

Terms of reference

Central-West Orana REZ Community Reference Group

June 2022

Overview

This document outlines the terms of reference for the Community Reference Group for the Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) project. The group is being established by the Energy Corporation of NSW (EnergyCo) to promote two-way engagement with local communities and key stakeholders during the development of the REZ.

Purpose and objectives

The role of the Community Reference Group (CRG) is to provide an open forum for discussion between community representatives, key stakeholders and EnergyCo about the Central-West Orana REZ. The CRG will discuss matters relating to the planning and delivery of the REZ transmission network, as well as broader REZ issues.

The CRG aims to:

- Establish good working relationships and promote information-sharing between EnergyCo, local community representatives and key stakeholders
- Provide CRG members with visibility of the project and enable them to share project information via their networks
- Keep members informed about project activities, key milestones and opportunities to provide feedback
- Provide an avenue for EnergyCo to seek community and stakeholder input on project matters
- Allow community members to seek information from EnergyCo and provide feedback.

The CRG provides an advisory function and is not a decision-making authority for the project.

Participation

The CRG will include:

- An Independent Chairperson
- Up to two local community members
- Up to six representatives from local community or stakeholder groups
- Representatives from local Councils and Local Aboriginal Land Councils¹
- Up to 15 members in total.

Developers of renewable generators within the REZ will be invited to attend CRG meetings on a regular basis as guest participants.

Local Councils and Aboriginal Land Councils

Representatives from the following Local Councils and Local Aboriginal Land Councils will be invited to participate in the CRG:

- Dubbo Regional Council
- Warrumbungle Shire Council
- Mid-Western Regional Council
- Dubbo Local Aboriginal Land Council
- Mudgee Local Aboriginal Land Council
- Gilgandra Local Aboriginal Land Council
- Wellington Local Aboriginal Land Council
- Walhallow Local Aboriginal Land Council

Involvement from Local Councils and Local Aboriginal Land Councils is voluntary. It is at the organisation's discretion if they would like to participate in the CRG.

Central-West Orana REZ Project Team

Meetings will be attended by EnergyCo project team representatives for the Central-West Orana REZ, including but not limited to the Project Director, Environmental Planning Lead, Technical Lead and Community and Stakeholder Lead or their nominated delegates.

Once appointed, the future Network Operator of the REZ network infrastructure project will participate in the CRG.

Stakeholder representation

Should a participant be representing a group (e.g. Local Council, Aboriginal Land Council or stakeholder group), they must have the authority to represent that group and acknowledge that they are a member of the CRG in that capacity, not in a personal capacity (i.e. they are authorised to speak on behalf of their representative group).

¹ Representatives of stakeholder groups, Local Councils and Aboriginal Land Councils may nominate an alternate delegate.

Roles and responsibilities

Independent Chairperson

The Independent Chairperson will act as the convenor, facilitator, mediator and advisor for the CRG. They will act independently and impartially and will be the key point of contact between the CRG and EnergyCo. The Independent Chairperson will be appointed and remunerated by EnergyCo. The Independent Chairperson is responsible for ensuring that issues raised by CRG members on behalf of the community are properly considered.

Community representatives

Community and stakeholder representatives will be:

- Current residents and/or landowners in the REZ, or a member of a community or stakeholder group with an interest in the REZ
- Able to demonstrate involvement in local community groups and/or activities
- Aware of the REZ and related issues of concern to the local community
- Able to represent and communicate the interests of the local community in the REZ
- Willing to adhere to the CRG terms of reference, code of conduct and declaration of interests
- Willing to report back to the wider community on the activities of the CRG
- Able to commit to a membership period of two years, after which time they will be required to re-nominate
- Able to attend at least 75 per cent of meetings.

EnergyCo

During its participation in the CRG, EnergyCo will:

- Provide the CRG with timely and informative updates on the Central-West Orana REZ, including the REZ transmission network infrastructure project
- Share community information and documents with the CRG, including all publicly available project updates and reports. This does not include any information of a financial or commercial nature
- Keep the CRG informed about the status of environmental planning and assessment requirements and will notify the CRG when any applications are lodged with the Department of Planning and Environment
- Respond to any requests for information from the CRG within 28 days unless otherwise agreed to with the CRG and specified in the meeting minutes
- Organise site visits for CRG members where appropriate
- Adhere to all CRG requirements including the terms of reference and code of conduct.

REZ Transmission Network Operator

Once a Network Operator is appointed to build and operate the REZ transmission network, they will be responsible for participating in the CRG meetings in accordance with the terms of reference.

Governance

Meeting frequency and times

CRG meetings will be held at least once per quarter, with the meeting dates and times to be agreed upon by the CRG members. It is proposed that meetings would be held during daylight hours to avoid members travelling via road at dusk and in the evening.

Venue

Meetings will be held face-to-face in the Central-West Orana region where practical. Due to the size of the project area, meetings can be held in local townships on a rotating basis to ensure equitable access for CRG members. Videoconferencing facilities will be provided where possible to allow members to attend meetings remotely.

Meeting documentation

The Independent Chairperson will manage the preparation and publication of meeting agendas and minutes, with administrative support to be provided by EnergyCo. Documents will be distributed electronically via email.

Members may propose a matter for inclusion on the agenda, either before or during a meeting, in consultation with the Independent Chairperson, providing the matter is within the scope of the CRG. If any documents are provided for members to review along with the meeting agenda, these will be circulated at least one week before the meeting.

Within one week of a meeting, the Independent Chairperson will distribute draft meeting minutes to all CRG members for review. Members have one week to provide their feedback to the Independent Chairperson. Within two weeks of receiving this feedback, the Independent Chairperson will finalise the minutes for publication on the EnergyCo website.

Guest attendees

Subject to approval from the Independent Chairperson, non-CRG members may be invited to join a meeting either as observers or to provide advice. This may include developers of renewable energy generation projects or stakeholder organisations with specific remits and expertise. Non-CRG members would not participate in the business of the CRG unless invited to do so by the Independent Chairperson.

Subject matter experts may be invited to attend CRG meetings to provide technical expertise as required.

Extraordinary meetings

If there are important and urgent matters requiring consideration, any member of the CRG may ask the Independent Chairperson to convene an extraordinary meeting. The Independent Chairperson will decide whether the extraordinary meeting is warranted, or whether the matters can be addressed in other ways.

Notice period

Members will be given at least four weeks' notice before a regular meeting and one weeks' notice before an extraordinary meeting.

Working groups

The CRG may form sub-committees or working groups to address an issue if required.

Site visits

Site visits may be organised at the discretion of EnergyCo. If site visits are conducted, members agree to take direction from project staff at all times and agree to refrain from taking images and distributing images publicly through the media or social media without prior consent from EnergyCo.

Code of conduct

All members must sign a code of conduct agreement prior to joining the CRG. The Independent Chairperson will bring any breach of the code to the attention of the concerned party. This may take the form of a verbal warning during a meeting, which is formally recorded in the meeting minutes, or a written warning following the meeting. Following three warnings, the Independent Chairperson may ask EnergyCo to replace the CRG member.

Declaration of interests

All members of the CRG must declare any pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests to protect the integrity of the group and its members. This declaration must be kept up to date for the duration of membership.

If a CRG member has a direct or indirect interest in a matter being considered by the CRG, and this interest conflicts with their ability to perform their role with respect to the matter raised, the member must disclose the nature of the interest to the CRG and in writing to the Independent Chairperson as soon as possible. Details of any disclosure will be recorded in the meeting minutes.

Communication and media

Sharing information with the wider community

CRG members are encouraged to discuss issues and share project information with the wider community, subject to confidentiality/commercial in confidence requirements where appropriate.

The CRG may release statements or other information to the media if all members provide agreement. However, only the Independent Chairperson may speak publicly on behalf of the CRG.

Individual CRG members may provide public comments on behalf of themselves or their stakeholder groups, but not on behalf of the CRG.

Media and public comment

CRG members are permitted to discuss issues or provide their own opinions to the media. However, when doing so, members should:

- Attribute comments, questions or answers to questions to themselves only
- Not claim to represent the CRG, EnergyCo or the Central-West Orana REZ project
- Inform the Independent Chairperson of any engagement with the media in relation to CRG matters

- Obtain written consent before sharing any logos or intellectual property with the media that belongs to EnergyCo or any other organisation.

Publishing member contact details

CRG members' email addresses will be published on the project website so that members of the community can contact them about CRG matters. Phone numbers won't be published online unless agreed to by the CRG.