

The Hon Cate Faehrmann MLC
Committee Chair
Select Committee on State Development
Legislative Council
NSW Parliament House,
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

6 March 2024

Dear Ms Faehrmann

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to questions on notice from the hearing on Feasibility of Undergrounding the Transmission Infrastructure for Renewable Energy Projects on 16 February 2024 and provide further information.

Landowner meeting

On Tuesday 13 February 2024, a meeting was held between EnergyCo and Mr Stuart Hackney. EnergyCo has committed to respect confidentiality in its dealings with landowners, and respectfully submits that it would not be appropriate to provide further details of matters discussed at that meeting.

Rule change on community engagement

On 9 November 2023, the Australian Energy Market Commission (**AEMC**) published a final determination on a rule change entitled “*Enhancing community engagement in transmission building*”. This rule change sought to enhance transmission network service provider (**TNSP**) engagement with communities by:

- Clarifying that TNSPs are required to engage with stakeholders such as local landowners, local councils, local community members, local environmental groups and traditional owners as part of preparatory activities for a project.
- Clarifying that TNSPs are required to consult with these stakeholders during the Regulatory Investment Test for Transmission (**RIT-T**) for a project.
- Introducing ‘community engagement expectations’. TNSPs are required to make reasonable endeavours to satisfy these community engagement expectations when engaging with local stakeholders. This includes requirements that “*stakeholders receive information that is clear, accessible, accurate, relevant, timely and explains the rationale for the relevant project*” and “*stakeholder feedback, including potential ways to deliver community benefits, are considered*”.

The rule change commenced on 5 December 2023.

EnergyCo operates under the *Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020 (EII Act)*. The principles of the EII Act align with those in the AEMC rule change. These are reflected in one of the objects of the EII Act, to “*foster local community support for investment in new generation, storage, network and related infrastructure*”, and its requirement that, prior to a Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) declaration, the Minister must “*consider the views of the local community in the Renewable Energy Zone*”.

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EnergyCo's approach to engagement with communities through project development activities, information provision and consideration of feedback aligns with the principles of the new rule. During consultation, there are inherently and inevitably trade-offs between early engagement, minimising uncertainty and genuinely considering feedback. EnergyCo continues to engage transparently and in good faith to engage with stakeholders.

Further information on overhead and underground repair times

EnergyCo notes that the Committee has received a range of evidence on repair times for underground cables in comparison with overhead lines.

The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (**IPART**) has established electricity transmission reliability standards for NSW that rely on a range of restoration times for underground cables and overhead lines as inputs to formulation of the standards. In its *Electricity transmission reliability standards supplementary final report (November 2016)*, IPART sets out a range of repair times based on consultant advice:

- for overhead lines of between 8 hours and 120 hours, and
- for underground cables of between 168 hours and 2,016 hours.

This may provide the Committee with a further, established reference on repair times.

Please feel free to contact me if the committee would like to discuss any of these matters further, at

Yours faithfully,

Andrew Kingsmill
Executive Director, Technical Advisory Services