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Meeting Notes

Maules Creek Solar Farm - Community Consultative Committee

Meeting No. 2, Thursday 10 October 2024
Time: 5:30pm-8:30pm
Location: Maules Creek Community Hall, 2247 Maules Creek Road, Boggabri NSW 2382

Members in attendance:	**Chairperson**:	Margaret Harvie
	Community representatives:	Stephen Bradshaw, Leanne Starkey, Nick Bradshaw, Mat Smith, Chris Smith, Glenn Holmes, Russell Stewart, Patricia Shultz
	FRV representatives:	Rob Beckett- Project Development Manager Ana Lazaro Herrasti – Project Developer (Minutes)
Others in attendance:	John Rafferty – Senior Principal, Stakeholder Engagement Adam Bishop – Principal Environmental Consultant – Pitt & Sherry	
Apologies:	Marty Brennan, Brian Druce, Tim Whan, Shanna Whan	

Item no.	Description	Actions
1.	Margaret welcome and acknowledgment of Country. Introductions • FRV - Rob Beckett (RB) and Ana Lazaro (AL) (taking notes). • John Rafferty (JR) - Supporting FRV with community consultation. • Adam Bishop (AB) – Principal environmental consultant for the project. Community members - • Russell Stewart (RS) – Head of Narrabri Chamber of Commerce, who also attends CCC for coal in the region and has interest in regional development. • Chris Smith (CS) – Neighbour to the project who feels he will be the most impacted. • Mat Smith (MS) – Chris's son who is a life-long resident of Maules Creek. • Nick Bradshaw (NB) – Third generation farmer, member of local RF brigade, works at Fairfax public school and building home in the area. • Leanne Starkey (LS) – Neighbour to solar farm, purchased home on black mountain creek road, social worker. • Steve Bradshaw (SB)– Neighbour, Secretary of local RF brigade. • Glenn Holmes (GH) - Generational farmer in Maules creek • Patricia Schultz (PS) – Explained that she was an Armidale resident but had ties to Maules Creek through activism work over the past 12 years and as a Power Of Attorney for the property of a well-known local resident, Cliff Wallace, who recently passed away. PS advised she is in favour of renewable energy and has an interest in the future of the area. Previous Minutes • MS shared that there were inaccuracies with the last minutes which he was very unhappy with. After the first CCC, MS left feeling heard and felt	**ACTION:** CCC members to review notes from meeting one and make

	that FRV was making an effort to rebuild trust, however the inaccuracies in the minutes had undone this. • MH clarified meeting notes were sent as a draft, and that everybody has the opportunity to provide comments and request changes. • MS advised that people in the region are very busy and that it is difficult to read through length document to provide comment. • Options were suggested such as colour coding but it was suggested that an option was to skim through to initials so that each person could confirm their own statements in the notes. • MS asked if MH would be willing to work through members comments and make the changes over the phone. MH agreed.	comments or add any additional information that is missing, these will be changed as required. **ACTION:** MH agreed to take verbal comments from members as required
2.	Conflict of interest discussion and Code of Conduct No conflicts of interest were declared.	
3.	Review of the purpose of CCC and confirmation Terms of Reference Community members acknowledged that they had not yet read the terms of reference. MH said that they were relatively straightforward and items had been discussed but she will take comments on them at any time in the future. Concern had been raisedabout membership of the CCC being open to those who are not residents of Maules Creek, RB explained: • FRV's establishment of the CCC was voluntary, as such it allows for more community members to participate than is in the guideline. • that membership is open to any person interested in the project. • That FRV chose not to exclude any applicant as some members of the community previously felt consultation on the project had not been open or transparent. • FRV will continue to accept applications from people going forward if they decide they would like to participate, as long as numbers do not grow too large to hold a constructive meeting. • The CCC is an information sharing forum only, and it is not a decision making body. • The CCC is only one form of consultation, and RB offered to meet any CCC members in person for confidential discussions about any issues that they did not want to discuss in the open forum. MH confirmed that it is usual for CCCs members to have diverse views, it is not expected that they will all have negative concerns, this diversity is of benefit to the CCC discussion. Questions: • MS asked if the CCC is open to residents only, and indicated that there were some at the table who he did not recognise as locals. • RB responded that applicants were to demonstrate connection to the broader area, but people don't necessarily need to be living in Maules Creek.	**ACTION:** CCC members to review the terms of reference.
4.	**Review actions from previous meetings** MH confirmed following items had been completed: • Code of Conduct signed • SEARs link provided	

	• Shanna's survey included in previous meeting • Catering arranged **Outstanding items in agenda** that will be covered during the meeting: • Update on environmental studies, particularly water and aquatic species • Share more detail about flood modelling • Present findings of the traffic impact assessment • Provide information about why LS property was deemed to not require a detailed assessment. • Present findings of the visual assessment • Share predicted noise modelling once completed. • Respond to community concerns about emergency protocols in times of flood. **Additional items** : • Investigate on-site water storage requirements for fire fighting with Fire Rescue NSW and consult with RFS • RB clarified that the water-storage requirements in NSW require at least one 20,000 L storage tank fitted for fire-fighting equipment. FRV has committed to providing two 20,000 L tanks – one on Middle Creek Road and another on Glencoe Road. FRV will consult with the local RFS group on the location of those storage tanks. **Items not covered in this meeting** • SW to provide to FRV email list of local residents (with their consent due to privacy concerns) for email updates on the project. It was suggested that it may be better that Shanna distribute to mailing list– future action. **Other business:** • JR indicated that FRV have just posted out another newsletter to all addresses in Maules Creek that were publicly available, and along the transport route. • Copies of the newsletter were then passed around to CCC participants at the meeting.	**ACTION:** SW to provide to FRV email list of local residents (with their consent due to privacy concerns) for email updates on the project.
5.	Presentation by Pitt & Sherry, Nation Partners and FRV on the following topics: **Update on Environmental Studies** **<u>Topic 1 - Flood modelling</u>** AB presented on flood studies for the project, explaining that: • studies are ongoing and modelling will be completed for the site both with and without project infrastructure, to model any impacts, and to demonstrate that the project won't affect flood/stormwater pathways. • studies relate to whole catchment and look at different scenarios including AEP (annual exceedance probability) 1% (i.e. 1 in 100 year flood) and PMF (maximum possible flood). • Final modelling studies will be included in the EIS. The draft modelling shows that part of the site is inundated during this flood scenario.	

	• The project would be developed to both ensure that infrastructure remained safe and unaffected by flood, and that there would be no off-site impacts to neighbours. **<u>Questions regarding flood modelling:</u>** MS: Pointed out that AB had just indicated that the project would have flood impacts. AB: Clarified that it was unlikely the solar farm would result in changes to flooding or stormwater flows. The design of a solar farm doesn't impede stormwater, so the impacts are not significant. MS: Disagreed with AB and felt that AB had contradicted himself when presenting information. MS expressed frustration that the community wants firm answers and commitments, rather than saying that things are "unlikely". RB: Explained that consulting early means that we don't always have all the answers and that flood modelling was not yet complete. LS: Asked about the size of the panels and the surface area. Asked how it is possible to determine that the panels do not change stormwater runoff given the surface area of the panels. RB: current panels are approximately 2.4 m x 1 m. Rows of solar panels/modules are spaced approximately 4-5 metres apart AB: Explained that groundcover (grasses) would remain on the site and these are similar to the characteristics of agricultural areas. During construction, most groundcover remains (only impacted by trenching or construction of internal roads). LS: Concerned that shading from panels might kill groundcover, or that during times of drought, there would be no groundcover and that this would result in changes to stormwater. RB: FRV have seen that grass grows better under solar panels due to reduced heat stress and condensation in the morning/evening providing water. AB: The solar farm structure won't increase the risk of flooding – the solar panels are pile driven into the ground with no concrete footings, and the ability of the site to absorb rainwater is not reduced. NB: Wanted to confirm if we are referring to water levels or water flow? He feels that flow will be impacted. AB: The solar panels take up a small area of the overall land, . There are larger solar farms safely operating in NSW regions that are more flood-prone/flood affected than Maules Creek. The ground beneath and around the panels remains pervious and able to infiltrate rainwater. Studies have shown that solar farms do not increase runoff. It's not like an urban environment where hardstands replace vegetation resulting in significant increases to runoff. NB: With time, with the vegetation, wouldn't it create like a channel, depending on the type of ground. A bit like when a roof doesn't have a gutter, and erosion occurs beneath the dripline of the roof? RB: FRV's Moree Solar Farm has been operating for over 8 years and has not seen any evidence of groundcover failing or any evidence of gullies/erosion due to runoff from panels, or off-site flooding impacts. Solar panels are closer to the ground than a building roof, and also, the angle/tilt of the solar panels changes through the day, so the edge of panel is not fixed in space.	

	SB: Within the model, where does Middle Creek break its banks in the image? RB: Showed section on available figure. MS: felt that the modelling is not accurate, and unhappy that it did not show the project outline on it, which was necessary to provide context. MS feels the project will have an impact on the break out of Middle Creek and that his father's property may be impacted RB: During the meeting added a rough outline of the project footprint to the figure for the benefit of committee members. AB: Apologised that the image presented did not show the footprint very clearly and acknowledged the difficulty this caused. This will be fixed in the graphics presented for the EIS. MS: Asked if any of the studies would be peer-reviewed before they are submitted to the Department. AB: Advised that they were not peer-reviewed, but that they are reviewed by specialists within the government departments responsible for various aspects of the EIS studies MH: Confirmed that the department will check this flood modelling, along with the agency specialising in flooding impacts. If the project was to result in significant flooding risks that can't be mitigated, the project would not be approved. RB: Pointed out that it was in FRV's interests to make sure flood modelling is right both to protect the community and the solar farm from damage. SB: Asked if FRV knew what impact Scrubby Hill has on Green Gully (watercourse). SB clarified that: • previous removal of trees on Scrubby Hill resulted in significantly more stormwater runoff in Green Gully, as less trees created decreased stormwater absorption. • He felt that the removal of trees within the project site would increase runoff. RB: Highlighted that groundcover would remain throughout the entire site, most vegetation within the site would be retained, and that FRV will also plant vegetation along Glencoe Road. NB: asked if the solar panels would look like those shown in the newsletter on the front page. RB: No they will not. Explained the project would be what is called a "1P" orientation (ie. only 1 solar panel on a fixed axis). This is why the maximum height was reduced from 5.5m to 3.01m. RB explained front page of newsletter used a stock image showing larger panel height than is proposed. GH: Do the panels change their position/angle to minimise flooding? Can the panel angles be changed to minimise runoff? RB: FRV change the direction of the panels in different environmental conditions (eg floods and hail). AB: clarified that even during periods of high rainfall, runoff from the solar panels would still land on soil and vegetation – the site's ability to absorb stormwater will not be reduced by the solar farm. .	

	LS: How many panels will there be? RB: Between 200,000 and 240,000 panels. MS: MS again expressed deep frustration that the community is not being given firm answers to questions that should be easy for FRV to answer. RB: Accepted that this would be frustrating. RB explained that the uncertainty comes from the process that FRV must follow – our EIS describes the largest project that could be constructed, but it may be smaller. Throughout our EIS/DA preparation, the project is constantly being revised to consider the existing environment and respond to emerging issues, and FRV also needs to undertake enquiries and negotiations with TransGrid. RB clarified it would not be until Transgrid enquiries are finalised that there is certainty about the size of the final project. LS: How far apart are the panels? RB: The panels are a few centimetres apart on the same row (tracker). In between trackers, there will be a gap of a few metres. This is larger in some areas to accommodate access roads. AB: Gunnedah SF offers a reasonable comparison to Maules Creek in terms of how it might look, however Gunnedah is larger. LS: Advised that she still could not see how the solar farm would not change runoff given the surface area. AB: Explained that when floodwaters prevent access to or from the site, FRV would follow established shut down procedures for the solar farm. RB: Clarified that FRV will have an established central control room, which enables remote monitoring and will ensure that the site can be safely shut down if the team cannot get to the site. PS: How do panels work in strong winds? RB: The piles supporting the panels are quite deep (usually around 2 m deep), which makes them secure during high winds. Engineering studies are completed once FRV have firmer details on the engineering and the qualities of the soil – this calculates the depth of the piles. AB: This is part of the detailed design, completed after a project is approved. NB: Where is FRV's central control room? RB: FRV is still developing this, but likely to be in Sydney. NB: How will the solar farm be contactable remotely? (noting that reception and internet is often unreliable in Maules Creek) RB: TransGrid transmission lines also have communications cables, and there is a need to connect via those cables. SB: How far is the substation and the battery to the transmission line? RB: Substation 200m from transmission line and Battery approximately 200m from the substation. LS: Maules Creek becomes an island when flood blocks roads - if there's a bushfire from a lightning strike and the roads are blocked, what happens then? RB: If the bushfire is caused by an external factor, that risk is there already. LS: Clarified that her concern relates to the risk from the battery for the solar farm.	**ACTION**: FRV to provide more exact details about the spacing of solar panels. **ACTION**: FRV to present more information on the risks and duration of a lithium BESS fire, including any

	RB: Explained the battery site (BESS), is a site composed of many individual battery units. The BESS is designed to avoid fire propagating from battery unit to battery unit by spacing the units at least 3m apart – meaning that fire cannot physically spread from one battery to the next. The units all also have fire prevention controls and safety mechanisms. RB explained that even if there is a fire, it would likely only affect one battery unit. RB: clarified that BESS fires have occurred in the past, but for grid-scale batteries, these fires only happened when the battery was installed incorrectly or when the units were damaged. AB: The project will also need to develop a Fire Management Plan and an Emergency Response Plan, and there would be an Asset Protection Zone around the entire perimeter. It was acknowledged that flooding and risk management represents a key community concern. RB: Acknowledged that there would be a small risk that the solar farm battery could be damaged by fire. MS requested an action that before finalising EIS, CCC want to see final flood modelling, not draft modelling. Added as Action. SB: What comes out of the battery when it burns, and how long do they burn for? I have heard that they burn for 5 days. I have also heard that solar farms increase the likelihood of lightning strikes. What happens if the BESS is struck by lightning? Agreed that this information be provided and added as an action. **<u>Topic 2 – Aquatic habitat</u>** Action from last CCC meeting AB: Explained process of assessing aquatic species and aquatic habitat. No threatened species have been identified. The development is not intended to impact the area of the Middle Creek andbuffer zones would be retained to protect the creek. A couple of vehicle crossings will be designed and constructed to manage any risk. These will be low, at-grade crossings that don't affect flow in the creek and don't block fish passage. SB: Commented that fish will travel downstream in flood from higher in the mountains. CS: Asked what will happen to animals on the site when the security fence goes up. For example kangaroos etc. RB: Explained that there would be a fence but Middle Creek will not be fenced off. CS: Indicated that the animals are going to come onto his property and affect his crops. Wanted to know if FRV is going to compensate him for that impact? RB: Indicated that they aren't permitted to do anything with native animals living in the area and a security fence was needed around the solar farm, but animals will still be able to travel along Middle Creek. CS and MS expressed concern that they are being expected to take on all of the impacts and RB acknowledged that concern.	chemicals present in the smoke and how long this persists in the environment. **ACTION**: Pitt and Sherry will present information on flooding once modelling has been completed **ACTION**: FRV to investigate if solar farms increase risk of lightning strike and how a substation responds when it is struck by lightning. **ACTION**: FRV to prepare a draft (high level) Emergency management plan to accompany the lodgement of the EIS for this project. **ACTION**: Pitt & Sherry to provide more detailed information on biodiversity impacts once the BDAR finalised.

	CS: Stated that his land value has been going up by around 4-6% each year. It is currently worth $1.04 million. Will you guarantee land value is not going to go below that? No one is going to want to buy my property with a solar farm next door.
	RB:
	• Acknowledged that this is a real concern to neighbours.
	• Pointed out that solar farms have been operating in Australia for over 10 years, there are over 100 operating solar farms, and FRV haven't seen widespread reduction of land values.
	• Acknowledged that there would be some people who would not want to buy a home next to a solar farm, but this would improve once vegetation plantings are mature and its harder to see the solar farm.
	• Acknowledged that it would still be possible to see the solar farm from some parts of your property but that FRV would make sure that views from homes were screened by landscape plantings.
	
	MS: disagreed and stated that he could not stay at the meeting. MS left the room at approx. 7.06pm.
	
	NB: Will there be any impact on animals living close to the solar farm/transmission lines? Concerned about this affecting the accreditation of animals, particularly those raised for human consumption.
	RB: An action was recorded.
	
	RB and JB left to have conversations with CS and MS who left the meeting
	MS returned at 7.12pm
	
	<u>Topic 3 – Traffic</u>
	AB presented:
	• Traffic and safety which he acknowledges as a key concern for local residents.
	• Project has changed based on community feedback by
	  ○ Reducing peak daily heavy vehicles to 45 per day (from 80).
	  ○ Limiting HVs to a max of 8 in any hour (and still only 45 per day)
	  ○ Reducing speed limit of HVs to 60 km/h or 40 km/h on all local roads.
	
	LS: Construction traffic will be a massive impact in the community. As a lifestyle in a quiet rural setting we are using roads to move stock, ride bikes or horses, this would be a huge impact. Roads here are not very wide.
	AB: The EIS team want to hear from the community around lifestyle issues – is there more that can be done to reduce the impact or inconvenience. Reduced speeds for construction traffic is currently being proposed. The project will also need to prepare a Traffic Management Plan with a driver code of conduct, and consultation withthe community will occur on this.
	RB: During construction all neighbours will have the name and number of an on-site contact that they can speak to about construction/ traffic issues.
	
	LS: Harparary Road is too narrow for two-way movement of trucks – will the road be widened?
	AB: Trucks currently use Harparary Road in two-directions – there is no plan to widen Harparary Road. Middle Creek Road will be widened to a width of 6m. Most traffic will use Middle Creek Road
		ACTION: FRV to find out if siting of the farm will affect the accreditation of animals, particularly those raised for human consumption

	RB: FRV estimate that Glencoe Road (and the section of Harparary Road near LS) will only have about 20%-30% of the construction traffic. NB: Where will traffic be coming from? RB: Trucks bringing in the bulk of components will travel from Brisbane, Sydney or Newcastle. Workers may travel from across the region. NB: Earlier plans showed Harparary Road being used – will the unsealed section be used? RB: No FRV will not use the unsealed section of Harparary Road based on feedback from Locals and Council NB: Turrawan Road is not approved for B-doubles. AB: B-doubles not approved, but council indicated there is a process to obtain temporary approval for B-doubles which Council felt was reasonable in this case. Intersection of Turrawan and Kamilaroi Highway is safer for trucks than Harparary Road/Kamilaroi intersection as it has an existing turning lane. NB: 45 trucks per day is likely to degrade Maules Creek Road. RB: All damage caused due to the construction traffic is repaired, and FRV will need to make sure that the road is in safe working order during construction. 7.20 CS and JR returned In interest of time, the group agreed to only focus on the key remaining issues. **<u>Visual Amenity</u>** NB: Asked about the reflectivity of the solar panels RB: Clarified that the solar panels have an anti-reflective coating – they absorb around 90% of the sunlight and reflect a small proportion. Glint initially can be a larger concern from aluminium frames for solar panels, but this lessens over time. AB presented on visual assessment and shared the photomontages from public viewpoints. RB explained that he had incorrectly presented methodology at last meeting, and had incorrectly stated that Green Gully would not have a visual impact. AB clarified the action item from previous CCC meeting regarding visual assessment from LS property Green Gully and advised that: • The methodology is based on a computer model that ignores screening provided by trees, vegetation and buildings in the area. • The methodology requires that any private dwelling that could potentially have a “moderate” rating or higher under this model requires a ‘detailed assessment • The methodology determined that while Green Gully may have views of the solar farm, that the impact was of a ‘low’ rating given the distance from the site, and given the flat topography. RB: clarified that a representative photomontage was completed for Harparary Road, and that this was done from very close to Green Gully and the nearby church. AB: The Preliminary tool identified three public viewpoints (roads) and 4 dwellings that required assessment. Public viewpoints were: Glencoe Road	

	(North), Glencoe Road (South) and Harparary Road. The visual assessor also visited Black Mountain Creek Road and identified that there was no visibility of the site. MS: Pointed out that the photomontage from Glencoe Road (North) was taken from the bottom of a gully. RB: The locations were chosen by the visual assessor, but we also completed a photomontage from El Rancho. Note that all photomontages on Glencoe Road show that the solar farm is visible. AB: Presented images of Gunnedah Solar Farm taken the day before the meeting at a distance of 700m, showing that the solar panels are not prominent in view. MS: Questioned that the photos could have been taken from a favourable angle/location and so they may not be representative of what Maules Creek residents would experience. RB: Accepted that residents may be able to see parts of the solar farm from parts of their property. RB reiterated that the focus for visual assessments is on homes, but it is accepted that even with vegetation planting the solar farm would be visible from certain parts of the valley. AB: Explained that the NSW Department of Planning guidelines have a quantifiable methodology to determine a viewpoint's level of impact. This involves taking a 180 degree photo, breaking it down into a 'grid', and counting the number of squares (cells) where the solar farm is visible. The solar farm must occupy more than 25% of a cell for it to be considered in the assessment. RS: Will we have access to these slides? RB: Confirmation everyone will have access to the slides with meeting minutes 7.31 Russell excused himself from the meeting MS advised that public viewpoint 2 (Glencoe Road) had been taken from a gully. CS advised that the photomontage taken from El Rancho had been taken at a lower elevation than their verandah. RB: clarified that the visual assessor had offered to take the photo from CS property and CS refused, which is why it was take from the roadside. AB:advised that CS home is located approximately 1.2 km from the solar farm, and that at these distances there would not be a significant change to the photomontage. MS asked RB to come to El Rancho and have a cup of tea with MS and CS from the front porch. RB confirmed that he would meet with MS and CS. **The discussion went to agriculture.** CS asked if FRV had read the landowner's own written testimony about the agricultural productivity of the site. CS said that FRV was implying that the site is not suitable for crop production, but CS pointed out that he farms crops right up to the boundary with the proposed solar farm site. RB: Clarified that FRV accept that the site is suitable for crops but confirmed that the site will continue to be used for sheep grazing. FRV confirmed that there are have historical aerial photos showing this from approximately 30 years ago.	**ACTION:** RB to meet with MS and CS at their home re visual impact.

	RB: Explained that the site being "class 4" is based on mapping completed at a regional scale, not local, and that "Class 4" means that the site can only be used for higher intensity agriculture (such as rotational cropping) with specialist knowledge and land management practices. AB: Confirmed that Pitt & Sherry is conducting an agricultural impact assessment which looks at the soil and historic land management practices to confirm the agricultural capability. LS: Asked if the classification had changed and if so, when. AB: Confirmed that the rating system changed several years ago, and a rating system with 6 classes was increased to include 7. AB clarified that higher LSC classes are poorer agricultural land (ie 1 being the best and 7 being the worst). RB: Acknowledged that the site is productive, it doesn't have characteristics that the NSW Government has chosen to protect from development, such as Biophysical Strategic Agricultural Land (BSAL), State Significant Agricultural Land (SSAL) or a Critical Industry Cluster. **Back to visual** The photomontage of Glencoe Road (south) was presented showing panels with and without vegetation screening. RB: Identified that the photomontages are from locations where the Solar farm will be most visible. FRV is developing a landscaping plan in consultation with neighbours and local landcare group. FRV are seeking feedback on things such as appropriate species, biodiversity offsets, mature height of species. The purpose of the vegetation buffer is to break up the view. RB: Acknowledged CS was concerned in the last CCC meeting about soil moisture on his property from tree plantings, and said that FRV could push these back so that they aren't right against the boundary. AB: Clarified that to block views of the solar farm from CS home, the plants would only need to be approximately 3m tall and these would be planted at the beginning of construction. MS: How far from the fence would the plants be? RB: Confirmed the committment to pushing back solar panels by 30 m from CS fence, and that within the 30 m FRV would need to include an APZ (Asset Protection Zone) (10 m) and the tree plantings (About 10m). This means the trees would be 10 m from the fence line. MS: stated that at these distances, trees would affect the soil moisture of CS crop and that the crop should take priority. MS suggested that an appropriate distance was 100 m from the fence line, and that CS would object to trees being planted any closer. GH: Asked how FRV would determine how big a buffer could be provided from the fenceline. RB: FRV need to look at the size of the project that is hoped to be built, and then the available land to work with. This then gives us a guide as to how much of a set back can be offered. RB **:** Advised FRV will look into the setback of vegetation from northern fenceline and come back to CS and MS.	**ACTION:** FRV to look into the setback of vegetation from northern fenceline and come back to CS and MS.

	RB: Advised that the Development Application outlines the "worst case scenario", which means it describes the project as big as it possibly could be, but in reality the project would likely be smaller in area. AB: Advised that the only receiver with potential for glint and glare impacts was a landowner associated with the solar farm and that this impact was limited to a very narrow period. NB: Asked about the anticipated life of the project RB: From start of construction, 40 years. *In the interest of time, FRV elected to wrap up the presentation to give attendees a chance to share final thoughts. The outstanding items included:* • *Community consultation* • *Benefit Sharing Program* • *Engagement to date and future opportunities.*	
6.	**Round the table: Community concerns and additional questions** • PS**:** observed that visual impacts seemed to be most important to the local community, but shared that, in her own experience, solar farms are not intrusive and that you just drive pass them. PS accepted that she has this view as somebody who does not live directly adjacent to a solar farm. One concern PS has about the project is Waste - How much waste would be generated and are solar panels recyclable? • RB: Yes, solar panels are recyclable. By the time this project is decommissioned there will be well-established businesses for solar recycling, there are now just starting to get off the ground with government funding. There is little doubt that within 30 years these will be well established, profitable businesses. • LS asked about recycling for batteries • RB: Battery manufactures currently accept used batteries free of charge, recycling them into new batteries. • Action for FRV to check about what will happen to damaged solar panels during construction, or before the solar farm is decommissioned. • GH: How much can the setbacks be from neighbouring properties? • RB: Committed to look into it as per action item listed • LS: Is the cultural heritage report available and are the list of RAPs publicly available? • AB: The draft report is currently with the Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs), who have 28 days to review and provide comment. The final Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment (ACHA) will be part of the EIS. The groups that participated are listed in the ACHA. Some parties requested not to be personally identified but have the appropriate qualifications to undertake field work. • LS: Advised that her work provides the opportunity to work closely with local Aboriginal people, and many of the people with whom she works do not have any knowledge of the solar farm, but would be very interested. AB: Will look into how RAPs are selected and requirements to participate. The report will be public and part of the EIS.	**ACTION :** FRV to Check what will happen to damaged solar panels during construction, or before the solar farm is decommissioned?

	• NB: Asked about the benefit sharing program how much the project would contribute over its 40 year lifespan – will annual payments be indexed for CPI? • RB: Explained that a one-off payment of $450,000 would be made at the start of construction, to be invested in the Maules Creek area. • RB explained that some initiatives that could be funded with this money include payments to near neighbours, equipment for local services (such as fire shed or hall), donations to charities, sports groups or funding community events, payments towards energy bills. RB confirmed that FRV are seeking feedback from community on how those funds are allocated. • In addition to one-off payment, FRV would also make an annual payment of $25,000 to Council, this would be indexed to CPI. RB advised that the terms of that payment are yet to be discussed, but FRV would like Council to accept grant requests from Maules Creek locals for social events etc. RB clarified that the overall value of the fund was $1.45 million • NB: suggested that it should be $3 million. • AB: Asked NB what he felt would be a fair directions for the allocation of community benefit funds • NB: Acknowledged that opinion about where this was directed this would vary between people, particularly those who felt they would be negatively impacted by property values. NB suggested something that would benefit the whole community is an upgraded road with extra lanes between Maules Creek and Narrabri, but that it is up to FRV to decide how much they would like to spend in the region. • RB: Highlighted that if there are certain items in Councils operational plan, FRV can ask them to allocate VPA funds for that purpose. • NB: Identified that mobile phone coverage is also a huge issue in the region and that improved telecommunications would greatly benefit the community. • PS: Advised other solar farms have also offered to provide solar panels to near neighbours to the solar farm. • MS: Biggest issue for him is potential impacts on property values, the conflict of interest raised in previous meeting (re: MCCC) and also he is concerned about Insurance issues. • PS: Expressed her view that we need to prioritise action on climate change, getting rid of fossil fuels. And that solar farms are not a big issue if they are not proposed close to people's homes. • LS: Raised that the 'where' is key and expressed her view that Maules Creek is not the right place. • MS: Said that the proposed solar farm was having a real effect on the mental health of people in the region, and that he and CS had been struggling. • CS: Is concerned about his future and that of his family. CS has put his life into his property, and sees that the project is going to cost him because of the drop of property value and impacts on insurance costs.	

	CS said that this was his super, and that he is really worried about the future. • RB: acknowledged that these are real and valid concerns, and that FRV needs to provide more information, as much as possible. Acknowledged that FRV won't be able to answer all questions, and that sometimes the answers may be difficult to accept, but expressed appreciation and gratitude to all participants in the CCC for being here, speaking to us and helping us understand the community views.	
7.	**Future meetings** • MH as the chairperson thanked everyone for their patience through this long meeting and for being so patient in listening to the information presented. • RB appreciates everyone coming and acknowledges everyone's concerns. • RB noted harvest season and Christmas shutdown period. FRV would like to return to Maules Creek before submitting the DA with the Department of Planning early in the new year. • RB offered face-to-face meetings to talk about concerns in addition to the CCC meeting. • JR offered calls or messages for any concerns. **It was agreed that the next meeting is to be held on 6th February 2025.** There was also discussion about deciding on some key issues so that the meeting was more focussed and perhaps over a shorter duration	
	Close 8.30pm	