

BOWMANS CREEK WIND FARM COMMUNITY CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE (CCC)

DATE: Wednesday, 14th April 2021

VENUE: Seminar Room, Muswellbrook Library, 126 Bridge Street, Muswellbrook

ATTENDEES:

Chairperson: Dr W.E.J. Paradise AM **Chair**

Community Members: Catherine Ball **CB**
Sue Sylvester **SS**
Brigitte Thomas **BT**
Nigel Wood **NW**
Martin Cousins **MC**
John Madden **JM**
Peter York **PY**

Council Representatives: Cr Godfrey Adamthwaite (Singleton Council) **GA**
Dr Paul Smith (Upper Hunter Shire Council) **PS**

Epuron Representatives: Julian Kasby **JK**
Andrew Wilson **AW**

Hansen Bailey Representative: James Bailey **JB**

Minute Taker: Kerri Garvie

Meeting opened at 5:07pm

1. Welcome:

The Chair welcomed everyone present.

2. Apologies:

Nola Conner

Apologies accepted by the Chair.

3. Declaration of Pecuniary Interest by Committee Members:

- The Chair indicated that he was paid to Chair the Committee. All committee members had previously submitted their forms on pecuniary interests to the Chair.

4. Minutes from the last meeting:

- The minutes from the last meeting were circulated, comments received, changes made accordingly, and according to guidelines have been accepted.
- The minutes were declared as a record of the previous meeting.

5. Business arising:

- No business arising. It was noted that this was a special meeting to discuss the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) currently on display.

6. Project Update:

- A printout of the power point presentation was given to all present.
- JK introduced JB from Hansen Bailey & Associates, who was a co-ordinator in the production of the EIS.
- JK was to go through the first half of the presentation and JB was going to do the second half.
- The chair then mentioned that a break would be taken at the end of the presentation, for food and refreshments, and then questions and discussions would be after this.
- JK started the presentation with the project description and timeline of the approval process. Also in the presentation were options and amendments that were looked at and had been made in response to stakeholders, EIS findings and field ground truthing. One amendment was that only 60 turbines were to be constructed. Construction could take up to 18 months to complete.
- SS asked about the capital investment and JK confirmed that it would be \$570 million. SS stated it was just under \$10 million per turbine, JK agreed.
- JK went on to say that it was in the public exhibition phase. This started on the 31st March and would go for 42 days and close on the 11th May. The EIS is accessible through the Department of Planning portal, as well as Epuron's website. Submissions can be made either online through the portal or can be in writing. Once the submissions have been collated by the Department of Planning, they are then sent to Epuron and they will prepare a response to submissions. Epuron will respond to all of the submissions, public and agency, and then Epuron will submit this document to the Department of Planning. The Department will then start their assessment and determination process. Depending on the number of submissions during the exhibition phase, it may need an additional step of going to the Independent Planning Commission.
- JB added that the Federal Government is doing their own bilateral assessment which it has delegated responsibility largely to the State.
- JK continued by stating that although the exhibition ended on the 11th May, it may take a few weeks for the submissions to make their way to Epuron. They will then start to review the submissions and depending on the type and quantity could take anywhere from 6 weeks to 2 months to respond. Once they have submitted the responses, it could then take the Department of Planning around 6 months to make their determination and assessment.
- JK continued with the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, which was completed by Green Bean Design Pty Ltd, which assessed visual impacts to dwellings within 4.4km of a turbine and public viewpoints out to 12km from a turbine. More than 40 dwellings were offered additional visual screening and 15 will have additional mitigation offered. Photomontages are included in the EIS.
- PY stated "that he liked the selective use of photos again, as the Muscle Creek Montage isn't included in the slide pack and that is the most confronting one of the whole thing and way closer than the McCully's Gap one. So once again you're painting a very nice picture for us".
- CB added that "Bowman's Creek would have been handier, that's what the thing is called".
- JK and AW said that they were in the EIS. PY then went on to ask, "isn't there Muscle Creek CCC members in the room, so wouldn't that have been a benefit?" JK replied

that these were only an example to talk through the format. PY replied, “that it would have shown respect to the CCC as there are Bowman’s Creek and Muscle Creek members and you can’t even add a montage in there”.

- SS then asked what page it was on in the EIS was the Bowman’s Creek one. JK said it was in the 2nd folder in the visual section. JB corrected it was in Appendix H, volume 1, page 9. JB added that the montages start at figure 17.
- The CCC members went through the EIS and SS asked, “so you don’t have a montage of Bowman’s Creek with the turbines on it?”.
- SS then stated, “So I am just going to confirm again, it’s called Bowman’s Creek Wind Farm, there is going to be 236 cars for 3 years every day and there is no montage of what it will look like?” JK replied that it would be 18 months for construction. SS added “so there is no photo of this with what the turbines will look like?”
- JK then went through where the photos were taken from. Again, JK was asked about Bowman’s Creek Road montage and admitted there was no photo. NW said to make sure they put this fact in the response to the EIS.
- JK stated that there were some photos taken from private residences along Bowman’s Creek Road, but SS added that the public cannot see the impact from this viewpoint.
- SS then asked, “Can I just confirm, the reason for this is that they deemed it low density?” JK replied the visual consultant did an assessment of the area and selected locations that would be representative for the public. AW added that there was a map showing all the viewpoints the photos were taken from. SS asked again, “So they have deemed it low density?” JK replied that he had interpreted it that way.
- CB added that herself and SS could see 4 60 degrees segments from their doors. JK had made the offer to take the photos from their front doors and said they would be happy to go back and take the photos.
- CB continued that “Figure 12 would need the turbines on it and any person would like to see it and it would be a normal conclusion. It is nice to make it all pretty, but...”. SS agreed and couldn’t see the point in the photos.
- JK answered that the photos that were used in the determination are a visual baseline in the determination, describing the area.
- CB then mentioned that they had used an 11-year-old photo of her place and mentioned that it was heritage listed, which she argued at the time the photo was taken it was not heritage listed.
- SS asked why it had been called the Bowman’s Creek Wind Farm? JK answered that it was where the project runs through the middle of Bowman’s Creek. CB interjected that it should be called where most of the turbines are – McCully’s Gap Wind Farm.
- JK continued with the summary of the management recommendations. Vegetative screening to be installed around houses, which would be done on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the landowner in terms of what they want to do and what would be effective. NW asked would that work as some of the trees around his place are up to 500mtrs tall. JK replied that when talking about vegetative screening, you do look at the effectiveness of it. Screening is not a one-size fits all. NW then asked why include it in the EIS. JK replied it was an option, and it does work in some cases. CB is concerned all the trees in her stream are going to be taken out when the turbines go through. JK continued that there are examples of Wind Farms that have been built and are currently being built where the mitigation has worked.
- SS asked what the additional mitigation was? JK replied that it is the offer of neighbor agreements to those out to 3km of the proposed turbines and in some cases the recommendation has been to change the location.

- CB then stated that JK had said to her that if she didn't agree to 2 turbines, she might not even get an agreement. JK said he didn't say that. CB replied that is how she interpreted it and then asked JK if she didn't agree with these 2, would she get compensation for the other 4, 5 or 6? JK replied that he thought his words were that he hadn't given any consideration to that thought and on the current offer that had been made but the EIS states that offers were made to residences up to 3km of each turbine. CB said that it didn't make her feel very confident. JK apologized.
- JK continued on with the Mitigation and Management from the presentation. CB then asked about the mitigation of flickering, would the turbines be turned off. JK replied that is a mitigation for shadow flicker. CB then asked what are the chances of that happening? JK replied that the assessment of shadow flicker found that there would not be an exceedance of the criteria. But if there is an exceedance then yes, they would be turned off.
- JB continued the presentation with the Noise and Vibration, undertaken by Sonus Pty Ltd. This initially involves the determination of the background noise. Monitoring was undertaken at a few locations. CB asked if one of them was at her place. JB replied that it was representative of the area based on the location. JK added that there were the options to operate turbines in a sound optimized mode or to restrict the speed.
- PY asked, "What triggers when it gets turned to curtailment mode?" JK replied that there is a particular wind speed that exceeds the criteria. AW added that the turbine models have a noise characteristic that is different depending on the speed of the wind and the noise predicted and measured at a receiver location is different depending on the speed and direction. PY then asked if there would be a real time noise monitor, JK replied that it would be pre-programmed. AW then said there would be a real time mode control. BT asked how come the table identifies dwellings that will be affected but none of them are in the Muscle Creek area? JK replied that there is 2 in the Muscle Creek area. CB then asked if 42dB was acceptable if the criteria is 35 + 5. She was told that the wind speed increases the background noise.
- JB discussed slide that shows the turbines and the extent of noise at the criterion, which is the limit of the orange line. CB stated that she is only 100mtrs from it. JK went back to BT's comment about the other parts of Muscle Creek which JK states is comfortably outside the 35dB criteria. CB asked what was comfortable? 100mtrs, 200mtrs? CB states that she is 100mtrs from an arbitrary line. SS asked how they do the orange lines with topography? JB stated that it is taken into account in the modelling, and you input the topography into the model and then superimpose worse case meteorological conditions. The modelling exercise is very prescriptive, described in the guideline which the government requires them to work by. AW states that conditions of approval are likely to require post construction logging, so PY's question about real time measurements, the answer is yes, they will be a requirement to do once a year or once every 3 years. PY replied that they will do 15 minutes attended monitoring once a month – that's all they'll do. Industry best practice would be Epuron committing to a real time noise monitoring to manage noise. NW stated that they were a horse and cart behind best practice. PY went on to say that industry best practice is looking at problematic noise monitoring. NW interjected and said JB knows. He has been doing this for a long time and cannot hide and pretend he doesn't know. He knows what it is like. JB replied that real time noise monitoring is appropriate in some circumstances where there a sensitive area.
- JB went on to say construction noise would be another issue for them as it is an 18-month period and the construction noise will be dynamic and vary from turbine to

turbine. There will be some static noise associated with this as well with the concrete batching plants and other static activities that can be better contained with mitigation around them. PY then asked if the community members will be able to hear the wind turbines? Will they be audible? AW answered yes. PY then asked at what percentage of the time and under what conditions? AW did not know. NW then compared a dripping tap which is not 35dB and nobody can sleep with a dripping tap. CB added that it is a rural landscape. JB then said that all of the studies were done within the relevant standards. PY added that Epuron were doing the bare minimum, as always.

- CB stated that traffic will be a major issue for her, going up Bowman's Creek Hill, your double deckers wake me up (motioning to SS). CB then stated that construction would not be going 24 hours per day but there would be no restriction on traffic coming in and out 24 hours per day. JB stated that construction would only be taking place during daylight hours. CB said that 8 cars is currently what Bowman's Creek Road has currently going up and down. SS then asked what the roads were being upgraded for? JB replied it depends on what the roads are being used for. Oversize, over mass will need to use some roads and upgrades will be required to get the equipment around corners. NW then asked if the table takes into consideration the cumulative effect of the excavations, road constructions together? JB replied that it did. Further stating that all of these activities were not in the same location at the same time. All of the activities have been assessed with the worst-case scenario is when there will be the most intense construction period, which he thought was about month 7. NW then asked about the EIS stating 75dB. JB replied that was the criteria, the 2009 criteria, was between 45-75dB, but with all "feasible and reasonable" noise control it should get nowhere near the 75dB.
- JB continued with the Aviation Safety report (conducted by Aviation Projects Pty Ltd). There were a lot of things to consider including fencing to civil aviation, commercial aviation, right down to agricultural and crop dusting and firefighting. There are potential for some aircraft landing areas which have been identified on the map. Consultation and agreements over how the Wind Farm can be managed. JK continued by saying that the assessment determined that the takeoff and landing on the 3 main areas would not be affected based on the elevation and distance of the 3 landing strips to the turbines but that due to proximity of some of the landing strips to some of the turbines there would need to be ongoing consultation between the Wind Farm operator and those landowners to do things like turning the turbines down during times when they will be doing aerial fertilizing, or talking to the company doing the aerial fertilizing to amend the route that they use, and if that additional time puts the price up. SS asked "So, 'need to be considered' does not mean to say that it is going to happen, does it?" AW replied that it is likely to be in the conditions of approval. SS then asked, "So you would advise any landowner now that may be affected to get some fairly good paperwork together to show costings now?" AW replied that they would need to show/demonstrate the increase. SS asked if they had looked into how many landowners this would affect? JB replied that there had been 3 identified. PY then asked "the landowners have the runway but would there be others that use the runway as well, through a 3rd party supplier with the super spreading?" JB replied that it is not the actual take off and landing that is the problem. PY then added "but the extra time taken". JK said that all discussion regarding this would have to be between the Wind Farm owner and the landowner. NW asked about the Hazard lighting and marking. He pointed out that the project update handout stated that it will not be required but he mentioned that there was one sentence in the EIS saying there was a

late submission and that maybe lights will be required. JK replied that the aviation consultants that did the assessment deemed it not necessary, but PY again stated that the late submission said that there could be lights. JB said that it was put in due to the potential that could be added by a determining authority. NW added that it would be massive on visual – flashing all night. “It will be like a Christmas tree, 24-7”. SS asked if they knew the history on how many wind farms have aviation lighting? AW replied that 10 years ago, they all did, but lights have been removed or turned off after further detailed assessments. SS then asked if Glenn Innes had lights? AW was unsure if it did or not. NW then asked if the condition was imposed, would the visual impact assessment be redone? JB replied that no it would not be redone as they had already looked at it and included all of the ‘worst case scenario’s’.

- JB then moved onto the Traffic and Transport assessment (Cardno Pty Ltd). The SEARS has specific requirements due to experience with previous wind farms moving oversized over-mass vehicles. JB then went on to state that some roads were local government responsibility, particularly Singleton Shire. SS then asked if Muscle Creek area was Singleton Shire? CB replied it was Muswellbrook. SS then asked how come Singleton was the major Shire? JB replied that it was because of Hebden Road. Oversize over-mass vehicles only have one access point to the project. CB then said that they would go through Spring Creek, Lincolns Creek then onto Albano Road then right past her place for 18 months. SS asked if the access point road would be available to the public, will it be a benefit to other people. JK replied that the access tracks will be on private property and will not be available for public access, but any upgrade to public roads will be a benefit. SS then said it would be of no benefit to the fire fighters, etc. JK replied that would be an exception. AW added that it would be with the consent of the landowners. SS then added that 27 million was being spent on roads and clearing, and this being a CC Committee and being worried about the community, as far as she could see there would be no benefit to anyone living in the area. JK replied that the 27 million would be attributed to the access roads. SS said it doesn’t matter where it’s being spent, it’s 27 million, and nothing. She then went on to say that they had to sell it to the community, isn’t that what you are trying to do? SS went on to ask, what are the benefits? JK replied that there was the benefit to the firefighters. JB added that there was the social benefit. JK added that another benefit would be the upgrade to public roads. The access roads was not one of the things that are promoted as a benefit as they are on private property. PY added that the use of the words ‘access track’ to the people in the room meant 4WD tracks and that is not what is being built. The roads are more like 50m wide to get the blades to position, it is a massive undertaking, essentially like haul roads. CB asked why all of the turbines on the eastern side can’t be accessed from Hebden Road and not past her place. SS asked if all of the turbines were being bought down Albano Road and none were being taken along Goorangoola Road. She was correct. CB then asked why they didn’t use Albano Road all the way, just one road. SS asked what the upgrade to Albano Road would be. JK replied that it would be significant. SS then asked if it would be all of the road or just from the access point. JK replied just from the access point. GA asked about the route coming in from Ravensworth, all the way up to Albano Road and then all the way back. He then mentioned that there was talk, nothing set in concrete yet, that Hebden Mine would be moving Hebden Road. JK replied that this was going through the planning process now as well. SS added that she had to drive 75km instead of 50km to get to the meeting due to Albano Road being in such a state of disrepair. For her to get to Muswellbrook as the crow flies, it is 40km’s but to drive it is 75kms and you were

going to put a 30m wide road in and nobody from the public will be able to access it. JK replied that it is on private land. SS replied that it was a 500 million project, and as far as she could see, it was not benefiting the community. JB said there were other benefits and some of those benefits could go towards upgrading public roads. SS then stated that she had lived in the area for 25 years, you have just been up and down the road occasionally. The biggest limiting factor is you have to either go west out to get to Aberdeen or you have to go north to Singleton. There is nothing to Muswellbrook because Muswellbrook Shire refuse to maintain roads. So, you are going to put a massive almost highway through there (Muswellbrook) and it will not be a benefit to anyone, besides the Wind Farm. Is that right? SS continued that if they got cut off by flood, which happens regularly, so for a normal car, that is not a 4WD, probably wouldn't have gotten out for 10 days. So, 500 million is about to be spent on the back door and there is no way of getting out. Am I right? Is this not the Community Consultative Committee? JK replied yes, it is. NW then added that SS was 100% right and this is what Epuron should have done from the beginning – what does the community want? SS reiterated – 500 million dollars. SS continued that for the whole community that lives there, and have lived there for a long time, there are 3 things that are needed – good roads, mobile phone coverage and good internet. You are about to spend 500 million dollars and we got zip! JB mentioned that they could get permission of the neighbors to access the roads. CB replied, “I wouldn't joke about that if I was you”. SS then said that was not the point. Epuron was bringing a 500-million-dollar project to the area and they are not contributing anything to the 3 major things that the district needs. There was agreeance by all in the room that lived in the area about the internet and mobile coverage. SS went on to say that they (Epuron) were not delivering anything. The Chair then said that we need to be talking about points of clarification rather than discussion in more depth and should move on.

- JB then moved onto Biodiversity Assessment (Cumberland Ecology). This did involve a lot of field work. This study had to look at landscape features and native vegetation and threatened species. The study identified that there were no wetland areas within 30km that would be disturbed. It did identify some endangered ecology communities at Federal and State level and a number of vulnerable endangered species as well. CB asked why wouldn't that be important biodiversity? JB replied that it was an outstanding biodiversity area, although not mapped. Discussion then went onto the endangered plant communities and threatened species. Although the Wedge-tailed Eagle is not listed as a threatened species in NSW, it is a targeted raptor and considered a high-risk strike species. There were some targeted studies and identified 2-4 resident Wedge-tailed Eagles. NW then stated that there were 4 nesting and feeding chicks in the trees near his place, which is right next to the turbines. NW said they must have had their eyes closed when they were doing the study. JB then said that if anyone knows of any other species that could be endangered during this project, then now was the time to let them know.
- JB moved onto the Aboriginal Heritage Assessment (Ozark Environmental and Heritage). Some sites were identified, and ceremonial rings were found. CB said the photo in the EIS was taken from google maps 2010. Her church is stated to be heritage, but it wasn't even heritage then. She couldn't see why they would put an outdated photo of a dilapidated old building in the EIS and asked why they would do that? JB replied that the photo was chosen by those doing the studies. CB then replied that they went out to Roberts Graves and took pictures and for some reason they wanted to make her place look worse than what it was. CB wanted to know the reasoning.

There was no mailbox. She had put \$200,000 into that house and you have just put it into the EIS looking like a tin shed. JB replied that beauty is often in the eye of the beholder. CB said it needed to be changed! It was 2015 that it was listed as historical after all of the work had been done. CB was quite upset that she was not asked about the photo. Prior to doing up her house it was just a shed in the paddock. She just wants honest upfront conversations. CB then said that they quoted her sister-in-law in the EIS about her property.

- JB continued through the other studies that were undertaken – Economics, Telecommunications, Bushfire, Waste, Property Value, Social Impact Assessment. SS asked why TV reception was the only telecommunication mentioned in the study? JB replied that it was the only one that could be impacted by the project. SS then asked why they wouldn't have done all of the telecommunications in the study. AW replied that they all were in the study. SS then asked why they were not in the report summary given out. JB replied that this was just the impact, most highlighted area. SS then asked if they thought that TV reception was the most important. JB replied that it would be the one that has the potential to be most impacted. SS then asked about mobile coverage. AW replied that mobile coverage is not normally affected by wind farms as it is a broadcast signal, generally point to point signal. During the discussion on waste, NW asked about the turbine blades. JK replied that they would be taken off site if replaced or decommissioned. PY asked if there was a current estimate that Epuron use for costing for the decommissioning of each turbine? AW replied that there were a number of resources that could be looked up. PY said that there was nothing in the EIS. AW then replied that it was a condition of approval that a draft plan is in place for the decommissioning before the 2-3 year, and that the cost of decommissioning is similar to that of the construction. GA then asked that on dismantling/end of life, all the parts will be taken away. JK replied that everything above ground, yes. AW said that typically 80-85% is recyclable but the blades are something that aren't recycled at the moment. SS then asked if they had done an estimate of the cost to decommission and if it is the same, then in 25 years when they are decommissioned, the cost, with CPI, would be considerably higher. AW replied that the decommissioning cost is the cranes, trucks and crew, not the cost of the whole project. NW said that the Sapphire EIS estimated a cost of about \$400,000 per turbine to decommission. AW said that sounded about right. NW then went on to ask if the bank guarantee had been sorted out yet, as currently that liability sits with the landowner. He went on to say that the operator is not the landowner and what is happening in some European countries, at the end of life, the companies are sold to \$2 companies and the landowner is stuck with the decommissioning costs. That is \$400,000 at today's cost. What is the guarantee for the landowners, and the community, that they will be decommissioned properly? CB added that there was a fund, they reckon. NW said that they could say anything in the agreement, but that gave him certainty as a resident. There was then some discussion about the mining bonds that the government holds for the decommissioning of a mine. PY & NW said it was totally different and cannot be compared with this. SS stated that at one of the meetings with the DPI, they said that as it is a commercial agreement, the government do not step in. PY said this needs to be covered in the EIS. PY said he had been involved in projects where the mine was on private land and the mining company had to have a bank guarantee. Epuron will flog it off and the proponent won't want to spend the money. Discussion then moved onto property values. 2 studies have previously been undertaken, 2009 & 2016, and it was found that an appropriately positioned wind

farm are unlikely to have measurable negative impact on surrounding land values. CB said she found that highly debatable. The reality is that nobody wants to live under a wind turbine. These studies were done 5 years ago and should not be relevant. CB thinks that she will lose value, a lot of people will lose value in their homes.

- The discussion then went onto the Social Impact Assessment. AW said that Epuron had used the funds to upgrade roads and install mobile phone towers. An offer of \$3,000 per turbine had been offered to the councils. GA said that it had been offered, not accepted. SS asked how much a mobile tower cost? It would take years to have enough money from that to build them. AW then added that it could be a joint project between the mobile companies and wind farms to build them. SS then stated that at the moment your social impact assessment, your contribution to the community, particularly the residents that have been affected by this is nothing. AW responded with no; it is a lot more than that. You have to look at the studies. JB continued with there is \$74 million annual direct and indirect regional output, and \$67 million annual direct and indirect regional impact. SS asked if that was broken down in more detail and how will that help the agricultural industry, which are the main land holders affected by this. BT added that the agricultural studies talk about cattle but when you go and look at the references, they talk about sheep. JB added that the other household income direct impact is \$6 million per annum. SS asked for how many people. PY replied 15 people. That's \$400,000 per year. Good job. JB added that it equates to 58 direct and indirect jobs, 15 full time. BT then asked if that was 15 people over the life of the project or 15 people each year? But it is only people that have the skills, and they don't have the skills here. SS add that she was still unable to see how the people in the area are going to benefit. PY said the housing will be cheap because the property prices will drop. JK went on to say there was also the benefit sharing arrangement for those living within 3klms of a proposed turbine would be qualified to get an energy rebate. PY said to JK, "how can you sit there and say the neighborhood agreement is a benefit? It is not a benefit! You basically become a tenant on your own property."
- SS said Albano Road that you are going to use has no mobile coverage. JK replied – at the moment. SS then said all of that road had no coverage. She still didn't know what they were giving back.
- PY said to JK – Epuron have been working on this project for 3 years now, that we know of, you should already know what the community wants, you are still assuming, you haven't done adequate community consultation. You haven't gone to the community and asked or you would know what SS was wanting if you had done that properly. You haven't even got a social scientist that works for your company. It's as simple as that. This is what I have been harping on about since day one. You've missed your opportunity. CB also said that no meeting was held at Mt Pleasant. PY asked how many people had been consulted, about 200? JK answered he did not have the figure off the top of his head. But 200 sounds about right. PY then said 1,000 maximum? The 3 LGA areas have 60,000 people and you think that is adequate consultation. One of PY's neighbors is within 1klm of the towers and did not even know the EIS had been submitted. PY & CB said the face-to-face meetings have been intimidating and that they had been lied to.
- The Chair stepped in and said that a break should be taken and after the break going through the process of making the submissions.

A break was taken between 7:02pm – 7:20pm

7. General Business (after the break):

- MC asked if an introduction around the table could be done. All around the table introduced themselves.
- JK gave a quick update on how to make submissions and timeframes. The end date for submissions is the **11th May 2021**.
- SS asked what about letting the community know. JK said a letter had been sent out to the mailing list, which has the web address for submissions. JB added that the NSW Government had put an advertisement out and had also sent a letter with all of the relevant information.
- The Chair also reminded the CCC members that it was part of their role to actually communicate with the broader community as well.
- The Chair then moved onto General Business and that one of the issues seems to be the question of “what does the community get out of it”.
- JB explained that the NSW Government had put out a guideline for the socio-economic assessment that states the guidelines for doing the analysis and looking at the socio-economic benefits of projects to society. This is very prescriptive. It says what you can consider in that economic assessment and the primary considerations are the expenditure which relates to both the construction, the capital expenditure and employment attached to that, and the Voluntary Planning Agreement. The modelling is done to review the economic impacts on a regional bases, and a state basis. SS then asked – it can only be based on employment, did you say? JB replied capital and the operating costs and employment. Expenditure and employment and the Voluntary Planning Agreement. SS said not infrastructure. JB had just referred us to go to the guidelines and the only guidelines refer to employment. JB replied that it refers to how to quantify the economic benefit to the region and state.
- The Chair asked if some of these costs and benefits are at the local level and need to be dealt with by local government while acknowledging this is a state significant project. He also asked about presentations to Singleton and Muswellbrook and Upper Hunter councils. Given Muswellbrook Council did not attend the CCC how will they be involved in terms of reviewing the benefits and costs associated with some of the issues that SS has been raising. JK replied the mechanisms for those discussions with Councils is what JB had mentioned – the Voluntary Planning Agreements. The other thing that falls into these discussions is the Community Enhancement Fund, with the offer of \$3,000 per turbine per year to go into the Enhancement Fund.
- GA stated firstly, it’s called a Voluntary Planning Agreement and it shouldn’t be. It should be a Compulsory Planning Agreement. Each individual council has a different approach to it. Muswellbrook have a “Futures Fund”. Singleton has started up a fund called a “Legacy Fund” and the majority of the funds from the Voluntary Planning Agreements go into this. We have only dealt with Mines so far, so this is the first of a different project. This fund is to look after the future, the legacy, of future people living in Singleton and only the interest is used on projects in the community. This is where we all need to get our head around it. When it says community, it is not just the community around the project, it is the whole of the LGA. GA indicated roads were a top priority. SS raised concern that not much can be done on the interest of \$39,000. GA said the fund was close to \$10 million.
- The Chair then asked about the difference between the Voluntary Planning Agreement and the Community Enhancement Fund. JK replied the commitment to

something usually the discussed in the Voluntary Planning Agreement because that is a document that the council, on behalf of the community, negotiates and puts on public exhibition to take submissions from the community on how that Community Enhancement Fund is described. AW replied that to answer your question, they are the same fund. The Chair then said that the Voluntary Planning Agreement would cover broader issues than just those related to the wind farm.

- There continued to be a lot of discussion about the offers made in the Voluntary Planning Agreements and how this is a starting figure. No agreement has been finalized yet. The discussion around the \$3,000 offered continued and PY stated that the total amount of \$180,000 per year equated to only \$3 per resident in the 3 LGA's. He also stated that some other projects were getting \$3000 per turbine and they were only 15mtr tall turbines, not 220mts. SS asked if it should be a percentage of the capital investment. PY said the mines cost \$300 million to set up and they are putting in hundreds of thousands per year.
- The Chair stopped this debate and asked AW to continue. AW said the way the wind farm community fund has evolved in NSW is typically a radius around the wind farm where the money gets spent so people can nominate for projects within 3kms or 5 or 6kms of the project. SS asked if Epuron wanted to talk to the community about this. AW replied that they wanted input from the community. MC suggested that what the community would like done with the funds should go on as a separate comment on the EIS response. JK said that this could be an agenda item for the next meeting.
- SS stated that the site access road of Albano road, the main part of Albano Road is unfenced road. There are livestock all along this road and it appears the EIS has not addressed this matter at all. JK replied that was a very good point and would look into it.
- PS (UHC) said the process with his council would be that he would prepare a submission on his review of the EIS and other documents and it would be put to the council and they may make other comments going into the submission.
- JM had nothing further to add.
- BT had nothing further to add.
- GA concurred with PS as to the way the submission would go with Singleton Council.
- SS said it was roads / phone / internet that was needed by the community.
- CB is at the bottom of the hill, too close to the turbines. Feels like she hasn't had too much conversation about how she could be compensated. Just seems like a lot of hot air. Only about half a dozen landowners will benefit.
- MC had a couple of questions for clarification. The disturbance area is 515ha, is that everything from grassland to trees? CB said that unique environments will be devastated. MC then continued with asking about the offsets that are proposed. JK replied that disturbance area is what to be cleared for the project. Within that disturbance area there are classifications, such as grasslands, wooded areas, dry rain forests, etc. removing each of those inputs feeds into values associated with an overall biodiversity credit system. There are 2 options to offset these credits – either pay money into a fund, which is managed by the state to purchase land. Land can be purchased and managed by ourselves or we have a management agreement with a landowner. MC continued by asking if there are there any firm proposals on how the Wedge-tailed Eagles will be managed? JB replied that there was a list of mitigation measures proposed and one of those relates to blade strikes. Continuing monitoring as far as numbers. MC also asked about the underground and overhead power lines

and what determined which way was chosen. The underground section proposes to use the road corridor.

- PY said he had no further comments on the EIS. Also asked about there not being any information sessions at Muscle Creek. Why is that? JK replied that they do have information sessions at McCully's Gap Hall and Hebden Hall and those venues were chosen as they were suitable for the format of the information session, which include displays of the studies done. PY then told JK to be prepared as there were lots of people in Muscle Creek that were not happy about not having an information session. CB added that they rang her up and asked who wanted to go to Mt Pleasant. That is not my job, that's yours, it's called community consultation. PY had another question about the ongoing saga of the monitoring towers. These are noncompliant and should have been pulled down after 30 months of installation. Has Muswellbrook Council been in touch to do an investigation of why the tower is still standing? JK replied that they had been in touch with Muswellbrook Council to inform them that as part of the EIS, they had put in a submission to continue to use the masts. As the EIS was still some time away, the Council requested that a development application be submitted for the consent to continue to use them until a determination of the EIS had been made. NW added that the application has not been approved. It is not compliant and wasn't compliant for 17 months when it was built, it hasn't been compliant since the end of February. JK replied that they had contacted the Council in February and submitted the DA in March. NW continued to say that they knew the 30 months was coming up and why wait until the last minute. JK said during the whole time they had been in discussions with the Council. NW came back and said they hadn't followed legislation. Then he asked how much a monitoring tower costs to put up? JK replied about \$200,000. NW then said that you expect us to trust you with a \$600 million project when you can't even get a \$200,000 project right. He then said you had broken the law, and broken legislation and you don't care. It's always let's look the other way, that's reality. I have to look at it every morning when I get up. PY then asked if there had been any complaints about the Bowman's Creek Wind Farm to date? JK replied that there had been some complaints. PY then asked if they could be included in these minutes to go through at a later date. JK asked if he wanted a summary of the complaints and PY replied yes please. It would be good for the committee to know what complaints had been received. The Chair asked what sort of complaints they are talking about as he was not keen to put material in the minutes of which he was not aware. There was further discussion on the complaints and JK agreed to tabulate the complaints that have been raised.
- NW just said to make sure you read the EIS carefully. It is a heavy read. There are a lot of mistakes in it. There are a lot of issues with it and to submit your feedback to the Department on time. There is a lot to do and hold Epuron accountable. People need to realise that the Upper Hunter has been identified and they area saying that there will be 5000 more turbines to go in the area.
- The Chair asked AW and JB if they had anything further to add. Both had no further points to add. JK said he had an item for general business. He stated that he wanted the main focus of tonight to be about the EIS however there was a further item of substance for the CCC. He indicated that about 2 weeks ago AGL made a presentation at their investor day about the future of their business. They talked about their pipeline of potential Wind projects and they discussed Bowman's Creek as they had come to an agreement with Epuron for the exclusive rights to the project. As a result, while Epuron is the owner of the project, AGL is the proponent

8. Next Meeting:

- The next meeting has been set for 18th August 2021 at 5:00pm but will be determined by when the response to submissions has been prepared.

9. Meeting Close:

The meeting closed at 8:15pm