

28 September 2023

Mr Andrew Dwyer
Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner
Community Engagement Review Taskforce
Via: cereview@dcceew.gov.au

Dear Mr Dwyer,

RE: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REVIEW

1.0 Introduction

Tilt Renewables welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission on the Community Engagement Review: Discussion Paper. The Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner plays a key role in helping infrastructure developers and owners to find mutually agreeable outcomes with local communities.

This submission:

- Endorses the Clean Energy Council's submission
- Demonstrates what community engagement works well based on Tilt Renewables' experience
- Discusses how the broader sector can improve community engagement
- Proposes best practice engagement strategies for future projects

Tilt Renewables plays a leading role in accelerating Australia's transition to clean energy. We own and operate nine wind and solar farms across Australia with another wind farm and battery energy storage system (BESS) under construction. In addition, Tilt Renewables has a significant pipeline of over 4,000 MW in proposed wind and solar projects in Australia.

Tilt Renewables is a signatory to the Clean Energy Council's' Best Practice Charter for Renewable Energy Projects ([Link](#)). The Charter is a voluntary set of commitments for Clean Energy Council members designed to clearly communicate the standards that the signatories will uphold in the development of current and new clean energy projects. The Charter outlines a commitment by signatories to engage respectfully with the communities in which they plan and operate projects, to be sensitive to environmental and cultural values and to make a positive contribution to the regions in which they operate.

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2.0 Endorsement of Clean Energy Council submission

Tilt Renewables is a sponsoring member of the Clean Energy Council, Australia's peak renewable energy association. Tilt Renewables endorses the content of the Clean Energy Council submission.

3.0 Tilt Renewables' commentary on specific matters

Our submission provides additional information regarding the following three questions:

- What community engagement has worked well and what can we learn from it?
- How we can improve engagement that that has not worked well?
- What is needed to ensure best practice engagement is achieved in all future projects?

4.0 What community engagement has worked well and what can we learn from it?

Our experience shows engagement guided by the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Core Values leads to better outcomes both for the community and for a Project.

Tilt Renewables fosters strong landowner and community relationships and is committed to open and honest dialogue with all stakeholders. This is supported through consultation and information sharing methods considered to be best practice, including:

- One-on-one briefings
- Newsletters
- Project websites
- Telephone lines
- Advertisements
- Drop-in sessions / centers
- Open houses
- Site visits
- Community workshops
- Community reference groups (e.g., Community Consultative Committees)
- Community partnerships

Aligned with IAP2 practice, our approach focuses early engagement on those most likely to be impacted or with the most influence, such as the immediate neighbours to projects, local councils, interest groups and those with a direct interest in impacted locations. This allows those most impacted to have the earliest involvement in project design and better equips them to participate in the planning and delivery process. We then expand our engagement to the broader community to ensure that they too are equipped to participate in the planning and delivery process.

The provision of information on our website is an important part of ensuring access to the wider community. During the development phases, this may include copies of environmental assessments, fact sheets and newsletters, maps and visualisations. Post approval, during construction and operations, the information will expand to include copies of approvals, management plans, compliance reporting and other documents.

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Tilt Renewables also strongly supports the establishment of Community Consultation Committees (CCCs) during development and construction of major renewable energy projects. We acknowledge that it provides a valuable avenue for community members to ask questions, share concerns and disseminate information to the wider community. They also enable Tilt Renewables to share information regarding the project (including minutes available on projects websites). We have experienced great success, particularly during construction, in the operation of CCC's and similar forums across Australia.

Benefit Sharing

A critical underpinning to community engagement is the benefit sharing we employ on our projects. Through partnerships with councils and local groups, and consultation with the community, Tilt Renewables develops custom benefit sharing plans that address important social, economic and environmental needs in the region.

Benefit sharing provides tangible proof, early in construction, of the benefits that a generator brings to a given community. Stakeholder involvement in the development of the benefit sharing plan provides community ownership over an aspect of the project and enables the community to steer funding into areas likely to drive the greatest long-term benefit. The scale of this funding is significant. At our Rye Park Wind Farm, we will start providing \$230,000 annually to the community via a voluntary Planning Agreement. Adjusted for CPI, the Rye Park Wind Farm community will receive at least \$6.9 million in real terms over the next 30 years from this benefit alone.

The figure below highlights some of the benefit sharing initiatives already in place on our projects.



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In 2020, Tilt Renewables received the Community Engagement Award from the Clean Energy Council for the Dundonnell Wind Farm Benefit Sharing Plan ([Link](#)). The plan demonstrated Tilt Renewables' willingness to collaborate with other industries and to drive long-term change. The Benefit Sharing Plan included the installation of a mini-grid, a road safety fund, a renewable energy training facility, support for local not-for-profit organisations supporting women fleeing domestic violence, mental health and conservation initiatives, and education funding for residents. The Plan aims to create a lasting legacy by helping the prevention of suicide, supporting vulnerable communities and creating educational pathways and opportunities.

5.0 How we can improve engagement that that has not worked well?

Good engagement does not always result in local community support for a project. Communities value where they live and changes to these places are rarely publicly supported by a majority of people, irrespective of the benefits that would accrue. This is consistent with experiences with other infrastructure types for example new schools trigger concerns about noise and parking and road upgrades trigger concerns about health and safety.

Where engagement has not worked well it is important to review:

1. what successful engagement should have looked like
2. the root cause of the failure
3. what successful engagement can now look like

Where a relationship with a community is already strained, it is very difficult to return to neutrality until the Project begins construction or operations and can demonstrate the benefits to the local area.

When seeking to get engagement back on track, it is also important to note that delays in engagement and approvals will extend the period in which a given community is subject to uncertainty, prolonging any existing community anxiety and risking engagement fatigue. In some cases, the best way to reduce the level of social impact can be by resolving a planning process promptly rather than subjecting a community to additional rounds of consultation.

6.0 What is needed to ensure best practice engagement is achieved in all future projects?

Best practice will always be specific to the host community and project type. Fortunately for the renewables sector there is already significant advice available to guide good engagement. Adherence to the approaches outlined in the documents below greatly assists proponents in delivering engagement appropriate to the scale, nature and location of a future project.

Industry guidance

- Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner guidance on community engagement [Community Engagement | aeic](#)
- Best Practice Guidelines for Implementation of Wind Energy Projects in Australia, Clean Energy Council
- A Guide to Benefit Sharing options for Renewable Energy Projects, Clean Energy Council,
- The International Association for Public Participation's (IAP2) core values and public participation spectrum
- RE Alliance Community Benefits Handbook - [RE-Alliance Community Benefits Handbook WEB 01v1 \(1\).pdf \(nationbuilder.com\)](#)
- RE Alliance Building Trust in Transmission - [RE-Alliance July 2021 Building Trust for Transmission Earning the social licence needed to plug in Australia's Renewable Energy Zones.docx \(nationbuilder.com\)](#)
- Equator principles - [The Equator Principles EP4 July2020 \(equator-principles.com\)](#)

State based guidance

- New South Wales
 - Large-scale Solar Energy Guideline for State Significant Development
 - Wind Energy Guideline for State significant wind energy development
- Queensland
 - Local benefits in Queensland Renewable Energy Zones Community consultation paper Principles for delivering local benefits in Queensland Renewable Energy Zones (QREZ)
- Victoria
 - Community Engagement and Benefit Sharing in Renewable Energy Development in Victoria A guide for renewable energy developers
- Western Australia
 - Position Statement: Renewable energy facilities

Ensuring best practice in benefit sharing

Benefit sharing is most powerful when the directly impacted communities take ownership of the benefit sharing plans and guide how funds are distributed. Careful consideration should be made to ensure that communities can continue to have a say in how local impacts are managed and the mechanisms for distributing benefit sharing funds.

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Maintaining this connection will retain the ability of industry to work directly with their host communities to build acceptance, trust and meaningful outcomes. The distribution of benefit sharing funds also needs to remain in sync with project delivery to avoid the risk communities feel disconnected from the benefits projects bring.

It is critical that proponents continue to be able to establish community benefit sharing plans, co-designed with their host communities and government.

7.0 Conclusion

Tilt Renewables appreciates the opportunity to provide a submission on the Community Engagement Review's Discussion Paper.

We recognise the importance of renewable energy-related infrastructure in helping Australia achieve net zero emissions, whilst ensuring that this growth and development is supported by good engagement.

In many cases, the renewables industry is already delivering best practice engagement with significant resources available to guide proponents and achieve long term benefits for the community.

We would be pleased to provide any further information that would assist in your review. Please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned should you wish to discuss any aspect of the above submission further.

Regards,

Owen Boushel

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