

Cooba Solar Project

Community Reference Group Meeting #2

Minutes

Date: 7 October 2025
Time: 5:00pm
Location: Colbinabbin Country Hotel

Attendees

Chair	Geoff Stoker-Lavelle – Managing Director, Venn Energy
Community Members	Belinda West Brian Spencer Carl Brown Dean Wallace Hugh Jones Ian Rathjen Jenny Weaver
Venn Energy	Bree Williams – Community and Stakeholder Engagement Manager Geoff Stoker-Lavelle – Managing Director
Apologies	Tait Hamilton

Agenda

	Item										
1.	Chair's welcome and opening remarks, introductions The meeting opened at 5:09pm. Welcome to Community Reference Group members and Project representatives. Short introduction from each member and connection/relationship to Colbinabbin and how their position will benefit the Community Reference Group/ Community Benefit Fund. <table><tr><th>Name</th><th>Summary introduction and connection/relationship to community</th></tr><tr><td>Belinda West</td><td>Local business owner and various committee representative</td></tr><tr><td>Brian Spencer</td><td>Local Minister and wine grower</td></tr><tr><td>Carl Brown</td><td>Local farmer</td></tr><tr><td>Dean Wallace</td><td>Chair for Colbinabbin Rec Reserve</td></tr></table>	Name	Summary introduction and connection/relationship to community	Belinda West	Local business owner and various committee representative	Brian Spencer	Local Minister and wine grower	Carl Brown	Local farmer	Dean Wallace	Chair for Colbinabbin Rec Reserve
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	Hugh Jones	Wine Growers Association for Heathcote Wine region – representing growers – representing 62 winegrowers and wine makers in the Heathcote region.
	Ian Rathjen	Chair for Colbinabbin Memorial and local wine grower/farmer
	Jenny Weaver	Local Kindergarten and Colbinabbin General Store (Co-op) representative
2.	Apologies/ attendance It was mentioned that Tait Hamilton was away on holidays and unable to attend this meeting. Jenny Weaver was previously not involved in the group; however, attended the community drop-in sessions and this meeting as a representative of different groups to represent the community in response to call outs by the project to ensure the CRG had equal representation from across the community. Hugh Jones was also a new addition to the group, however attended the community drop in sessions and this meeting as a representative of different groups to represent the community in response to call outs by the project to ensure the CRG had equal representation from across the community.	
3.	Declaration of pecuniary or other interests All members of Community Reference Group must sign a declaration of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests before they join the committee and keep this declaration up to date while they are members of the group. Action: members to return signed copy prior to or at the next meeting.	
4.	Minutes of previous meeting 4.a – Discussion around what we want this group to be/ defining the purpose of the CRG: included feedback around the “Community Benefit Survey” and suggestion from Venn Energy that the survey regarding the Community Benefit Fund be recirculated via future Project newsletters. 4.b – Legal Agreement Questions were raised about the legal agreement for the Community Benefit Fund: requests were made to put the commitment in a legal agreement. Venn explained that while it is not typical to have these commitments	

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	enshrined in a legal agreement at this stage, the commitments Venn has made to the community will be further reinforced through the progress of the initiatives with this CRG and with the governance partner.
5.	Business arising from the minutes N/A
6.	Adjourned business N/A
7.	General business 7a. A draft purpose of the Cooba Solar Project CBF-CRG was presented to the group: • Establish good working relationships and promote information sharing and transparency on the project's Community Benefit Sharing Fund between local community, local councils and stakeholder groups (such as environment, residents, business/ commerce associations). • Allow the Cooba Solar Project Team to keep the community informed about the Community Benefit Fund for the Cooba Solar Project, seek community views and respond to matters raised by the community. • Allow community members to seek information from the Cooba Solar Project Team and provide feedback to assist with the delivery of balanced social, environmental, educational and economic outcomes for the Community Benefit Fund. • To perform an advisory and consultative role in the formation and establishment of the CRG and Community Benefit Fund and subsequent allocation of funding. Action: Issue draft Terms of Reference to be agreed by the group members. 7b. Communication protocols - What is the preferred method for communication within CRG? - Establish crg@coobasolarproject.com.au email contact group list - Handling of specific complaints is to be managed directly by Venn Energy - Methods for seeking community feedback eg: Community Survey - Code of conduct 7c. Governance and the role of Bendigo Bank

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	• A detailed discussion was had around the role of Bendigo Bank and governance structure – including conditions. • It was agreed by the group that some kind of administrative governance structure was required and that the Bendigo Bank - Community Enterprise Foundation should be represented at the next meeting. Action: Invite a representative of Bendigo Bank CEF to the next meeting. 7c. Governance and the role of Campaspe Shire Council • The importance of ensuring Council was presented with an opportunity to present a non-decision-making representative at future CRG meetings was discussed. Concerns were acknowledged that Council will want to ensure they do not have any legacy costs associated with CRG funding or projects. It was established that an invitation should be extended to Council to “involve them from the start” for the purpose of sharing information. Action: Invite a representative of Council to the next meeting.
8.	Community feedback / areas of interest from members of CRG 8a. Feedback was unanimous by the group that the next meeting should be held ‘after school holidays and between harvest’ in early-mid February 2026.
9.	Next meeting date and location February 2026 An invitation will be extended to a representative of Bendigo Bank to attend either virtually or in person. An invitation will be extended to a representative of Council to attend either virtually or in person.
10.	Meeting closed at 7:00pm

Other notes or information:

N/A