
ALUMINIUM - kg	299	210	248	261	240	394	270	291	217	212	195	286	3,124
STEEL - kg	2,189	1,626	1,681	1,783	1,530	2,659	1,510	1,644	1,292	1,409	1,354	1,932	20,609
GLASS FINES - kg	17,431	12,921	12,669	14,663	12,297	22,850	15,562	14,486	12,230	13,255	11,979	17,671	178,014
TOTAL - kg	54,404	38,315	39,516	43,014	37,651	65,183	44,223	42,099	35,267	38,668	35,475	50,961	524,775
WASTE %	10.77%	10.48%	10.92%	11.00%	10.44%	10.77%	10.06%	10.37%	10.49%	10.82%	10.89%	10.83%	
WASTE - kg	6,566	4,485	4,844	5,316	4,389	7,867	4,947	4,871	4,133	4,692	4,335	6,189	

QUARTERLY

	Jul to Sep 22	Oct to Dec 22	Jan to Mar 23	Apr to Jun 23	TOTAL
PAPER - kg	71,765	77,604	65,269	66,662	281,300
MIXED PLASTIC - kg	11,194	11,566	8,819	10,149	41,728
ALUMINIUM - kg	757	895	778	693	3,124
STEEL - kg	5,496	5,973	4,446	4,694	20,609
GLASS FINES - kg	43,022	49,810	42,278	42,905	178,014
TOTAL - kg	132,234	145,847	121,590	125,104	524,775



These figures are comparable to the previous financial year.

The current 10-year contract is in its 7th year, and Netwaste is commencing the program to review the requirements of the participant councils as part of developing a scope of works and tender for the next contract period. It is considered that the next contract phase for Cabonne should include FOGO (food and garden organics waste collection) known as a third bin or green bin).

While this proposed change will require community engagement through Netwaste, it is accepted that the three-bin system will be mandated by the State government for introduction across NSW by 2030.

Bulk Waste Collection

As part of the council's domestic waste contract, the annual bulk waste collection was undertaken in late August. There was strong interest this year in the collection services. Arrangements were made with the service provider to reschedule the Cargo and Mullion Creek collection services to the end of the collection schedule, as community notification brochures provided to Australia Post were not delivered to those two areas.

The bulk waste collection for the Cabonne area encourages the community to separate steel from general waste to enable a dual collection program, thus allowing some diversion of waste from landfill and into recycling streams.

CRC

The Community Recycling Centre (CRC), located at Manildra landfill, is part of an EPA program and deed of agreement. The servicing of the CRC was previously with Cleanaway, however with recent contract changes the facility is now serviced by Environment Treatment Solutions. With this change the facility has gone from receipt steel bins with plastic liners to open lid IBC units (IBU is an intermediate bulk container). Currently the CRC stocks 6 stillages for gas cylinders, aerosol drums, fluorescent tubes, and paint. One fluorescent bin has been emptied since the service changeover mid-year.

Landfill and transfer station sites

Preparedness for bushfire season is being undertaken with boundary fire breaks being refreshed, a sprinkler system installed at Manildra, water tanks and firefighting equipment installed at each site. A risk assessment of fuel load on adjoining land along the common boundaries with council's sites has also been considered. Training of staff in the operation of firefighting equipment, and procedures has been undertaken.

The Environmental Services Department is currently seeking quotes to update the waste facilities data management systems. Currently site data is recorded via Tipwaste System, however the technology and the handheld devices require upgrades, and capability for integration with council's records and technology systems. Along with the Tipwaste system, other data product systems are being explored with the assistance of Netwaste and the council's IT team.

Waste Management Strategic Review

The Waste Management Strategic Review was completed by Robert Bailey Consulting. The review of council's waste management strategy was informed by previous reports undertaken by consultants Quadro in the period 2008 – 2011, and a subsequent review by Robert Bailey Consulting in 2015. And updated by Robert Amaral in 2016.

The current review considered the operations of the Cumnock, Manildra, Canowindra and Eugowra landfill sites to determine the rate of consumption of landfill void space from 2016 to present day.

The volumetric changes have been assessed and the conclusion is that the landfilling is being undertaken in keeping with the 2016 estimates. In addition, opportunity areas have been identified whereby landfill footprints could be expanded, subject to investigations, to thereby further extend the residual life of the landfill sites. Residual life estimates across the four sites range from 16 to approximately 50 year timeframes.

Council will in coming years need to commence investigation of future landfill options, be that a new site or a collaborative regional approach to waste management.

Cemeteries

Recruitment for the position of Cemetery Maintenance Officer has been completed and the appointment commenced. The regime of mowing and site maintenance is well underway to manage seasonal spring growth of vegetation within the cemetery reserves.

Council has been required by Cemeteries and Crematoria NSW to apply for an operator's license to which an \$800 fee applies. This is a new fee and has not been budgeted for. Funds will be transferred from within the existing cemetery general budget to accommodate the cost incurred.

A new extension on the Catholic beam section at the Canowindra cemetery has been completed and will provide for an additional 42 plots. Planning has been undertaken for additional beams to be completed at a later date.

Bollards have been ordered for installation at the Canowindra Cemetery to ensure vehicles accessing the cemetery do not damage existing burial sites. Quotes have been requested for construction of a new columbarium wall at the Eugowra Cemetery.

Ranger services

Recruitment for the position of Ranger has been completed and the appointment commenced.

Biosecurity

Council's biosecurity staff attended the bi-annual Weeds Conference in Dubbo in August. This was a good event for innovative ideas and networking between other councils and State organisations involved in the industry.

As part of the conference program a photo competition was run, with Cabonne Council's biosecurity officer David Dickerson winning the "Weedy Superstars" award for his photo of serrated tussock at Four Mile Creek, taken during a combined inspection with National Parks and Wildlife Services of that service's

land. (The category was for photos of weed infestations that could be mistaken for fancy Instagram backdrops)

A Chilean Needle Grass field day was also hosted recently by our biosecurity team at Garra. This was in conjunction with Central Tablelands LLS.

Currently Biosecurity is working with the council's communications team to deliver information nights for landholders as a meet and greet, and also to discuss landholder's and council's obligations under the Biosecurity Act 2015. This aims to bring our team closer with the community and instill a "working together" attitude around biosecurity. These sessions are to be held in October in Molong, Canowindra and Cargo.

In August the council was notified of a varroa mite outbreak within the LGA at Gumble. The outbreak was managed by DPI with infected hives destroyed and disposed of at a licensed waste facility outside the LGA. A control zone now applies to a 10km radius from the initial outbreak site.

Current weeds/Actions

The biosecurity team is focusing on controlling Chilean Needle Grass, African Boxthorn, Sweet Briar, English Broom and Blackberries across the LGA. In coming months, the team will focus on serrated tussock, and with this – a targeted approach to this weed in the Long Point area. Early works have also been conducted for preliminary St Johns Wort control, to alleviate the first growth cycle in some of the more readily contained areas of the LGA.

ITEM 5 - MINING & ENERGY RELATED COUNCILS

REPORT IN BRIEF

Reason For Report	For the information of the committee.
Policy Implications	Nil
Budget Implications	Nil
IPR Linkage	1.2.2.1a - Facilitate Council and standing committee meeting processes.
Annexures	1. Draft Minutes - MERC 3rd August 2023 ↓ 2. Delegates Report MERC Ordinary Meeting 3rd August 2023 ↓ 3. MERC Newsletter August 2023 ↓
File Number	\\OFFICIAL RECORDS LIBRARY\GOVERNMENT RELATIONS\LOCAL AND REGIONAL LIAISON\ASSOCIATION OF MINING AND ENERGY RELATED COUNCILS - 1597882

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the information contained in the report be noted.

DEPUTY GENERAL MANAGER - CABONNE SERVICES REPORT

On 3 August 2023, Cllr Batten and Acting Deputy General Manager Cabonne Services, Stacy Whiley attended the Mining & Energy Related Committee meeting. The minutes of the August 2023 meeting of the Mining & Energy Related Councils meeting held in Sydney on 2 September 2022 are attached for the information of the committee.

Also attached is the following;

1. Delegates Report
2. August 2023 Newsletter

MINUTES OF THE ASSOCIATION OF MINING & ENERGY RELATED COUNCILS (NSW) INC. ORDINARY MEETING HELD AT NSW PARLIAMENT HOUSE, JUBILEE ROOM, 3RD AUGUST 2023

Present.

Cr Kevin Duffy (Chair)	Orange City Council
Cr Dennis Brady (Deputy Chair)	Lachlan Shire Council
Cr Phyllis Miller OAM (Deputy Chair)	Forbes Shire Council
Cr Liz McGlynn (Ex Comm)	Bland Shire Council
Cr Scott Ferguson (Ex Comm)	Blayney Shire Council
Cr Denis Todd (Ex Comm)	Warrumbungle Shire Council
Cr Matthew Deeth	Wollondilly Shire Council
Steve Loane OAM	Forbes Shire Council
Cr Peter Batten	Cabonne Shire Council
Stacey Whiley	Cabonne Shire Council
Cr Jim Hickey	Broken Hill City Council
Cr Jason Hamling	Orange City Council
Brad Cam	Mid-Western Regional Council
Cr Dom Figliomeni	Wollongong City Council
Ron Zwicker	Wollongong City Council
Greg Tory	Lachlan Shire Council

Apologies

Jay Nankivell	Broken Hill City Council
Cr Mathew Dickerson	Dubbo Regional Council
Murray Wood	Dubbo Regional Council
Cr Michael Banasik	Wollondilly Shire Council
Cr Cath Blakey	Wollongong City Council
Heather Nicholls	Cabonne Shire Council
Mark Dicker	Blayney Shire Council
Kent Boyd	Parkes Shire Council
Peter Vlatko	Cobar Shire Council
Cr Peter Abbott	Cobar Shire Council
Cr Jarrod Marsden	Cobar Shire Council
Cr Des Kennedy	Mid-Western Regional Council
Cr Jane Keir	Walgett Shire Council
Megan Dixon	Walgett Shire Council
Gary Woodman	Warren Shire Council
Cr Ros Jackson	Warren Shire Council
Cr Katrina Walker	Warren Shire Council
Cr Pam Kensit	Upper Lachlan Shire Council
Alex Waldron	Upper Lachlan Shire Council
Cr Aniello Iannuzzi	Warrumbungle Shire Council
Hon Ron Hoenig	Minister for Local Government
Hon Courtney Houssos	Minister for Natural Resources
Hon Penny Sharpe	Minister for Climate Change, Energy etc.
Roy Butler	MP Barwon, Independent

In attendance

Greg Lamont, Executive Officer (Minute Taker); Liza Schiff (Melting Pot Planning); Cr Lauren Trembath & Gary Wallace (Oberon Shire Council); Robert Parker, (Nuclear for Climate Australia); Martin Rush, Amer Hussein & Jamie Park (Future Together Group/Three Pillars Advisory) and Jonathon Wheaton (Acting Deputy Secretary, Regions NSW).

MINUTES OF THE ASSOCIATION OF MINING & ENERGY RELATED COUNCILS (NSW) INC. ORDINARY MEETING HELD AT NSW PARLIAMENT HOUSE, JUBILEE ROOM, 3RD AUGUST 2023

1. Welcome.

The Chair, Councillor Kevin Duffy, welcomed members to the meeting and declared the meeting open at 9.08am. Chair also acknowledged the presence of Cr Lauren Trembath and General Manager Gary Wallace, Oberon Shire Council and Stacey Whiley, Acting Deputy General Manager Community Services, Cabonne Shire Council.

2. Acknowledgement of Country by Chair

"I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land that we meet on today and pay our respects to the Elders past, present & emerging".

3. Apologies.

OM 20/2023 Resolved (Cr Miller/Cr Brady) that the apologies as per the above list be received and noted.

4. Disclosures of Interest.

(a) Ron Zwicker declared a non-significant pecuniary interest with his shares in AGL
(b) Cr Matthew Deeth declared a non-significant non-pecuniary interest as Director South32 Community Partnership.

OM 21/2023 Resolved (Cr Miller/Cr Todd) that the disclosures of interest be received and noted.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS AT 9.30am

OM 22/2023 Resolved (Cr Brady/Loane) that the meeting be suspended at 9.30am to receive the following speakers and have morning tea:

(a) Proposal presentation from the Future Together Group speakers Martin Rush & Amer Hussein as follows:

"Future Together Group (FTG) specialises in delivering strategic planning advisory services, with a focus on helping our clients connect and create new ways of working in a changing world.

Our boutique advisory draws on a network of experts who support government, industry, and local organisations across several disciplines, including public policy, energy, planning and environment, economics, public affairs, transitions, and sustainability.

We outline a condensed scope of services to allow delivery in a month say by 8th September 2023. FTG proposes the scope of services will be delivered in the form of a written report that makes approximately 20 recommendations with accompanying reasons that enhance/broaden MERC's objectives and evolve its organisational effectiveness. The Report will also set out a reviewed financial and resourcing plan.

MINUTES OF THE ASSOCIATION OF MINING & ENERGY RELATED COUNCILS (NSW) INC. ORDINARY MEETING HELD AT NSW PARLIAMENT HOUSE, JUBILEE ROOM, 3RD AUGUST 2023

FTG sees long-term benefits and value it can contribute to MERC's impact agenda by delivering this project. As such, we are offering our discounted rates totalling \$7,500 (exc. GST) to deliver this work in a four-week period.

A breakup of the project proposal is:

- 1. Review and refresh of MERC value proposition - sharpen future strategic planning review processes and member-derived value.*
- 2. Review of Constitution to*
 - a. support organisational effectiveness,*
 - b. facilitate greater membership & external cut through.*
 - c. enhance direct and in-kind resourcing.*
- 3. Develop a policy platform structure plan*
 - a. a policy gap analysis – Local Government interest in mining and energy,*
 - b. prioritisation of policy - relevance to current and/or prospective members,*
 - c. a policy and position paper roadmap - short – medium term)*
- 4. Update MERC financial and resourcing plan”.*

Comments by Delegates:

- MERC needs to establish its priorities and determine how does it use its resources to get the best bang for our buck.*
- Need commonalities for all members.*
- Delegates should not attend meetings for the sake of attending meetings.*
- Must focus on a broad range of member's needs.*
- Councils with mining & energy developments are struggling.*
- The emergence of other groups to address issues are the same as MERC has dealt with and are still pursuing eg with VPA's for all State Significant Developments, surety with Resources for Regions grants and Community Enhancement Funds, concerns with roll out of REZ's – there is a lot of similarities and should all be part of MERC as one apolitical voice.*
- What role can MERC play in the roll out of the REZ's?*
- State Government has set up a Steering Committee to deal with the issues raised with REZ councils and communities in them.*

(b) Robert Parker – Nuclear for Climate Australia:

In a very passionate manner, Robert gave a presentation on nuclear energy as the answer to Australia's impending energy crisis. His opening slide was a portrayal of a senior Australian Defence leader in uniform quoting beneath his photo "If nothing else works, a total pig-headed unwillingness to look facts in the face will see us through" Hi presentation covered the following topics:

- 1. A journey into emissions reductions.*
- 2. Avoiding the energy blunder of 100% wind and solar*
- 3. Environmental benefits of nuclear energy.*
- 4. We ignore successful precedent at our peril.*
- 5. Canada is leading the way by re-industrialising from a position of strength.*
- 6. The Canadian and US Nuclear roadmap.*
- 7. We have the solutions now – we can't afford to wait.*
- 8. Conclusions and What About the Waste?*

MINUTES OF THE ASSOCIATION OF MINING & ENERGY RELATED COUNCILS (NSW) INC. ORDINARY MEETING HELD AT NSW PARLIAMENT HOUSE, JUBILEE ROOM, 3RD AUGUST 2023

Using slides to illustrate his presentation, Robert described the problems inherent in attempting to achieve deep carbon reductions and power Australia using 100% renewables.

He explained the research he and Dr Robert Barr AOM have done exposing the huge cost and inherent unreliability and redundancies of the Government's planned roll out of solar and wind farms, as well as the reason for the massive transmission expansion and storage needed to harness these variable sources.

He described a lower cost, reliable, safe, and better integrated plan, developed from this research. Under this plan, the eastern states could be optimally powered by a mix of over 70% nuclear power combined with approximately 30% renewable wind, solar and hydropower. He demonstrated how, by using successful precedent this mix would also deliver much lower carbon emissions and allow for the increasing demands on our electricity that will be needed in the future, without despoiling farmland.

Mr Parker then described the findings from a research trip he undertook in 2022, investigating the success of nuclear power in Ontario, Canada (the size of NSW and Victoria combined). He described the similarities between Ontario and NSW/ Victoria, illustrating a pathway for an Australian roll out of similar technology.

He pointed out that Federal and State governments are closing fossil fuel fired electricity generation and relying almost solely on renewable energy to keep the lights on.

Unfortunately, the big dirty secret of wind and solar is the vast amount of land required to provide anywhere near adequate power generation potential. Power companies are allowed by government to prospect and target prime agricultural land for renewable projects. Transmission lines that service these facilities will carve a path of destruction through our beautiful bush and countryside.

Renewables don't represent diversity in power generation but rather a concentration on a variable resource which requires storage back up by the means of pumped hydro and batteries. Both are proving extraordinarily expensive to build and acquire.

Nuclear energy will provide reliable 24/7 power to firm up our energy production needs into the future. It is forecast by the Victorian Government that by 2035 the demand for power to charge electric vehicles will exceed residential electricity use. How can we cater for this without nuclear?

Nuclear energy unlocks a future of reliable and affordable electricity to power our nation and achieve our climate goals. He called for immediate action at all levels of government to lift bans and begin the planning and development of nuclear electrical generation capacity in Australia.

Comments by delegates:

At the end of his talk there followed questions which covered waste storage and possible re-use, cost, timelines, and sites of possible power stations.

MINUTES OF THE ASSOCIATION OF MINING & ENERGY RELATED COUNCILS (NSW) INC. ORDINARY MEETING HELD AT NSW PARLIAMENT HOUSE, JUBILEE ROOM, 3RD AUGUST 2023

RESUMPTION OF STANDING ORDERS AT 11.35am

OM 23/2023 Resolved (Cr Miller/McGlynn) that the meeting be resumed at 11.35am to continue with the meeting items.

5. Adoption of the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 9th June 2023

OM 24/2023 Resolved (Cr McGlynn/Cr Brady) that the minutes of the Ordinary meeting held on 9th June 2023 be received and noted.

6. Business Arising from Minutes of the Ordinary meeting held on 9th June 2023

Note: It was agreed that the Executive Officer submit a delegate's report to accompany the draft minutes when they are sent to members after each Ordinary meeting.

7. Adoption of Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting held 28th June 2023 and 14th July 2023

OM 25/2023 Resolved (Cr Todd/Cr Miller) that adoption of the minutes of the Executive Committee meetings held on 28th June 2023 and 14th July 2023 be deferred until after the Chair and Executive Officer provides a background report on the replacement for the Executive Officer Services being undertaken by LGNSW Management Solutions.

The Chair provided an overview on the status of the recruitment of an entity to provide the Executive Officer services through LGNSW Management Solutions, details are on their webpage and the contact person is Christian Morris. Dates for interviews yet to be discussed with Christian and Chair, to ensure all members of Executive Committee are available for the selection and interview process.

8. Business Arising from the Minutes of Executive Committee Meetings held on 28th June 2023 and 14th July 2023

Nil

9. Delegates Reports – Nil.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS AT 12.00pm

OM 26/2023 Resolved (Cr Brady/Loane) that the meeting be suspended at 12.00pm to receive the following speakers:

Jonathon Wheaton, Acting Deputy Secretary, Department of Regions NSW had this to say:

- Resources for Regions Program now under Hon Tara Moriarty, MLC who is Minister for Regional NSW, Minister for Western NSW, and Minister for Agriculture.
- Royalties for Rejuvenation Program now under Hon Courtney Houssos, MLC, Minister for Finance and Minister for Natural Resources.

MINUTES OF THE ASSOCIATION OF MINING & ENERGY RELATED COUNCILS (NSW) INC. ORDINARY MEETING HELD AT NSW PARLIAMENT HOUSE, JUBILEE ROOM, 3RD AUGUST 2023

- Renewable Energy Zones roll out now with Hon Penny Sharpe, MLC, Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Leader of the Government in the Legislative Assembly.
- Resources for Regions Program is reviewed each year and this has been done for Round 9 but he is not in a position to comment on any changes to the program that is the responsibility of the relevant Minister as part of September budget details to be released next month.
- Royalties for Rejuvenation is a program locked in legislation under the Mining Act and there was an election commitment by the Labor Government to establish Transition Authorities in NSW, to be aligned with Federal Government on cleaner emissions targets eg have established the Hunter Clean Energy Authority already.
- REZ issues are being considered by Minister Sharpe department.

(Note: Minister for Finance & Natural Resources, Hon Courtney Houssos, was unable to attend at the last minute to address delegates and despite “drop in” indications from Hon Penny Sharpe, Minister for Climate Change, Energy, Environment & Heritage and Hon Ron Hoenig, Minister for Local Government they were unable to do so due to urgent business in the Legislative Assembly at the time).

RESUMPTION OF STANDING ORDERS AT 12.20pm

OM 27/2023 Resolved (Cr Deeth/Loane) that the meeting be resumed at 12.20pm to continue with the meeting items.

10. Speakers - As above

11. Executive Officer's Report

Executive Officer's Report

The Executive Officer went through the items in the Executive Officer's report that related to matters on the agenda for this meeting as information or for decision prior to the consideration of them in General Business.

12. General Business

(a) Future Together Group/Three Pillars Advisory External Review Proposal.

OM 28/2023 Resolved (Cr Figliomeni/Cr Ferguson) that MERC accept the proposal from Future Together Group/Three Pillars Advisory to undertake the following external review for \$7,500 plus GST:

1. Review and refresh MERC value proposition - sharpen future strategic planning and member-derived value.
2. Review of Constitution to
 - (i) support organisational effectiveness,
 - (ii) facilitate greater membership & external cut through.
 - (iii) enhance direct and in-kind resourcing.
3. Develop a policy platform structure plan
 - (i) a policy gap analysis – Local Government interest in mining and energy,
 - (ii) prioritisation of policy - relevance to current and/or prospective members,
 - (iii) a policy and position paper roadmap - short – medium term)

MINUTES OF THE ASSOCIATION OF MINING & ENERGY RELATED COUNCILS (NSW) INC. ORDINARY MEETING HELD AT NSW PARLIAMENT HOUSE, JUBILEE ROOM, 3RD AUGUST 2023

4.Update MERC financial and resourcing plan

(b) Resources Energy Industry & Innovation Forum (REIIF) 2024.

OM 29/2023 Resolved (Cr Brady/Cr Miller) that MERC.

(1) Write to the Chair RDA Orana thanking them for the opportunity to partner with MERC to conduct the inaugural Resources, Energy, Industry & Innovation Forum and to congratulate the CEO, staff, and event planner for their involvement.

(2) Advise RDA Orana:

(i) MERC is interested in partnering with them to run a similar event June 5-7th 2024 albeit over 3 days with the schedule reversed as discussed in the review, to maximise the involvement of Local Government plus to minimise costs, and

(ii) The profit of \$6348.50 be reduced from the \$20,000 event fee for 2024.

(c) Next Meeting.

OM 30/2023 Resolved (Cr McGlynn/Duffy) that the next meeting of MERC be held in NSW Parliament House in November 2023, on a date to be determined by the Executive Committee, pending the results of the external review of MERC.

(d) Parliamentary Enquiry into the Effects of Pollution from Mining on Health, Air, Land & Water Quality. Item was discussed by delegates who decided to take a monitoring brief, at this stage.

OM 31/2023 Resolved (Cr Batten/Cr Figliomeni) that MERC write to the Committee expressing an interest in the matter with MERC to monitor developments.

(e) Minerals Legislation Amendment (Offshore Drilling and Associated Infrastructure Prohibition) Bill 2023. Item discussed but no action to be taken.

Close – the meeting closed at 1.05pm

The minutes (pages 1-6) were confirmed at a meeting of the Ordinary Meeting held in November 2023 and are a concise and accurate record of proceedings of the Ordinary General meeting held on 3rd August 2023.

.....
Cr Kevin Duffy
Chairperson



Delegates Report – MERC Ordinary Meeting 3rd August 2023

This report provides a summary of a very successful meeting held 3/8/23 NSW Parliament House, Jubilee Room for Association Mining & Energy Related Councils NSW (MERC).

Oberon Shire Council attended as observers and potential members.

Cr Lauren Trembath and General Manager Gary Wallace attended the meeting as observers in consideration of joining MERC.

Executive Committee Meetings held 28th June 2023 and 14th July 2023

These two meetings by Executive Committee focussed on the proposal from Future Together Group proposal (see later item) and the replacement process for the Executive Officer who has given notice to leave MERC. LGNSW Management Solutions were appointed to undertake the process at a cost of \$10,000 plus advertising of \$1500 and GST.

The Chair provided an overview on the status of the process to seek and appoint an entity to provide the Executive Officer services through LGNSW Management Solutions, indicating that details are on their webpage and the contact person is Christian Morris. Dates for interviews are yet to be discussed with Christian and Chair/ Executive Committee, to ensure all members of Executive Committee are available for the selection and interview process in September.

Speakers

There were 3 speakers, unfortunately there were late withdrawals from Ministers, which was disappointing, however having Jonathon Wheaton , Acting Deputy Secretary, Department Regional NSW enabled matters to be clarified by delegates.

(a) Future Together Group (FTG) speakers Martin Rush & Amer Hussein

MERC received an initial presentation from FTG on 9th June 2023 where they asked if they could address delegates as they had to share their findings with other like Councils in NSW as part of their State Government funding brief with Lithgow City Council by: -

- *undertaking the development of Lithgow Councils transition to renewables and emerging economies plan.*
- *reviewing its financial sustainability and transition preparedness.*
- *review its quarrying, mining & energy impacted road network.*
- *develop Councils transition policy framework and next step.*

Because of this presentation, FTG offered to submit a proposal to review and refresh MERC's value proposition, review its constitution, develop a policy platform to be more relevant to potential members, update MERC's financial and resourcing plan, look at associate membership options, involving more senior staff from members etc. The cost is discounted at \$7,500 plus GST.



Delegates felt that an external review is timely for MERC given the uncertainties that exist in the mining and energy space in NSW Local Government with a change of government, their review of funding programs, emergence of small groups and the need to have a closer look at MERC's value proposition to attract more members and be a stronger voice for the respective communities. Delegates agreed to accept the FTG proposal to undertake the aforementioned actions and report back in a month.

(b) Robert Parker – Nuclear for Climate Australia

Robert first came to MERCs attention at the Dubbo forum where he gave a presentation on nuclear energy as the answer to Australia's impending energy crisis and the content on what he said delegates needed to know as an energy option. Using slides to illustrate his presentation, Robert described the problems inherent in attempting to achieve deep carbon reductions and power Australia using 100% renewables.

He described a lower cost, reliable, safe, and better integrated plan, developed from this research. Under his plan, the eastern states could be optimally powered by a mix of over 70% nuclear power combined with approximately 30% renewable wind, solar and hydropower. He demonstrated how, by using successful precedent this mix would also deliver much lower carbon emissions and allow for the increasing demands on our electricity that will be needed in the future, without despoiling farmland.

Mr Parker then described the findings from a research trip he undertook in 2022, investigating the success of nuclear power in Ontario, Canada (the size of NSW and Victoria combined). He described the similarities between Ontario and NSW/ Victoria, illustrating a pathway for an Australian roll out of similar technology.

He pointed out that Federal and State governments are closing fossil fuel fired electricity generation and relying almost solely on renewable energy to keep the lights on. Renewables don't represent diversity in power generation but rather a concentration on a variable resource which requires storage back up by the means of pumped hydro and batteries. Both are proving extraordinarily expensive to build and acquire.

Nuclear energy will provide reliable 24/7 power to firm up our energy production needs into the future. It is forecast by the Victorian Government that by 2035 the demand for power to charge electric vehicles will exceed residential electricity use. How can we cater for this without nuclear?

Nuclear energy unlocks a future of reliable and affordable electricity to power our nation and achieve our climate goals. He called for immediate action at all levels of government to lift bans and begin the planning and development of nuclear electrical generation capacity in Australia.

(c) Jonathon Wheaton, Acting Deputy Secretary, Department of Regional NSW:

Delegates were keen to hear if the Resources for Regions program was going to be retained by the State Government and Jonathon informed delegates that the September 2023 budget would reveal all, fielded questions and clarified some issues as follows:

- Resources for Regions Program now under Hon Tara Moriarty, MLC who is Minister for Regional NSW, Minister for Western NSW, and Minister for Agriculture.
- Royalties for Rejuvenation Program now under Hon Courtney Houssos, MLC, Minister for Finance and Minister for Natural Resources.



- *Renewable Energy Zones roll out now with Hon Penny Sharpe, MLC, Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, Leader of the Government in the Legislative Assembly.*
- *Resources for Regions Program is reviewed each year, and this has been done for Round 9, but he is not able to comment on any changes to the program that is the responsibility of the relevant Minister as part of September budget details to be released next month.*
- *Royalties for Rejuvenation is a program locked in legislation under the Mining Act and there was an election commitment by the Labor Government to establish Transition Authorities in NSW, to be aligned with Federal Government on cleaner emissions targets eg have established the Hunter Clean Energy Authority already (This is what the Future Together Group were talking about on June 9th & 3rd August)*
- *REZ issues are many and are being considered by Minister Sharpe's department.*

Resources Energy Industry & Innovation Forum (REIIF) 2024.

Following the success of the recent REIIF in Dubbo 5-9th June 2023, delegates resolved to partner with RDA Orana to conduct another in Dubbo with them in period 5-7th June 2024, with a locked in date, early marketing and a reversal of the speaker and forum schedule, so it's at the front of the forum when the politicians and experts are in attendance. On this basis, it should be another successful cost positive event in 2024. Profit over and above the event cost on 50:50 split with RDA Orana was \$6348.50 each.

Conducting another forum with technical content from industry, government and innovators in a changed forum with more council's present will assist with the value proposition of MERC and attract more members and potential members.

Next Meeting.

Delegates want to have more meetings in NSW Parliament House to have access to Ministers and so the next meeting in November will be set by Executive Committee to fit in with the LGNSW Conference, Country Mayors etc.

Parliamentary Enquiry into the Effects of Pollution from Mining on Health, Air, Land & Water Quality. This Item was discussed by delegates who decided to take a monitoring brief, at this stage and write to the Enquiry to be kept informed of developments.

Minerals Legislation Amendment (Offshore Drilling and Associated Infrastructure Prohibition) Bill 2023. Item raised and briefly discussed but no action to be taken at this stage.

Greg Lamont
Executive Officer
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MERC NEWSLETTER – AUGUST 2023

Introduction

Delegates, here is the MERC August Newsletter, please circulate the Newsletter to your fellow Councillors and senior staff this week, so they can appreciate and understand the excellent work the Association and you are doing on behalf of your Council and community, with regard to mining and energy related matters.

Next Meetings of Association. The AGM meeting will be held in November in Sydney, NSW Parliament House on a date to be confirmed by the Executive Committee after the external review report by Future Together Group is received and analysed. Delegates resolved that the next meeting will be held in Sydney at Parliament House at a date to be determined to keep pressure on getting relevant Ministers attending during House sitting times.

Future 2024 Forum (REIIF) The REIIF date slots have been temporarily booked for next year in the week 5-7th June 2024 but only over 3 days. The delegates at Ordinary meeting on 3rd August confirmed that the conference will be run in partnership with RDA Orana with MERC's Ordinary meeting being held on first day 5th June 2023, followed by site visits, networking dinner in evening, then a conference day for councils, politicians, experts and having non members and potentially new members attend as observers, then the business/industry day is on 7th June 2023.

COVID-19 Virus Impact on MERC - In 2023 MERC will be resuming its' meeting cycle activities in the normal manner. What this means for MERC delegates is that 2023 will have quarterly meetings as "face to face" meetings with use of zoom in exceptional circumstances. Executive Committee meetings will be by zoom means as determined. A lot of value is gleaned from being at a meeting in person and this can be lost when delegates attend by zoom. The focus will always be on giving delegates an opportunity to attend meetings. However, delegates must be present to vote for the AGM in view of the voting system in the constitution.

Speakers for Next Meeting in Sydney – The Ministers for Natural Resources, Planning, Climate Change, Energy, Treasury & Local Government will be approached to speak in November whilst in Jubilee Room, NSW Parliament House.

Inland NSW Growth Alliance (INGA) (formerly Orana Opportunity Network - O2N) – MERC is trialling as a Bronze Member of INGA for 12 months. Their Newsletters are available on their website on rdaorana.org.au.

CRC Transformation in Mining Economies (CRCTIME) Post Mining - MERC is a partner with CRC TIME on a no cost but consultative basis. They provide quarterly updates on progress with an opportunity for members to join webinars, workshops, surveys etc. See Website www.crctime.org.au

Executive Officer Services Replacement. The Executive Committee has commenced the replacement process for an entity to provide Executive Officer services, need an ABN and relevant insurances, part time focus, utilising LGNSW Management Solutions to help with the



engagement. LGNSW Management Solutions Christian Morris consultant has advised that there were 6 individuals and 2 with multiple individuals in the applications. Arrangements will be made for the applications to be assessed by the Executive Committee when all are available, hence the delay with some overseas or unavailable during September 2023.

Engagement of Future Together Group (FTG) & Three Pillars Advisory. MERC has engaged Martin Rush and Amer Hussein from FTG and Three Pillars Advisory to undertake a review of MERC as follows:

- (1) Review and refresh MERC's value proposition, sharpen the future strategic planning review processes and membership derived value.
- (2) Review Constitution to:
 - Support organisational effectiveness.
 - Facilitate greater membership and external cut through.
 - Enhance direct and in-kind resourcing.
- (3) Develop a Policy Platform Structure Plan:
 - A policy gap analysis – Local Government Interest in mining & energy.
 - Prioritisation of policy – relevance to current and/or prospective members.
 - A policy and position paper roadmap in short-medium term.
- (4) Update MERC Financial & Resourcing Plan.

Reports have been received from Three Pillars Advisory for Items 1, 2 & 4 and FTG for item 3. The recommendations are many and will be assessed when the Executive Committee meets to consider the Executive Officer applications possibly in a face to face meeting in Central West in late September early October, to be arranged when all Executive Committee are available. It is a timely review with new State Government and councils grappling with issues associated with the roll out in some areas of renewable energy developments and new EO..

RDA Orana

Whilst the Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) during this early development stage has many benefits, it also brings some challenges. The project is expected to bring up to \$5 billion in private investment to the region by 2030. At its peak, the REZ is expected to support around 6,000 construction jobs in the region, however this could be as high as 8,000.

As the project moves forward, the finer details are being established. Following a Central-West Orana REZ Steering Committee meeting last week, terms of reference were finalised for four new working groups: Accommodation, Environmental, Roads and Transport, and Social.

The Accommodation Working Group will focus on the accommodation shortage for itinerant workers involved in the project and look at innovative housing solutions to meet current and future needs.

The Environmental Working Group will consider water, waste, wastewater, and construction water issues.

The Roads and Transport Working Group will investigate the impacts of increased heavy vehicles on the local and regional road network.



The Social Working Group will focus on issues such as policing, health and food supply, with the large number of workers involved in the project.

Membership of the groups will be a whole-of-government approach consisting of Local Government and State and Federal Government Departments and related agencies such as Energy Co.

Mining & Renewable Energy articles

"NSW to Hike Coal Royalties to Raise Billions for Budget" article by Duncan Murray & Peter Bodkin 6th September 2023, AAP. "Coal royalties will be hiked in NSW for the first time in almost 15 years, delivering a billion-dollar boost for the state's ailing budget. Treasurer Daniel Mookhey on Wednesday revealed coal royalties would be increased by 2.6 percentage points from July next year, delivering taxpayers an expected windfall amid high global coal prices. The change would leave the state budget more than \$2.7 billion better off across the four years starting from 2024/25, the government said.

But Mr Mookhey said households could expect to see a negligible increase - worth an average of less than \$6 per year - in their electricity bills from higher coal costs despite Labor not renewing a cap on prices for the commodity. The coal royalty increase will coincide with the expiration of an emergency domestic coal cap put in place by the former coalition government in December last year.

That measure to limit the wholesale price of coal was rolled out in an attempt to bring spiralling power costs under control as the war in Ukraine sent shockwaves through the global energy market. The new coal royalty rate in the state will be up to 10.8 per cent, with discounts applied for underground mines. The government said the change was developed after consultation with the mining industry and key trading partners.

Mr Mookhey said the feedback from coal producers was that it was a "manageable change", defending suggestions Labor was going too soft on the industry. He said the shift was a fair outcome for the state and replaced an out-of-date royalty regime last updated in 2009. "The new scheme will make sure the people of NSW share in the wealth their resources create," Mr Mookhey said. The money would be spent on essential services and providing cost-of-living relief to families, the government said.

NSW Minerals Council chief executive Stephen Galilee said the industry had consistently asked for the existing royalty regime to be maintained. "The increase in coal royalty rates announced today by the NSW government will impose a significant additional impost on coal producers at a challenging time of lower coal prices and increased operating costs," he said.

Finance and Natural Resources Minister Courtney Houssos said coal remained a key part of the state's electricity network and the new rates balanced increasing revenue with the ongoing viability of the sector.

The Minns Labor government has been priming taxpayers for a brutal budget, weighed down by growing debt, rising interest rates and a fast-rising bill for public sector pay increases.

Mr Mookhey previously said the state's two remaining AAA credit ratings were under pressure with the budget forecast to be \$12 billion in deficit for 2022/23.

Queensland recorded a \$12.3 billion surplus for the last financial year after the state's Labor government introduced new, progressive royalty rates. In contrast to NSW's fixed-rate royalty



system, Queensland operates tiered rates of up to 40 per cent that vary depending on coal prices.

Greens energy spokeswoman Abigail Boyd said the NSW increase was an "insult" and the Labor government had left too much potential income on the table. "The Greens have been calling for an increased and progressive coal royalty structure that would bring in increased revenue similar to that enjoyed by Queensland," she said.

Climate Energy Finance founder Tim Buckley said the northern state ran the preferred model, which delivered major windfalls at times of high prices while easing pressure on producers when prices were low. "(We have) long been calling for a progressive NSW coal royalty scheme to generate revenues for alleviation of cost-of-living pressures and energy poverty in the state, following the leadership of Queensland," he said.

"Road to Renewables: Deal Struck to get Massive Turbine Parts & Transformers from Port to REZ" Sophie Vorrath, Renew Economy, 3rd September, writes "New South Wales Labor has secured a deal to ensure the state's roads are up to the job of carrying load after load of huge and hefty wind turbine parts and massive transformers, often trucked hundreds of kilometres to their destination in regional renewable energy zones.

EnergyCo said on Monday that it has finalised a Memorandum of Understanding with Transport for NSW (TfNSW) to upgrade the state's road network in consultation with communities, councils and road users during construction of Renewable Energy Zones.

Already, roads around Australia are being put the test by increasingly enormous wind turbine components, including 80-metre-long blades that weigh 32 tons, ferried by 92 metre-long "blade-runner" trucks that – with their load included – weigh closer to a total of 100 tons.

Transporting these blade parts, along with turbine tower parts that require a height clearance close to seven meters, is a feat of logistics that comes at a big cost to developers, often including the price of police escorts. It is also a source of concern for the communities who use the roads daily.

But as more and more major wind farms reach development stage in New South Wales, and as major grid upgrades get underway, EnergyCo wants to get ahead of the problem and prevent it from becoming another potential speed-hump to progress on renewables.

Individual developers will still be responsible for meeting each project's road haulage requirements and mapping a feasible route from port to site. The "Port to REZ" MoU, meanwhile, will coordinate and facilitate upgrades to road infrastructure as needed to ensure they can support the transportation of over-sized and over-mass (OSOM) components to REZs and priority transmission network infrastructure projects.

The agreement will also help identify the best routes for transportation of these enormous bits of wind farm and transmission line kit and develop a strategy and framework to manage their delivery efficiently and safely. "The Port to REZ MOU between EnergyCo and TfNSW is another example of how we are taking a whole-of-government and community-focussed approach to delivering a clean, reliable and affordable energy system," said EnergyCo chief James Hay on Monday. "It complements EnergyCo's agreement with the Department of Planning to establish dedicated resources for assessment of major energy projects in NSW REZs, and EnergyCo's partnership with the Port of Newcastle to understand the logistics required to support renewable energy development in NSW."



Anthony Hayes, executive director, regional, for Transport for NSW says the “transport task” for wind and transmission projects is substantial and needs to be carefully managed. “For many of these projects, hundreds of massive components will need to be safely and efficiently moved across our road network,” Hayes said. “By working together, we will ensure the best routes are identified and ready to enable the manoeuvring of these key components to their destinations in the Renewable Energy Zones, with minimal impact to the community.”

“Eraring is more about Shock & Equity than Lights Going Out: Batteries and Bowen can Help”. Giles Parkinson, Renew Economy writes, 6th September” Let’s make this pretty clear, because the Australian Energy Market Operator and the NSW government already have said in the past week: The lights are not going to go out if Australia’s biggest coal generator, Eraring, closes as flagged in late 2025. But there might be other reasons to keep it going.

For one, there is the self-interest of Origin. Most people assume it is losing money hand over fist from operating the 2.88GW plant, but in the last year it made money, thanks to high wholesale prices and the coal price cap. Just how that evolves into the future no one knows. Other estimates suggest it might cost \$400 million a year to keep it open – former energy minister Matt Kean suggested \$1.5 billion a year, but that was only at the height of the energy crisis when coal got into silly pricing territory.

Origin has estimated that the capital cost of keeping the station going is around \$250 million, to which you must add any special upgrades and make calculations about the cost of coal and wholesale prices. Origin, it should be noted, is used to being “short” in the market. They must be good at contracting. And then there is the Brookfield factor, the new Origin owner that needs to negotiate its way around regulatory and competition issues to take the control of the company and embark on its planned \$30 billion renewables and storage investment. Does it really want coal sooting up its green credentials?

So why is the NSW government bothering at all to talk to Origin? Mostly because this is about affordability and equity issues. If it can strike the right price with Origin/Brookfield to keep, say, one or two units spinning in reserve for an extra summer or two, it can be confident there will be little in the way of price gouging by the market.

That will happily get the Labor government past the next election in early 2027. But in a strong signal of the steep learning curve that NSW Labor has followed since talking about a “buy back” of the plant in the lead up to the last election, it is now talking about the advice it has received, and followed, from the industry over the last few months.

This was recognised by energy minister Penny Sharpe in the [latest episode of RenewEconomy’s weekly Energy Insiders podcast](#), recorded on Wednesday. “We spent a lot of time gathering the wisdom of many people in this industry. And it’s an industry that’s new to me ... I wasn’t the shadow spokesperson (for energy) prior to the election. But, you know, a lot of their wisdom has been picked up and was reflected in the checkup.”

Indeed, NSW Labor has discovered there is a whole bunch of things it can do to reduce the risk on reliability and prices, and equity. One is reforming the planning regime, to ensure that wind and solar and battery projects don’t get stuck in the bureaucratic vortex.

Another is opening the path for more wind and solar projects to be connected to the existing distributed or local networks, as advocated by Essential Energy boss John Cleland, in another of [RenewEconomy’s podcasts this week](#).

The third, and possibly most significant option, is dealing with the issues of equity. A lot of this is outlined in the response to the O’Reilly health check on the grid. It includes co-ordination of consumer energy resources – rooftop solar, battery storage, energy efficiency – and making



sure that renters and low income and other vulnerable households are embraced in this transition. Not only does that protect their interests, but it also boosts grid reliability, and support for the transition.

“There are parts of the checkout that didn’t get a lot of mainstream media attention,” Sharpe told the podcast. “It’s about really concentrating on focusing on the opportunities in terms of consumer energy resources, we’re going to be doing a strategy about that. But more than that, I’m really keen just to harvest the enthusiasm within the community for the transition, and how we can ... help them better access that and deal with the equity issues that are built into that.”

She said later: “The support for the transition within the communities is dependent on how they’re feeling and experiencing that transition. As we know, costs and electricity prices have been going up, we know the best way to get them down is to get more renewables in as quickly as possible.”

There is also the political exposure to the small business market. In energy terms, this is known as the C&I market – commercial and industrial customers – that are particularly vulnerable and have been worst hit by the surge in wholesale energy and gas prices.

NSW could save those customers a lot of money – and dodge a lot of political grief – by paying them to install a battery at their premises – it would deflect their exposure to peak prices, allow them to store on site solar, get protection against local outages, and beef up the security and resilience of the grid.

It’s clearly much better to spend tens of millions on local batteries than the mooted hundreds of millions to Origin and more coal fired pollution. And if prices continued to be a worry, there is even a potential role for federal energy minister Chris Bowen to step into the fray.

About five years ago the state Queensland government was being railroaded by soaring energy prices in the local grid, so it rang up at least one of its state-owned generator companies and told it to dial down the bidding strategies – and wholesale prices fell in an instant.

Bowen is the minister of the government that owns all of Snowy Hydro, which dominates the peaking generation market, through its portfolio of gas and hydro generators, and usually sets the price when they soar into the troposphere during evening peaks and other scarcity events.

Snowy controls that market so completely, they even sell insurance against their own bidding practices. And the closure of Eraring, even if it didn’t lead to blackouts, presents potentially more opportunities to exercise their control over the market and fill their depleted coffers.

But Snowy Hydro owes Bowen, and the rest of the country, a very big favour for the way they have completely stuffed up and mismanaged the Snowy 2.0 project, with massive delays and even bigger cost over-runs.

It’s not entirely certain that this is within Bowen’s powers. But if Snowy could pull its bidding head in, then that could avert a lot of damage to people’s wallets, and to the general public’s acceptance of this complex energy transition.

As Energy Insiders co-host and ITK principal David Leitch notes in this week’s episode: “It’s a people business, and I hope that whoever’s in charge of it has got the skills to get the job done. Because quite clearly, the hearts and minds part of it’s just not been won now.”

“Farmers are Famously Self Reliant. Why not use Farm Dams as Mini Hydro Plants?” 7th September 2023, article by Nicholas Gilmore, Martino Malerba & Thomas Britz, UNSW. “Farmers often pride themselves on their self-reliance. When you live far from the cities, it



makes sense to do as much as possible yourself. Australia's sheer size has meant many remote farms have long been off grid as it's often simply too expensive to get a power connection. But for those still on the grid, there are now new options.

As solar gets cheaper, [more and more](#) farms are aiming to become self-reliant in power. But until now, getting fully off the grid has had a sticking point – solar intermittency. Solar power might be cheaper than ever, but if you don't have storage or backup, you're still reliant on the grid when the sun doesn't shine.

Batteries are a compelling solution. But they might not offer a [full day's backup](#) and come [with concerns](#) about fire risk and waste. Generators offer reliable backup. But they too [have downsides](#) – they have to be resupplied and produce harmful emissions.

For farmers, there's now another option: connect one of your dams to a river – or link two dams together – to create a small pumped hydro plant to store electricity from solar to use at night. The water in your dams could offer yet another form of self-reliance.

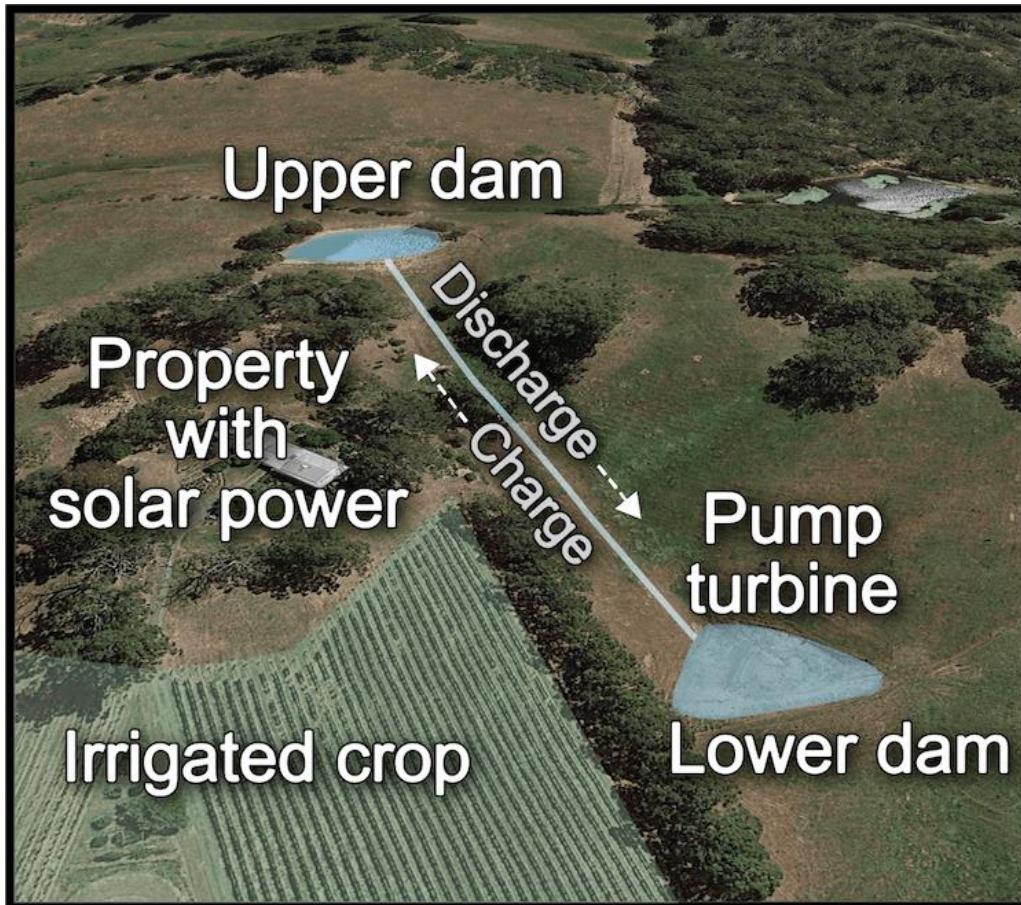
Our [new research](#) has identified over 30,000 rural sites where micro pumped hydro could work. A typical site could produce two kilowatts of power and store 30 kilowatt hours of energy – enough to run a [typical home](#) in South Australia for 40 hours.

Micro pumped hydro is surprisingly simple: two dams, a pump and a turbine. Author provided, [CC BY-ND](#) Massive to micro? Yes, pumped hydro can work on farms. Pumped hydro is essentially turning hydroelectric power into a battery as well.

Take two reservoirs, where one is higher than the other. When you have extra solar power, you store it. How? By using the energy to pump water uphill to the top reservoir. When you need power later, you release water down to the lower reservoir and produce electricity with a turbine.

At large scale, these plants are an [established and efficient](#) way to store energy, though they can suffer from cost blowouts, as in the [Snowy 2.0 scheme](#). Queensland's government [is planning](#) massive pumped hydro schemes to act as batteries. Until recently, small-scale pumped hydro hasn't made much economic sense.

But the steadily falling cost of solar means the numbers have changed. It's now more cost effective to get larger arrays. And that opens up opportunities to find ways to store surplus electricity generated in daytime. For farmers, another opportunity is the ability to use existing dams and reduce pumped hydro construction costs.



If it's cheaper, it's much more viable. Early research on solar-powered irrigation systems using pumped hydro suggests the payback period for this kind of energy storage could be up to [four times shorter](#) than for batteries. What's the catch? As you might have guessed, this solution depends on the size of existing farm dams and rivers, and topography of the land.

The steeper the slope between the two water bodies, the more useful the system will be as energy storage. To get the most out of these systems means finding the sites with the most potential value. And it's likely the solution won't work for farms on flat ground – you need a drop of at least 20 metres.

You're probably wondering how this stacks up financially. We compared a micro pumped hydro system with 42.6kWh capacity and able to discharge 3.6kW to a commercial lithium-ion battery, the Tesla Powerwall, able to store 13.5kWh and discharge 5.0kW.

We found micro pumped hydro storage was 30% cheaper than a battery if locally generated solar was regularly needed overnight – such as to power a 24/7 irrigation system.

Our research is the first continent-wide assessment of potential pumped hydro farm dam sites. How did we figure out how many sites would suit micro pumped hydro? The magic of maths.

