

Minutes

Community Advisory Group meeting #25

Chair	Ian Gibson	Time	4:00pm – 6:00pm
Minutes	Jason Pickering	Date	2024-02-07
Location	Seminar Room at Traralgon Business Centre; Level 1/55 Grey Street, Traralgon VIC 3844		

Attendance

Members		Project team		Apologies
Ian Gibson (Chair)	Travis Dillow		Erin Coldham	Anne Roussac-Hoyne
Allan Rogers	Tony Cantwell		Paul Johnson	Peter Mooney
Wendy Farmer	Glen McColl		Jason Pickering	Marcus McKenzie
Julianne Peavey	Jonathan Pintus		Jacob Politakis	
Nicki Jennings	Deb Lucas			
Tony Wolfe	Glenn Stagg			
Jack Winterbottom	Nick Dudley			
Darren McCubbin	Jenny Smith			
Ken Fraser	Harry Mitchelson			

Key discussion points

Item	Discussion points
1	Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country
2	Standing items and actions from previous meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Apologies - Endorsement of minutes from CAG meeting #23 occurred in December (CAG meeting #24 became an event without a meeting). - Declaration of potential conflicts of interest. - Jacob Politakis was introduced to the CAG as an intern working with SOTS casually whilst studying Electrical Engineering at Federation University.

Item	Discussion points
3	<p>Focus topic: Project timeline revisited</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Paul provided an overview of the project timeline and milestones, including points at which decisions are required to progress to the next step. The discussion covered timeframes for licencing, policy decision effects, environment and planning approvals, site investigation engineering design, grid connection and procurement and the information provided within Implementation Statement 3. - Questions from the group: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tony W. enquired that, should SOTS secure a feasibility licence, what is the next major milestone for SOTS in 2024. Paul explained that should SOTS secure a feasibility licence, the next key milestones are submission for environmental approvals to both the state and federal governments and clarity on a transmission solution from VicGrid. - Jenny asked if further external delays could see the local coal fired power stations need to extend their forecast closure dates. Paul explained SOTS can't answer, and he hasn't heard anything to confirm this is being considered. - Nick asked given SOTS has already completed their environmental baseline studies, is it likely after feasibility licences are awarded that other licensees could ask to share this data to fast track their own project approval processes and to advance the industry sooner. Paul indicated the studies need to be carried out on each proponent's specific site according to scoping requirements as part of each project's referral process. <p>Darren added he thought outside of protecting intellectual property, successful proponents would likely enter conversations on sharing workplace capabilities, maritime resources, and ports infrastructure among other things. Everyone is still in a competitive environment now, after licences are awarded, Darren believes a more sharing environment will likely ensue as part of a government agenda.</p> <p>Nicki added environmental studies should remain independent across projects to ensure findings are validated and to reduce the potential for mistakes or areas of neglect being duplicated.</p> - Erin concluded that our project timeline remains subject to many outside influences that can affect when key milestones are met. <p>Different governments could have different policy positions and as a project, we are looking to meet the policy positions that are in place today.</p> <p>SOTS will focus on what we can continue to control and bring information to the CAG.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Any additional discussion that occurred in 'Item 3' remains 'commercial in confidence'.
4	<p>Focus topic: Ports update following the Hastings decision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Refer to presentation for key updates. - Michael Dillon, SOTS Ports and Industry Manager, recapped information last shared with the CAG in Meeting #21 on the two types of ports required by the project – a construction feeder port and an operations port, before discussing how the recent Port of Hastings decision might affect SOTS construction feeder port options.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="335 324 1404 425">– Typically, multiple ports are used for similar projects overseas. A multi-port approach provides more flexibility in your operations and allows some mitigation for port delays and congestion. <li data-bbox="335 436 1420 537">– There isn't a port in Australia operational for offshore wind construction at this point and some development is required at all options. SOTS would like multiple port options available, and as well as secondary options to retain flexibility. <li data-bbox="335 548 1420 649">– The Port of Hastings does not have an existing offshore wind terminal. The proposed VRET site is vacant, reclaimed land between two existing facilities and is zoned as a port development area. <p data-bbox="383 660 1420 795">As part of this development, Port of Hastings proposes construction of hard stand area, new berths, and some localised dredging to deepen the proposed swing basin. This work requires an environmental approvals process that is separate from SOTS and is undertaken by the Port of Hastings.</p> <p data-bbox="383 806 1404 884">This proposed project falls under the EPBC Act which triggered a referral to the federal government which occurred last year.</p> <p data-bbox="383 896 1404 996">In early January 2024, the decision from the federal government was that the proposal from the Port of Hastings development had 'unacceptable impacts of the matters protected by the EPBC'.</p> <p data-bbox="383 1008 1340 1075">That decision halts the process and cuts off the need to submit an Environmental Impact Statement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="335 1086 1420 1187">– The Port of Hastings Corporation is now assessing options. These are likely to include abandoning the project, challenging the decision or re-referring with alternative design and mitigations. <li data-bbox="335 1198 1420 1332">– It is important to correct the misleading reports that SOTS were leading the Hastings project. To clarify, SOTS is not a port developer but is an offshore wind developer. Any supportive ports developments are undertaken by the ports themselves. SOTS role is to find suitable ports with infrastructure to meet the project requirements. <li data-bbox="335 1344 1332 1411">– As a port to service our project and the wider offshore wind industry, the Port of Hastings is not the only option. <p data-bbox="383 1422 1412 1568">High quality potential secondary construction feeder port options exist at Geelong and Bell Bay and potentially other ports further afield. Given SOTS is in the development stage when the Hastings decision was announced, provides time and flexibility with planning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="335 1579 1428 1713">– SOTS is continuing discussions with all port options, including Hastings and interstate ports and will remain engaged on all opportunities. The offshore wind industry is new to Australia and associated technologies are advancing all the time, so we are continuing to be explore. <li data-bbox="335 1724 1420 1825">– The Hastings decision had no impact on the potential Gippsland operations ports. Both Port Anthony and Barry Beach Marine Terminal are progressing their own plans. These developments and associated approval processes are again independent of SOTS. <p data-bbox="383 1836 1420 1904">Both will also undergo a similar regulatory approvals process to Hastings and will need to refer their projects accordingly depending on the investigations that are undertaken.</p> <p data-bbox="383 1915 1332 1982">There will be an associated community engagement process where affected and impacted stakeholders will have the opportunity for input.</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nicki asked whether Port Anthony and Barry Beach Marine Terminal are in a Ramsar wetland area too. Michael answered yes that Corner Inlet is within the Ramsar boundary, so will be required to refer its projects as well. Unlike the Hastings development site, these ports are existing ports and do not require dredging and the land being considered for development is mostly existing hard stand area. Both existing ports are already being used for industrial purposes. - Darren asked whether long jetty options with rail lines are suitable, like in Queensland with coal exports. Michael responded that anything is possible, but with the scale of the wind farm componentry, moving them around individually by rail could be quite problematic and inefficient. <p>Allan also added we heard at the CAG Port Anthony site visit that having a sheltered pier reduces some influence from an open sea state that would make loading and unloading difficult.</p> <p>Michael agreed that the proposed dig in option with a front breakwater dissipates wave actions and reduces loading constraints and safety concerns.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ken shared that both Gippsland ports would have taken some learnings from what had occurred at Hastings and will be ensuring they meet all expectations with their submissions.
5	<p>Break</p>
6	<p>What's happening on the project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Refer to presentation for key updates. - Paul spoke of recent events and presentations delivered by the SOTS project team. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nicki shared her experience after joining Paul at the SOTS exhibitor stand at the Middle of Everywhere Christmas Parade, mentioning there was quite a bit of interest in project employment opportunities. - Jack shared that joining Paul and Jason on the SOTS exhibitor stand at the Sea Days Festival in Port Welshpool on the 6th of January was an enjoyable experience and that he'd encourage other CAG members to do so as well. It offered good insight to any questions people might repeatedly ask and enabled him to ensure his own messaging is accurate. We had around 40-50 conversations with attendees on a wide range of topics. <p>Ian asked if the attendees were mostly locals. Jack answered it seemed a good mixture, with plenty of holiday makers as well.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ian added it is great to see CAG members getting along to these events and chatting with the community and encouraged it to continue. <p>Action 1: SOTS project team will share information on upcoming events that could offer an opportunity for greater CAG member attendance.</p> - Jason spoke of the site visit undertaken by members of the SOTS project team to Geelong Port in December. <p>The visit held particular interest for us as on the day they were unloading componentry for the nearby Golden Plains Wind Farm. Despite being a terrestrial wind project and the components smaller than what is required for an offshore wind project, it was still interesting to see these big loads craned from their transport vessel.</p>

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	<p>The components are moved to a pier-side hard stand area for some pre-assembly before further distribution to their project site, around 64km away from that port. The final transport is by road and occurs over night when the traffic is at a minimum.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paul reminded members of the upcoming 'Planet Wind' film screening on the 20th of February at the Yarram Regent Theatre which features CAG member Tony Wolfe. <p>All CAG members, their families and colleagues are encouraged to attend if available.</p>
7	<p>What's happening in the community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ian offered a change moving forward with this agenda item, that CAG encourages anyone to provide a community update instead of nominating two CAG members to speak before the meeting. <p>The previous nomination method was conceived at the formation of the group when all members knew little about the project, the CAG and their role within this group and may have felt a little reluctant to speak. Nominations occurred on a rotational basis, but naturally do not always align with what's happening in each community at that time.</p> <p>As this group has developed, it has become apparent all members are more comfortable to speak or to update on issues/news from within their community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposed change was supported by the CAG. Nicki shared a group of landholders, south of Sale to Flynn, have formed a group named 'Better Transmission Gippsland' and they are focussed on ensuring transmission will proceed underground and have been engaging with VicGrid. Glenn S. shared that an article in 'The Weekly Times' reports that concerns have been raised by farmers in the western districts of Victoria that the compensation payments that are being offered to host infrastructure will now be subject to tax. Darren updated the CAG that the Gippsland New Energy Conference has now been shifted forward a day to be held 3-4 September 2024 at the Gippsland Performing Arts Centre in Traralgon. <p>Darren is seeking feedback for potential speakers and topics, so please reach out to him with your thoughts.</p> <p>Gippsland Climate Change Network (GCCN) is running the 'Gippsland New Energy' web portal designed to connect and inform Gippslanders as the region transitions to new energy. Darren offered the portal can publicise community groups, like the one Nicki mentioned and other relevant events. Please reach out to Darren through the contact us section of the website.</p> <p>Access the website here: https://gippslandnewenergy.com.au/</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Harry shared that he is commonly hearing within his community that the Port of Hastings decision, discussed earlier within this meeting, means that SOTS will not proceed - so SOTS will need to release something to correct that. Paul responded some media did incorrectly report that it was our port development project and therefore integral to SOTS proceeding. This will be addressed when feasibility licence announcements occur soon. <p>Darren added the GCCN 'Renewable Energy Demonstration Trailer' is always active, with six events upcoming in East Gippsland near Lakes Entrance. This service is independent of developers and will update on the progression of government processes and correct misinformation for the community.</p>



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wendy reported that a photo opportunity in Morwell (outside the Council offices) was organised by 'Friends of the Earth' to support renewable energy on the 4th of February. About 50 people turned up, but the temperature was hot which may have deterred people from attending. Wendy reminded members that the 10th of February is the 10-year anniversary of the Hazelwood Mine Fire, and a community event is planned for the 17th of February to commemorate the event and to highlight what's changed in Gippsland following the fire. All are welcome to attend and there will be a lot of information about renewable energy. - Nick shared Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC) are looking forward to the feasibility licence announcements. GLaWAC has been dealing with a large volume of proponents. GLaWAC is looking at produce an internal engagement document for First Nations people on renewable energy. With limited staff resourcing, it has been difficult to have people on the ground engaging with all potential proponents. This resource would prove valuable to educating First Nations people about industry and engagement.
8	<p>CAG annual survey results</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jason thanked the members for their completion of this survey which provides important feedback towards our management of the CAG. The key points from the survey were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meetings: Members are still finding the meeting content relevant and interesting and support the way the meetings are chaired. The ability to attend online if you can't in person is greatly appreciated, as is rotating the meeting locations around Gippsland to share the travel. - Communication: Members are satisfied with the amount of SOTS communication between meetings and gave clear indication to their preferred channels of contact. - Content: Members appreciate the current mix of technical, environmental, social, cultural, and economic updates. It is clear that members have differing specific areas of interest, but the project team will continue to inform on each topic to meet the broad interests of the group. - Members: As a collective, the CAG must remain mindful that individual members may possess differing levels of engagement towards the project and the wider new energy transition - we all need to understand and respect this. The SOTS project team see the diversity of the CAG as a strength, and all members should feel comfortable to seek further explanation or challenge any related topic when they feel it is required. Jason concluded by offering to the CAG, as always members don't need to wait until the end of the year survey to provide any feedback to the project team - please reach out at any stage for a chat.
9	<p>Other business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Darren asked if anyone had read 'Community Engagement Review – Report to the Minister for Climate Change and Energy', recently released by the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner.

Item	Discussion points
	<p>Action 2: SOTS project team to share 'Community Engagement Review – Report to the Minister for Climate Change and Energy' with the CAG.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paul suggested that with feasibility licence announcements imminent, that we remain flexible with the date of our next meeting scheduled for the 4th of April and consider moving it back if we had an announcement just prior to or learnt that it would occur around that time to enable discussion at CAG Meeting #26. <p>This was supported by the CAG.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Darren shared that he, Glen McColl and Dan Clancey will be overseas in March to look at wind projects in Europe and would be happy to report back to the CAG on some of the best practice examples they encounter. <p>Glen added the visit is in partnership with the German-Australian Energy Alliance and is very much connected with offshore wind and despite being only a relatively new partnership, there are agreements already in place with regard to information sharing. Germany is much further advanced in their new energy journey than Australia, so there is a lot Australia can learn to accelerate our own path.</p> <p>Ian offered that update could be added as an agenda item to the next meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allan requested a condensed version of this meeting's discussion points and key messages that he can present when providing community updates. <p>Travis added he thought this would be beneficial for his community updates too.</p> <p>Action 3: SOTS project team to provide an email to the CAG after the meeting condensing the points of discussion to bullet points and adding a key message to each.</p>
10	Meeting close

Actions – new

No.	Action	Owner	Due
1	SOTS project team to share information on upcoming events that could offer an opportunity for greater CAG member attendance	Paul / Jason	14/2/2024
2	SOTS project team to share 'Community Engagement Review – Report to the Minister for Climate Change and Energy' with the CAG.	Paul / Jason	14/2/2024
3	SOTS project team to provide an email to the CAG after the meeting condensing the points of discussion to bullet points and adding a key message to each.	Paul / Jason	14/2/2024

Next meeting

Date	Time	Place
TBC	4 – 6 pm	Sale [Venue TBC]