

NEOEN



# Thunderbolt Energy Hub CCC Meeting

*8 May 2023*

# Acknowledgment of Country

We would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the country on which we work and on which the project is located and pay respect to their Elders – past, present and emerging.



1. **Actions from the last CCC Meeting**

2. Project Update

# Actions from the last CCC Meeting

1. Neoen to provide information as to whether discount electricity for the community is an option of the Community Benefit Fund.
2. Neoen to provide clarification regarding what happens if there are funds left over in the Community Benefit Fund and whether they will be rolled over from one year to the next.
3. Neoen to provide a list of the ideas that have been suggested by community members for the Community Benefit Fund so far.
4. If community members have any further questions regarding de-commissioning and rehabilitation, please email these to Joanna Murphy so she can provide further details at the next CCC meeting.
5. The Chair to write to State Planning regarding decommissioning and rehabilitation practices and processes.
6. Joanna Murphy to email members a link to the *Strategic Benefit Payment Scheme* published by EnergyCo.
7. Neoen will provide more detail around the connection process at a future meeting.
8. Joanna Murphy will send links to the wind turbine manufacturer websites for members information.
9. Neoen will provide information on what options are available to make official complaints.

**ACTION 1:** Neoen to provide information as to whether discount electricity for the community is an option of the Community Benefit Fund.

- Neoen does not sell power directly to household consumers, therefore the cost of power to the community will not be directly reduced due to the construction of this project, but the project will contribute to the overall reduction in consumer's power bills thanks to the transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy.
  - The Project has the ability to provide affordable, reliable and low-cost electricity to NSW consumers.
  - It can do this because the energy input (wind and sun) for renewable generators is free, hence a wind or solar farm is able to offer electricity prices that are competitive with the traditional generators like coal and gas.
  - Neoen typically sells a large portion of the generated electricity to customers via a contract called a power purchase agreement. This customer may be a company (like a factory or a mine with high energy needs) or an electricity retailer who then on-sells the electricity to residential customers like you or I.
- The community benefit fund is not intended to benefit individuals or companies, but the community as a whole, i.e. community groups, schools and community organisations. Therefore, the Community Benefit Fund will not provide direct discounted electricity for individuals.
- If lower electricity prices are a key concern, then another option may be for an NGO to apply for a grant to the Community Benefit Fund to provide energy bill relief for low-income households or those struggling to pay their electricity bills.

**ACTION 2:** Neoen to provide clarification regarding what happens if there are funds left over in the Community Benefit Fund and whether they will be rolled over from one year to the next.

- Yes, remaining funds will be rolled over from one year to the next if it isn't fully used

**ACTION 3:** Neoen to provide a list of the ideas that have been suggested by community members for the Community Benefit Fund so far.

- We have summarised the community feedback in our Community Relations Plan, which will be submitted together with the Response to Submissions (RTS) report.

Description of Benefit	Number of responses (as at April 2023)	Percentage of responses (as at April 2023)
Community Benefit Fund providing grants for local community groups	49	70%
Discounted electricity bills for local households	39	55.71%
Solar and/or battery storage subsidies for local households	36	51.43%
An opportunity for community members to invest directly in the project	23	32.86%
Biodiversity funding & opportunities	27	38.57%
Explore ways to support local eco-tourism	16	22.86%
Suggestion (please specify)	24	34.29%

Some of the responses received from people who selected ‘Suggestion (please specify)’ include:

- Local electric car fast charging stations
- Not to allow local Council to administer the Community Benefit Fund
- Community Future Fund
- Ambulance station for improved outcomes for the community
- Sponsorship of the local show
- Profit sharing in wind turbines that impact neighbours
- Telecommunications improvement, including improved mobile phone signal and internet coverage
- Funding for Kentucky Hall, School and fire brigade
- RFS training on roads within wind farm
- Educational scholarships, traineeships, cadetships, trade skills
- Making the wind farm partially community-owned
- Indoor sports centre
- Energy efficiency program and support for low income households
- Help local shires to prosper

During the one-on-one meetings, the most common idea that community members had in relation to the Community Benefit Fund was that they would like to see improved telecommunications in the area (mobile and internet reception) as they perceived it to be poor at present.

Other ideas suggested include:

- providing cheaper power
- a viewing platform for the wind farm
- funding for local community groups such as the Kentucky Hall, School, RFS and Progress Association to make Kentucky more appealing
- create more recreational areas such as camping grounds
- a community centre where programs are held all the time, such as pottery and crafts
- a community sports centre
- a swimming pool/tennis court/cricket pitch
- tree corridors near turbine roads and next to the solar farm to prevent erosion and screen view of the solar farm
- potable water trucks for times of drought
- lights at railway crossing in Kentucky village
- wildlife conservation



**ACTION 4:** If community members have any further questions regarding de-commissioning and rehabilitation, please email these to Joanna Murphy so she can provide further details at the next CCC meeting.

- NSW Department of Planning is currently updating the 2016 NSW Wind Energy Guideline, which we expect will include some guidance around decommissioning. It is expected to be released in August for consultation.
- Decommissioning and rehabilitation requirements are also usually outlined in the conditions of project DAs.

**ACTION 5:** The Chair to write to State Planning regarding decommissioning and rehabilitation practices and processes.

- The Chair to please provide an update.

**ACTION 6:** Joanna Murphy to email members a link to the *Strategic Benefit Payment Scheme* published by EnergyCo.

- <https://www.energyco.nsw.gov.au/community/strategic-benefit-payments-scheme>



## What is the Strategic Benefit Payments Scheme?

The NSW Government has committed to a plan to transform NSW's electricity system into one that is cheaper, cleaner, and more reliable. Building new transmission infrastructure is critical to this plan and to NSW's future energy supply, security, and affordability.

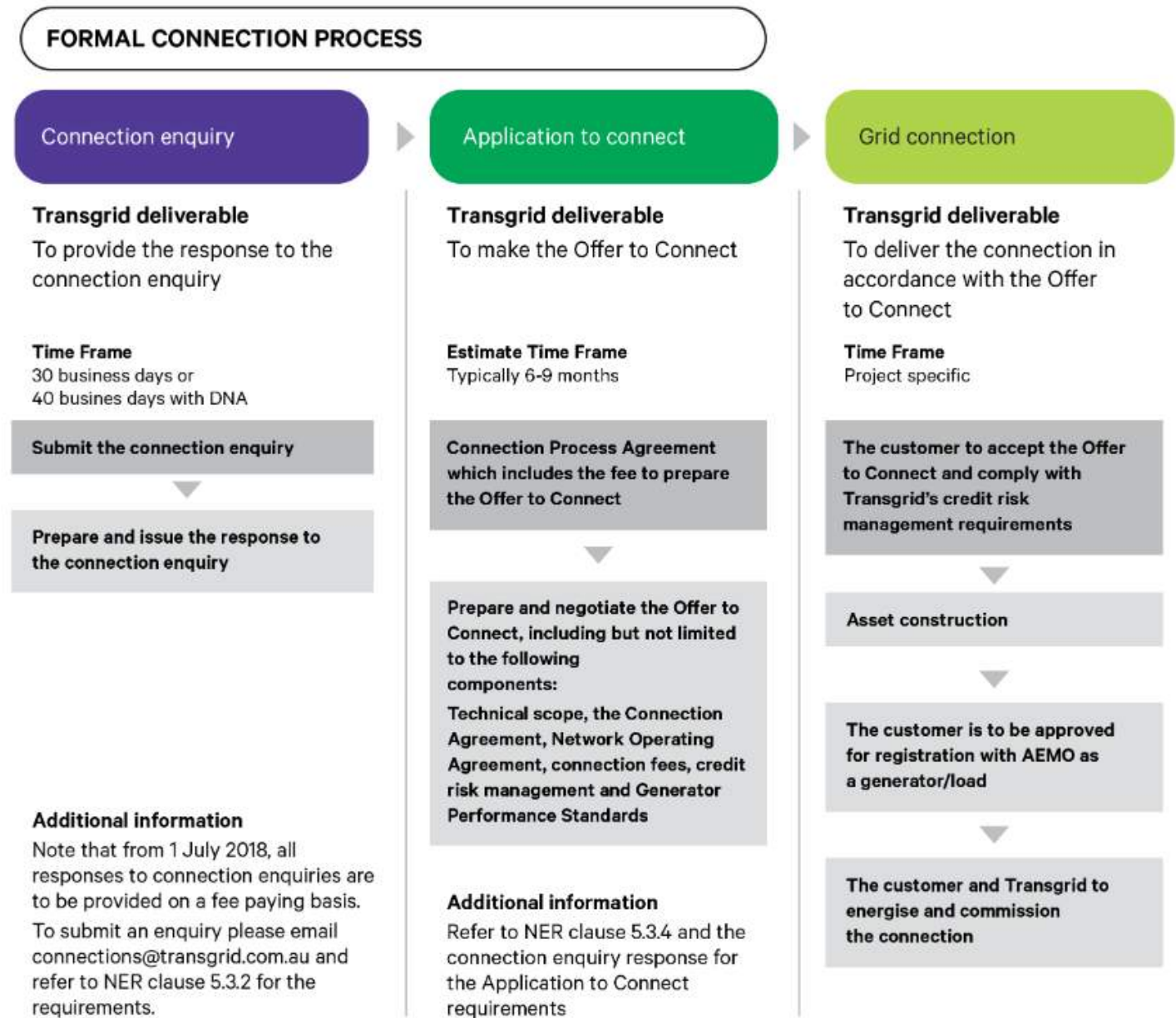
To support the delivery of a modern electricity grid for NSW that benefits communities and consumers, the NSW Government is establishing a Strategic Benefit Payments Scheme (SBP Scheme) for new major transmission projects. Under the SBP Scheme, private landowners hosting new high voltage transmission projects critical to the energy transformation and future of the electricity grid will be paid a set rate of \$200,000 per kilometre of transmission hosted, paid out in annual instalments over 20 years.

These payments are an acknowledgement of the important role these landowners will play in hosting critical infrastructure that will power the State into the future. These payments are separate, and in addition to any compensation that is paid to landowners for transmission easements on their land in accordance with the *Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act 1991*.

**ACTION 7:** Neoen will provide more detail around the connection process at a future meeting.

- A high-level overview of the connection process can be found on TransGrid's website:

<https://www.transgrid.com.au/about-us/network/network-connections>



**ACTION 8:** Joanna Murphy will send links to the wind turbine manufacturer websites for member information.

- Vestas: <https://www.vestas.com/en>
- GE: <https://www.ge.com/renewableenergy/wind-energy>
- Nordex: <https://www.nordex-online.com/en/>
- Goldwind: <https://www.goldwindaustralia.com/>
- Siemens Gamesa: <https://www.siemensgamesa.com/en-int>

For context, the wind turbines used at Neoen projects in Australia that are under construction or in operation:

- Hornsdale Wind Farm: Siemens
- Bulgana Wind Farm: Siemens Gamesa
- Kaban Wind Farm: Vestas
- Goyder: GE

**ACTION 9:** Neoen will provide information on what options are available to make official complaints.

The options to make complaints are:

- Contact Neoen to discuss the complaint. You may contact us via phone (1800 966 207), email ([contact@thunderboltenergyhub.com.au](mailto:contact@thunderboltenergyhub.com.au)) or mail (GPO BOX 1950, Canberra ACT 2601). The Thunderbolt Energy Hub website outlines the six-step process of how we handle complaints (<https://thunderboltenergyhub.com.au/make-a-complaint/>)



- Contact Uralla Shire Council (<https://www.uralla.nsw.gov.au/Home>) or Tamworth Regional Council (<https://www.tamworth.nsw.gov.au/>)
- Contact the National Energy Infrastructure Commissioner (<https://www.aeic.gov.au/>)

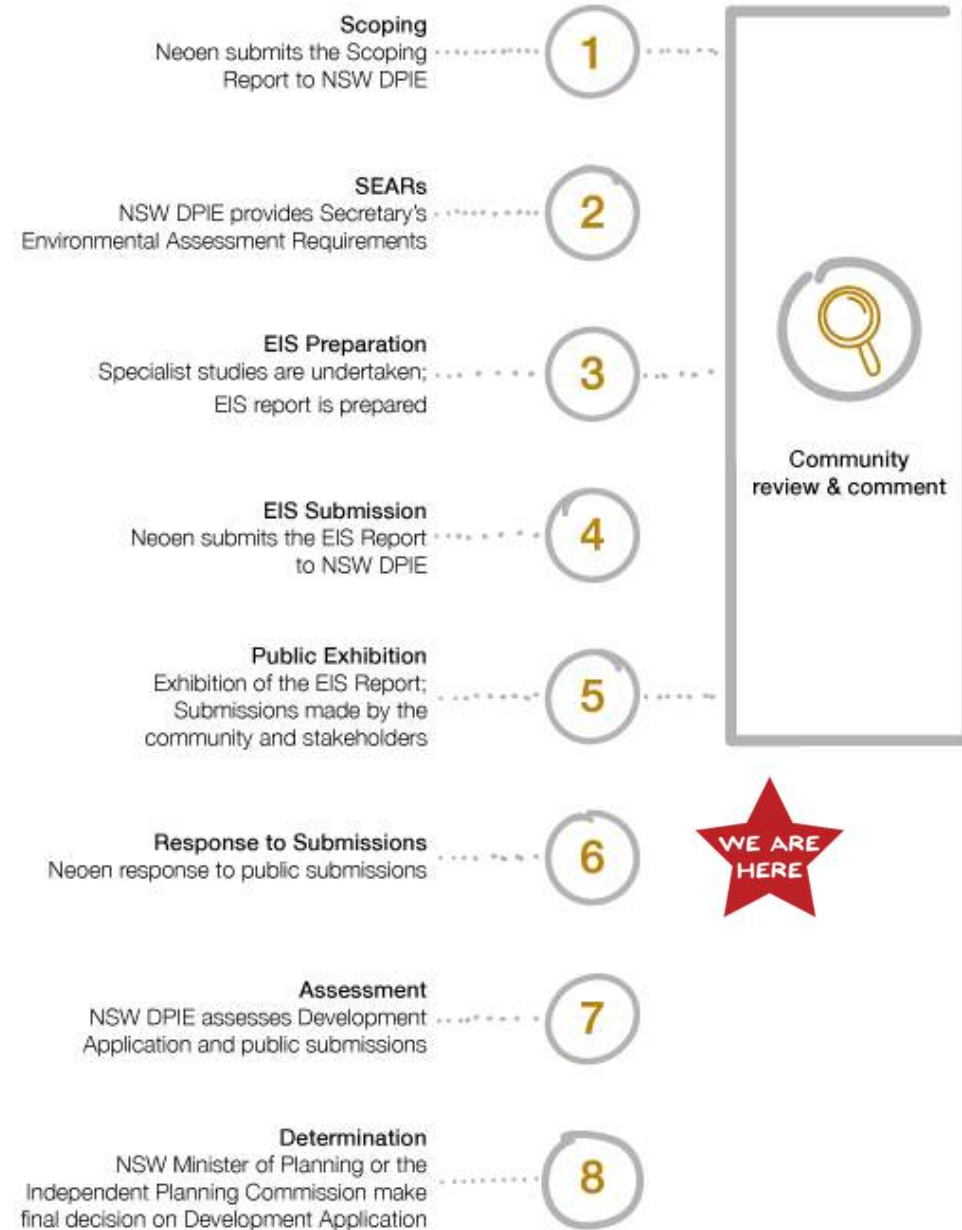
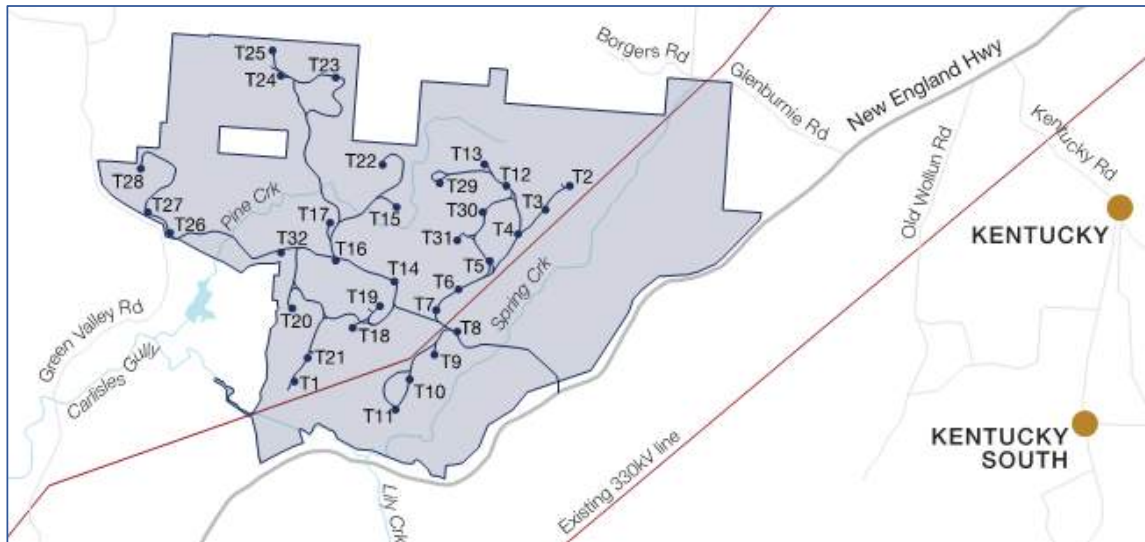


1. Actions from the last CCC Meeting

2. **Project Update**

# Project Updates - Planning

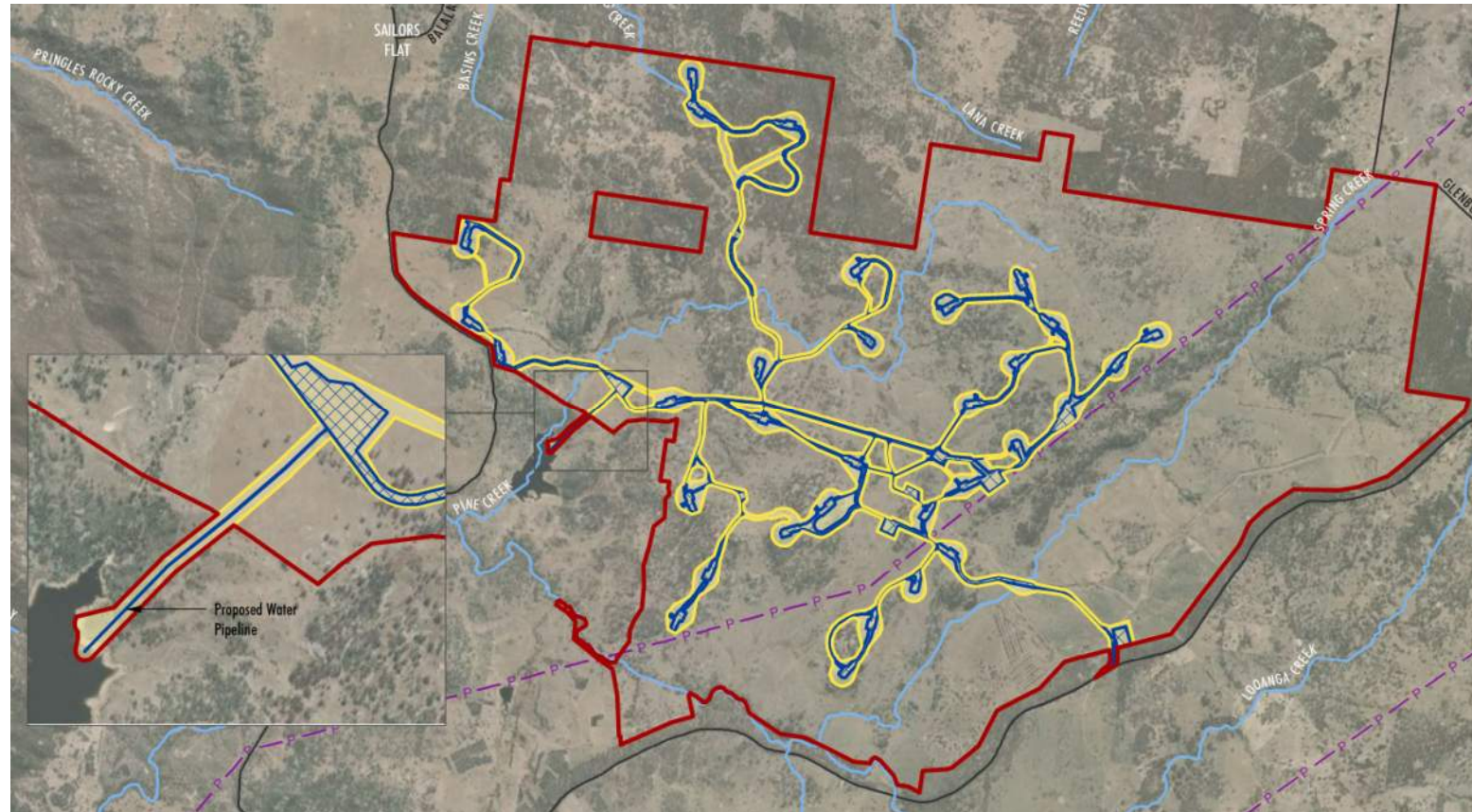
- Neoen plans to submit a Response to Submission (RTS) within the next month.
- NSW DPE will then undertake its assessment of the EIS.
- The project will be referred to the NSW IPC following NSW DPE's assessment.
- We expect the DA decision by the end of 2023





# Project Updates - Design

- We are proposing a potential water source for construction, which will be included in the RTS report.
- This will involve the use of water from the neighbouring dam for construction needs, e.g. dust suppression.
- Water would be stored in an on-site reservoir that would only be required throughout construction, approx. 2 years
- This will be subject to licensing, therefore other ideas may be explored as well.



# Project Updates – Detailed Assessments

- **Aboriginal Heritage:** test excavations undertaken in 2022 across 4 locations.
- **Aviation Assessment:** in line with CASA's requirement a lighting plan has been prepared, outlining which wind turbines may require lighting. The aviation assessment found that lighting is not required. The final decision will be made as part of the assessment of the DA.
- **Biodiversity:** a number of further surveys have occurred throughout 2022 and 2023, some of which are for the RTS in response to BCS' submission. Other bird and bat surveys are being undertaken for the Bird and Bat Adaptive Management Plan (BBAMP), which will be required for the project prior to construction commencing. An updated report will be submitted with the RTS.
- **Community Relations Plan:** an updated report will be submitted with the RTS.
- **Traffic:** TfNSW required some clarification on access road from New England Hwy to site, which will be provided in the RTS.
- **Visual:** two additional photomontages from near-by residences have been created and will be submitted to DPE for assessment.

# Community Benefit Sharing

- Neoen has proposed an industry-leading and generous community benefit sharing program for the project
- The program is comprised of two components:
  - Community Benefit Sharing Fund
  - Neighbour Benefit Fund
- **Community Benefit Fund** = initially committed \$100,000 per year throughout the operations phase
- **Neighbour Benefit Program** = approx. \$220,000 per year throughout the operations phase
- Our principle is that community funds should be shared with the community closest to the project
- We have been negotiating with Uralla and Tamworth Councils regarding a Voluntary Planning Agreement (VPA)
- We have agreed to increase the sum of the CBF to \$160,000 p.a. indexed to CPI in line with Uralla Shire Council's request for the community contribution fee to be approximately 1.5% of build cost
- \$160,000 p.a. represents approximately 1.88% of the project's build cost. With the \$220,000 neighbour payment, this represents 3.65% of the project build cost



- Neoen proposed to share benefits with both Councils equally; i.e. \$80,000 each
- Tamworth Regional Council agreed to their portion being administered as a CBF, while Uralla Shire Council chose a VPA.