



AGL NEWCASTLE COMMUNITY DIALOGUE GROUP

MINUTES OF MEETING No. 22 HELD AT HUNTER REGION BOTANIC GARDENS, HEATHERBRAE AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS VIDEO-CONFERENCING ON THURSDAY 16 NOVEMBER 2023 AT 10am

PRESENT	NAME	ORGANISATION
	Lisa Andrews (LA)	Independent Chairperson
	Kourosh Maleklou (KM)*	AGL - Asset Manager for NGSF
	Kevin Taylor (KT)*	AGL – Head of Generation (Gas & Renewables)
	Joanne Ferguson (JF)	AGL – Community Relations Coordinator
	John Moraitis (JM)*	AGL – Environment Manager
	John Simpson (JS)	Hunter Water Delegate
	Audrey Koosmen (AK)	Hunter Wildlife Rescue (NATF)
	Kate Drinan (KD)	Port Stephens Council delegate
	Dianne Ball (DB)	Wahroonga Aboriginal Corporation <i>[arrived at 10.26am]</i>
	Arianna Henty (AH)	AGL – Snr Manager - Approvals
	Vicki Brady (VB)	AGL – Snr Manager, Environment Land, Approvals & Environment
GUEST	Liam Buxton (LB)	Principal Environmental Planner AECOM
APOLOGIES	Mayor, Cr Ryan Palmer	Port Stephens Council
	Robyn Parker	Tomago Aluminium
	Ken Page [#]	Hunter Region Botanic Gardens
ABSENT	Representative	Hunter Business Chamber
	Representative	Port Stephens Koalas

*Attended via video-conferencing.

#Attended venue prior to the meeting for discussions.

The CDG meeting was opened at 10.12am.

Acknowledgement of Country - "AGL recognises the Traditional Owners of the lands on which they work and they pay their respect to their Elders past, present and emerging."

WELCOME	LA welcomed all attendees to the AGL Newcastle Gas Storage Facility Community Dialogue Group (CDG) being held at the HRBG, environment pavilion. LA introduced Council's delegate (KD), AGL's Snr Manager (VB) & consultant (LB).	Recognition of those joining on line.						
APOLOGIES	As listed above.							
DECLARATIONS	LA advised that she is an Independent Chairperson, approved by the Department of Planning engaged by AGL to chair this CDG.	No changes to members' previous declarations.						
BUSINESS ARISING	The minutes from the previous meeting held on 1 June 2023 were finalised and sent to members on 23 June 2023. There were four action items – three of which are ongoing: <table border="1" data-bbox="470 2022 1141 2056"> <thead> <tr> <th>ITEM</th> <th>ISSUE</th> <th>BY WHOM</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	ITEM	ISSUE	BY WHOM				1. Moved to GB.
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4	Provide photos of the Medowie Offset property	JM												
CORRESPONDENCE	<p>No other business arising.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 13/6/23 – Email to members with the draft minutes for review. 23/6/23 - Email to members with the finalised minutes presentation. 1/9/23 – Email to members advising that the Community Funding program is open (closing 29/9/23). 12/9/23 – Email to members postponing meeting from 28/9/23 to 16/11/23. 3/11/23 – Email to members confirming CDG with meeting notice, agenda, correspondence and providing video-link. 	<p>As provided with meeting notice – emailed 3/11/23.</p>												
TOMAGO BATTERY PROJECT	<p>EIS Briefing</p> <p>AH commenced the project overview, advising the project proposes to construct, operate and maintain a Battery at Tomago, NSW as per the Scoping Report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approximately 500 megawatts (MW) and storage of up to 2,000 megawatt-hours (MWh) in capacity Transmission line from the Battery land to either the 132kV Transgrid substation (north) or the 330kV Transgrid substation (south) Connection to an existing switchyard, including minor works to connect the Battery to the preferred neighbouring substation. <p>LB provided an extensive briefing of the proposal with input from VB & AH.</p> <p>Project Location</p> <p>Land:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Semi -rural/industrial area with industrial land uses located adjacent to and around the Site <p>BESS Site:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1940 Pacific Highway (Part Lot 5 & Lot 6 in DP1286735) <p>Transmission Connections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Across Lots 7, 8, 24, 25 and 28 DP1286735, Lot 104 DP1125747 and Lot 3 DP808004. The BESS would connect to either: 132 kV substation located on Lot 101 DP1125747; or 330 kV substation located on Lot 3 DP808004, and Lots 102 and 103 DP1125747. <p>The Site Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total site is ~22 ha.(Battery site is ~12 ha) 	<p>Referred to aerial map: Slide 6</p> <p>Project remains unchanged.</p> <p>Either Option 1 or Option 2.</p> <p>No change to the footprint.</p> <p>Slides 7 – 14.</p> <p>*See link at end of minutes to NSW DPE Major Projects Portal – Tomago Battery.</p>												

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LGA – Port Stephens Council • Zoning – E4 (General Industrial) • Permissibility - permissible with consent within the E4 land use zone under the T&I SEPP • Design – will allow for known constraints <p>List of Environmental Chapters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project Description ▪ Noise and Vibration ▪ Hazards and Risks ▪ Bushfire ▪ Biodiversity ▪ Aboriginal ▪ Heritage ▪ Surface Water ▪ Social and Economic ▪ Soils and Contamination ▪ Air Quality ▪ Traffic and Transport ▪ Non-Aboriginal Heritage ▪ Visual Amenity ▪ Land Use ▪ Waste; and ▪ Cumulative Impacts <p>Key EIS Focus Areas</p> <p>Noise and Vibration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ AECOM prepared a noise and vibration impact assessment that accompanied and informed the EIS. ○ The noise assessment identified a single 2dBA exceedance (above the Noise Policy for Industry criteria). This exceedance is considered negligible in accordance with the NPfI. The affected residence has been consulted with, during the preparation and finalisation of the EIS. ○ Management and mitigation measures have been captured within the EIS and supporting technical assessment to reduce the potential impact because of the Project. <p>Traffic & Transport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ AGL has had ongoing consultation with TfNSW to support the preparation of a Traffic Impact Assessment (prepared by AECOM), which supported the EIS. ○ The associated traffic impacts are largely limited to the construction phase. ○ The project has proposed the use of the NGSF site as a temporary construction laydown area to minimise offsite impacts during the project construction. ○ AGL is working in close consultation with TfNSW to manage the cumulative impact of the M12RT Project. 	
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Surface Water

- AECOM prepared a surface water impact assessment, which accompanied the EIS.
- The SWIA included an assessment to achieve NorBE outcomes (i.e., neutral or beneficial effect)
- The Project proposed to connect into two discharge points on the western portion of the site, which was supported by MUSIC modelling to achieve quality outcomes.
- • The Project includes a number of detention basins to control the quantity of discharge to downstream receivers, in accordance with Landcom Blue Book (2004). This is supported the DRAINs modelling.

Biodiversity

- A Biodiversity Development Assessment Report was prepared by Biosis to assess the potential biodiversity impacts in accordance with the Biodiversity Assessment Method.
- The BDAR was supported by a number of seasonal and targeted surveys (including bat and koala monitoring)
- The BDAR has adopted the avoidance hierarchy – with nominated exclusion areas to avoid areas of high biodiversity value.

KD asked if the survey had found any koalas. LB advised no. VB advised that there was no evidence of koalas or scats.

LB advised that a local patch of Grevillea parviflora subsp. Parviflora in one of the options for construction. Would need to underground drill in this area to protect.

JS asked whether underground or overhead as some species benefit from overhead transmission lines as it allows light, etc.

KD enquired whether AGL would have to pay for biodiversity offsets.

VB responded that offsets would be required for the Southern myotis and Common planigale. Noting that targeted surveys were undertaken by Biosis for the Masked, Barking and Powerful Owls.

JS asked if the biodiversity impact from the Battery was different to the proposed Gas Fired Power Station. LB responded that the Power Station had a different alignment and larger footprint. Not a controlled action under the EPBC Act.

JS stated that given the scale of the development on site, that it is not too different. LB responded that the battery

	<p>will not have the same impact, as it is inert. VB advised that the lighting and noise are the main issues. JB asked how the project made noise. VB responded – from the inverters, as they are running constantly. LB commented that the industrial construction noise will be intermittent over the 2 year period.</p> <p>Hazard Analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A Preliminary Hazards Assessment has been prepared by Planager in consultation with both DPE and NSW RFS. ○ The PHA has accounted for a number of scenarios as part of a multi criteria analysis, with a swathe of recommendations that informed the design of the Project to minimise the potential risk associated with the Project. <p>LB advised that SEPP 33 screening was not required.</p> <p>JS asked what the key hazards are for battery storage. LB confirmed that there would be no explosions. Thermal runaway – could catch fire. Design standards for internal / separate distances. Support in terms of fire suppression.</p> <p>KD asked whether the project was out of the flood plain. VB responded - Yes.</p> <p>JS asked whether water will be needed for the administration building, etc associated with the storage. LB advised that potable water would be needed for the office and onsite collection of water for fire control, so minimal demand for potable water.</p> <p>Community and Stakeholder Engagement</p> <p>AGL will continue to engage with key stakeholders throughout the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIS) and beyond. Including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Federal Government ○ State Government ○ Local Government ○ Community; and ○ Business <p>Schedule</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🚧 EPBC Decision September 23 (not a CA) 🚧 EIS submission 3/11/23 🚧 Public Exhibition 16 November – 13 December 2023 🚧 Determination sought Mid 2024 🚧 Construction Q2 2026-2028. <p>AH advised that DPE have allocated a case manager and AGL has an agreement with EnergyCo.</p> <p>For Discussion</p> <p>Stakeholder Engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company briefings 	<p>See Slide 12 for stakeholder groups identified.</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Days – location tba • 4-6pm Wednesday 29th November • 9-11am Saturday 2nd December <p>AH informed the CDG of the proposed Open Days. JF advised that she will be meeting with HRBG and that conference facilities at the Sir Francis Drake Motel, Heatherbrae were being organised.</p> <p><i>*POSTSCRIPT: Open day locations have been confirmed:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ 29/11/23 (4pm-6pm) at the Sir Francis Drake Motel Heatherbrae; and ❖ 2/2/23 (9am to 11am) at the Hunter Regional Botanic Gardens. <p><i>Everyone is welcome to attend!</i></p>	
<p>NEWCASTLE GAS STORAGE FACILITY GENERAL</p>	<p>KM provided the NGSF Update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No major incident, MTIs or LTIs • Workforce re-structure complete • New EA approved and signed • Minor security breach. Additional measures in place • Major maintenance activities completed as planned • Compressors overhaul complete • Startup liquefaction planned for today. <p>KM advised that it will take 2-3 months to fill the tank. KM commented that the upgraded security system worked. 3 offenders were detected a couple of weeks ago at 2am. They couldn't get into the buildings and set off the alarm. The police were informed and provided with photographs from the cameras.</p> <p>JS commented about vandalism and trespass issues on Hunter Water property. Ramming of gates to gain access.</p> <p>JM commented as well about 4WDs illegally accessing the Medowie property; despite signage, security warnings, etc.</p>	
<p>ENVIRONMENT UPDATE</p>	<p>JM provided the Environment Update:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bushfire Threat Assessment – next week <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AGL has commissioned a third party qualified bushfire assessor to conduct a review of the NGSF • This will involve investigation of six key areas: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Site access 2. Asset Protection Zones 3. Utilities 4. Firewater storage 5. Landscaping 6. Emergency Management. <p>JM commented that the site is surrounded by bush land so it is imperative to know that the site is bushfire ready.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Amendment to Environmental Licence 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AGL was successful in reducing the frequency of emissions testing from annually to once every five years • This followed a site visit from the regulator and the provision of operational data • There is no relaxation of the pollution limits and a complaints process is in place to protect the community. <p>3. Wetland ponds</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AGL has removed excess vegetation within the ponds to improve efficiency. <p>JS was interested to know of the benefits of the floating boom to control the hydro carbons onsite. Reminding AGL that whilst controls are in place (bundling, concrete, hard stand, etc), there was an issue previously when a septic tank was not decommissioned properly, causing a nitrate plume. Whilst not related to the wetland, it was as a result of operating the facility and had an impact on the ground water.</p> <p>JM agreed, stating that his comments were related to oils, etc. Stating that the wetlands are lined ponds and get overgrown with reeds, therefore requiring removal by hand.</p> <p>KD asked if there was a Weed Management Plan for the site. JM responded no.</p> <p>Discussions regarding possible cultural burns. There are 21 people training and authorised to undertake these activities, as well as “Green Teams” that can assist.</p> <p>4. Landscaping</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AGL has removed excess leaves from around the flare compound as a fire precaution measure. <p>AK enquired about search and rescue plans for wildlife, in the event of bush fires. Whilst NATF are no longer the nominated group for Koalas by NP&WS, NATF are approved and have a response trailer and can provide excellent support. In these circumstances, it’s all about everyone helping the wildlife and responding in emergencies.</p>	
<p>NGSF COMMUNITY</p>	<p>JF provided an update on sponsorship:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🚩 Hunter Region Botanic Gardens - \$10,000. AGL NGSF has been supporting the gardens for 7 years. An annual contribution of \$10,000 will allow HRBG to carry out further infrastructure projects and initiatives so they continue to attract visitors from the hunter region and beyond. 🚩 Newcastle Fringe Festival - \$5000 AGL NGSF is a long-time supporter of the Newcastle 	

	<p>Fringe Festival. The festival has grown from an audience of 660 in 2016 to 5200 this year! We continue to partner with the festival to support the development of local performance artists along with economic development for the area.</p> <p>✚ Newcastle Show- \$5000 AGL NGSF continues commitment to Newcastle Show. For over 120 years, the Newcastle Agricultural and Industrial Association has provided an annual community platform for over 40,000 Novocastrians and over 280 local businesses to buy, sell, educate, innovate and celebrate all aspects of the Newcastle and Hunter Region.</p> <p>The remainder of the annual community investment budget will continue to support our social license focus areas for greater social impact.</p> <p>AK asked when the next round of community grants would be open. JF advised that they have changed the system as AGL were not receiving enough applications. Community/Environment Groups are encouraged to contact AGL (JF) to nominate projects for consideration under the criteria.</p>	
<p>AGL UPDATE</p>	<p>KT provided an overall update of AGL's national activities:</p> <p>Broken Hill – 50MW battery will be completed in December 2023. Liddell Battery – 500MW at the power station that was decommissioned, should have financial investment in next few months. It will take 2 years to build.</p> <p>Stating that it's an interesting time with many coal power outages as the industry prepares for summer. Bayswater will be undergoing maintenance ahead of the peak period. AEMO put out a preparedness report and many people are working to get plants ready for summer.</p> <p>AGL has a program for readiness – maintenance, fire breaks, trails as it prepares for the change between la Nina to el Niño weather patterns.</p> <p>There was a Firesticks conference held in South Australia, where they shared their experiences in cultural burnings. An interesting way of managing the environment.</p> <p>KT advised that there are big plans in the electricity market in Australia. Whilst the spot prices are negative, people with home solar panels are paying money to generate or consume energy now. Batteries will change the market as they will charge and put back into the grid.</p>	

	<p>JS enquired about the status of the NGSF. KT advised that AGL is engaged with the NSW state government. AGL is keen for the government to understand its system of security and supply. Will keep CDG informed.</p> <p>JS asked if AGL will hold on to the facility for the next 5 years. KT responded that it is up to AEMO and the government. JS commented that Hunter Water is keen to know who they will working with. They have always had a good relationship with AGL.</p> <p>KT commented that AGL did put out an expression of interest last year, however, no one was interested in the facility.</p> <p>JS stated that Hunter Water has invested in solar farms on a number of their properties to offset its daily energy consumption.</p>	
<p>GENERAL BUSINESS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JM showed photographs of the Medowie Offset properties and explained the vegetation. He explained its management and maintenance, including feral animals (deer), vandalism, wild dogs. • AK commented that it is a shame that the Port Stephens Feral Animal Committee closed down as they did a good job. The control of wild dogs helped keep the koala population safe. AK commented on the importance of the Angophora trees shown in the photos. They help keep koalas cool and they can eat the flowers. • KD enquired about the PS Feral Animal Committee. Further discussions regarding membership and that the issue is under the control of Local Lands Services agency. • JS advised that he will be meeting with delegates from Wollongong University today to discuss invasive species. 	<p>Forward to members.</p>

MEETING SCHEDULE FOR 2024	It was agreed to continue with quarterly meetings. Still on Thursdays at the HRBG, commencing at 10am: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ Thursday 29 February ✚ Thursday 30 May ✚ Thursday 29 August ✚ Thursday 28 November. 	AH advised that the Q1 meeting will include a briefing on the RTS for the proposed Tomago Battery.
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Meeting closed at 11.18am with LA thanking members for their attendance and contribution throughout 2023 and wishing all a happy festive season.

***Tomago Battery link to DPE Major Projects Portal:**

[Tomago Battery Energy Storage System | Planning Portal - Department of Planning and Environment \(nsw.gov.au\)](https://www.nsw.gov.au/planning-portal)

ACTION ITEMS

ITEM	ISSUE	RESPONSIBILITY
1	Keep CDG informed of the sale of NGSF (ongoing)	KT
2	Keep CDG informed about the highway upgrade (ongoing)	KM
3	Keep CDG informed about the proposed Tomago Battery pathway (ongoing)	AH