

WRAP UP: Ag + Energy Social Licence Roundtable

27 March 2024: Online

Purpose	The Ag + Energy Social Licence Roundtable is a coordination and collaboration platform, which identifies strategic issues at the nexus of energy and agriculture and encourages action through collaboration across participants. Together, we identify what's working and areas for continuous improvement, across three key areas: Ag as Energy Hosts, Ag as Energy Generators and Ag as Energy Consumers.
Outcomes	 Drive better landholder and community social licence outcomes through the energy transition Elevate discussions from the AG Energy Taskforce and other relevant forums to a strategic level Feed into relevant processes run through AEMO and other relevant government and market bodies. Operate as a clearing house of strategic issues, rather than seeking to resolve all issues within the roundtable.
Chair	Independent Chair – Joy Thomas (formerly National Irrigators Council) and co- convener of the Ag Energy Taskforce.

Item	Agenda	Lead	Wrap Up
		SESSION 1 – ENERGY	+ AG AROUND THE GROUNDS 1:00pm – 2:30pm
1.	Chair Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country Moment of reflection: Karin Stark and Jon Elder	Joy Thomas, Chair Ag + Energy Social Licence Roundtable	Refer here for opening remarks.



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2.	Roundtable Session 1: Welcome, purpose + housekeeping	Amy Abraham, the Energy Charter (Facilitator)	 Acknowledgement of Country and welcome to all. The Ag + Energy Social Licence Roundtable is a coordination and collaboration platform, which identifies strategic issues at the nexus of energy and agriculture and encourages action through collaboration across participants. Together, we identify what's working and areas for continuous improvement, across three key areas: Ag as Energy Hosts, Ag as Energy Generators and Ag as Energy Consumers.
3.	Ag Energy Taskforce Strategic Issues for update	Dale Holliss, Chair Ag Energy Taskforce (BRIG) and Joy Thomas, Chair Ag + Energy Social Licence Roundtable	 Summary of Taskforce meeting held in December 2023: Strong focus on the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner Community Engagement Review, Taskforce submission to the Review in September – with a series of recommendations and with a strong focus on driving the cultural change necessary to ensure project developers commit to, and deliver, improved engagement and accountability – for example, via the existing model of the Energy Charter.
			 Taskforce submission to the AER focus on social licence; recommendations included: Improved adherence to the Energy Charter Social Licence Guideline. That ag industries and consumers broadly, are not left to meet any additional social licence costs embedded in transmission businesses' pricing proposals to the AER. Proposed transmission infrastructure avoids any adverse impact on existing land use and recognises the social and economic factors for farmers and rural and regional communities. Landholders are not worse off because of infrastructure development, nor suffer loss of income or equity in property value; landholders' equity is critical to their farming business bottom line.



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			 Appropriate compensation and/or commercial consent for infrastructure projects. Genuine shared value is available to communities impacted by renewable energy infrastructure. Safe operation of machinery around transmission infrastructure, including insurance implications. Cultural change and a systems' thinking approach to ensure that all renewable energy infrastructure businesses commit to and deliver improved engagement and accountability. Expected the AER will provide further guidance around cost recovery on this issue mid-2024. Other Taskforce issues: Biosecurity remains a big one for landholders; this has been raised in many forums through National Farmers' Federation (NFF), Primary Producers South Australia, Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF), Tasmanian Farmers and others. The Taskforce submission to the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner highlighted obligations around Australian agriculture biosecurity requirements when individuals and vehicles venture onto a property; individuals and equipment can act as vectors for many endemic and exotic biosecurity threats. Clothing, boots, tyre treads and equipment can become contaminated with disease agents or weed seeds; many insect pests are known to be found in the undercarriages of vehicles or within containers. Taskforce members expect that biosecurity considerations are upheld, relating to the relevant sites, in the movement of staff and contractors and their equipment. The Taskforce recommends Local Government alignment on these types of measures would be helpful in establishing biosecurity



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			requirements relating to, for example, the mandatory decontamination of equipment, washing down vehicles, including the use of dedicated clothing such as overalls and footwear. • VFF and Tasmanian Farmers jointly released a Farm Access Code of Conduct earlier this year, aimed at promoting respectful and sensible infrastructure development on agricultural land. Note that land access issues remain a central issue for many farmers and ag peak organisations (See Item 6). • Land access issues remain a central issue for many farmers and ag peak organisations. Every opportunity we have through the Taskforce, these issues are raised. • Taskforce members have kept an eye on the next iteration of AEMO ISP 2024. Integrated System Plan DRAFT – regarding route selection, and the incorporation of social licence issues in the Plan. • Importantly, Taskforce meetings provide a forum for members to showcase their activities, partnerships with the energy sector and businesses - and other opportunities from a jurisdictional perspective. This was like showcasing initiatives at this Roundtable. • Taskforce members have been kept updated on the Energy Charter Landholder Engagement Training and feedback.
			Tariff and pricing update, Dale Holliss:
			We identified that the two most important inputs to our various production functions are water from irrigation and energy (electricity) to pump it onto the crops. We have worked with Energy Queensland to get:
			Affordable (8c N & 8c R ceiling).



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			Optimised (Load control)Individualised (solar soaker)
			Overall, the collaboration has achieved considerable results for our irrigators and the Ag Energy Taskforce/ Energy Charter association has assisted that process.
			Discussion summary:
			 Ian, Dairy Australia queried if there is discussion at the Roundtable regarding reliability and security of energy supply for ag sector. Lisa, VFF noted Powercor (Victorian distribution network) is currently undertaking
			public consultation for its regulatory proposal to the AER.
			 Amy, Energy Charter confirmed every five years, Powercor and other networks prepare a fully costed business plan (referred to as regulatory proposals) for review and approval by the Australian Energy Regulator (AER). Reliability and resilience are key themes tested with communities through the 'reset' engagement process.
			 Chair noted reliability has often been part of Roundtable discussions as it relates to renewable energy development. She welcomed Roundtable members to submit future agenda items on this topic for further discussion.
4.	Showcase: Queensland	Jo Sheppard,	Refer to presentation.
	Farmers Federation and Powerlink Queensland	Queensland Farmers Federation (QFF)	Summary of key points:
	partnership		 Powerlink has entered a three-year partnership with QFF to fund a new role which will facilitate meaningful engagement, consultation, and education within the agriculture sector regarding Queensland's renewable energy transition. QFF and Powerlink identified the need to build capacity in agricultural sector to allow better flow of information and ideas between it and the energy industry.



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4.	Biogas Opportunities	Jarrod Irving, AGIG	 Education about the energy transition is vital – significant amounts of confusion and misinformation are present. Noted need to gain direct feedback from farmers to help shape energy policy and projects and to create a better interface between energy and agriculture in Queensland. Jo, QFF noted any organisations looking to understand more about the partnership are welcome to get in touch (ceo@qff.org.au) Chair, call to action for all jurisdictions to consider a collaborative approach based on the QFF/Powerlink Queensland partnership model. Refer to presentation. How much gas or energy is currently being produced through this process? Jemena's Malabar project is the only one currently producing biomethane in Australia, however, it is very common in the USA, Europe, UK, India and China. Are there any infrastructure upgrade requirements for having 100% biomethane in the network and/or disadvantages? No, it is a drop in fuel for natural gas and no changes to the pipelines, networks or appliances. Is the focus currently animal sources or are crop residues included? As a business we are working with all biogas producers from various sources across the ag sector, wastewater, landfill, and organics.



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			 Are you linked in with all the biogas projects that are going on around the country ? How do we leverage/ optimise? Working at AGIG we are familiar with those looking to connect into our networks and Bioenergy Australia is connected with many project developers. As the industry grows tracking of these projects will be done through organisations like Bioenergy Australia.
			 What point would you get involved in a biogas project? Dairy Australia and Australian Dairy Product Federation are partners with a number of other animal industry groups to identify the best bioenergy sites in Victoria and the en review the feasibility of the best site. The intent is then to provide these insights to a developer to implement. We like to be involved early and recommend talking to local gas network owners/operators as soon as possible. Pipeline operators are eager to support the development of biomethane projects.
			 Farmers are being asked to use less water and we understand there is high water requirement for hydrogen – how can this be managed? Hydrogen can be produced through electrolysis, requires varying volumes of water depending on the facility. However, advancements in water recycling and desalination technologies, has little impact on the end cost of hydrogen production, so as any project development the sustainability of water supply in particular needs to be accounted for and is as key part of certification schemes such as NSW Governments Greenpower Renewable Gas Guarantee of Origin.
			Can you explain the CO2 output from biomethane?



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			Biogas is produced through the anaerobic digestion of organic matter and consists mainly of methane and carbon dioxide. When the cleaned up biomethane is burned, it releases only the carbon dioxide that was absorbed from the air by organic matter, like plants with no additional carbon emissions to atmosphere.
5.	Energy Charter Landholder & Community Social Licence Initiatives update	Sabiene Heindl, CEO Energy Charter	 Landholder Engagement Training In partnership with Powerlink Queensland, the 3-day National Landholder Engagement Training was held from 27-29 February in Brisbane. It included 63 participants from Energy Charter Signatories: Powerlink Queensland, Transgrid, AusNet Services, CS Energy, Marinus Link, AEMO, JLL and Energy Estate, together with renewable developers. Based on the feedback from the previous training supported by AusNet Services in October 2023 and input from the Ag Energy Taskforce, the training agenda was designed to: Encourage participation from a broad range of energy professionals, including land agent contractors and renewable energy developers Highlight the critical importance of leadership and practical knowledge to manage increasing biosecurity risks Focus on practical learning opportunities over theoretical approaches Create ample opportunity for networking and the development of peer relationships Support learning on approaches to better manage psychosocial risks for landholders impacted by renewable energy development.
			Wimmera Southern Mallee Community Benefit Collaboration



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			 The Wimmera Southern Mallee Collaboration builds on a workshop hosted in Horsham in November 2023, where Wimmera Southern Mallee Development invited representatives from all renewable and transmission companies working in the region together. The 6-month collaboration will result in the development of a Collaboration Framework for energy businesses working in the Wimmera Southern Mallee. The Framework will provide the structure and foundational commitments needed to enable energy businesses to collaborate – and together, work with the Wimmera community – to ensure community benefits are delivered.
			Evaluating Transmission Undergrounding
			 The Evaluating Transmission Undergrounding initiative aims to improve the experience of impacted landholders and communities by collaborating with community representatives and stakeholders to: Validate community concerns, considerations and expectations for how the viability of underground compared to overhead transmission designs are evaluated by transmission businesses Co-develop a shared knowledge and evidence-base, including Better Practice approaches to assessing and evaluating social costs and mitigating impacts Identify and address public information and evidence gaps, sources of (dis)information and practice (in)consistencies. This includes considering the insights gathered through the NSW inquiries into the feasibility of undergrounding transmission infrastructure.



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			ACTION COMPLETE: Circulate the Select Committee Report via Wrap Up. See: Report No. 1 - Select Committee on the Feasibility of Undergrounding the Transmission Infrastructure for Renewable Energy Projects - Tabled 28 March 2024.pdf (nsw.gov.au)
6.	Showcasing new opportunities + partnerships	Open contributions	 Shape Your Energy Future Program, Rachelle Cooper Kulkarni: The Australian Rural Leadership Foundation is working with Rachelle Cooper Kulkarni, who is studying at the Centre for Alternative Technology, Wales, UK. Rachelle is completing a Masters of Science: Sustainability and Adaptation. Her dissertation title is: A just transition in Regional Queensland. Understanding the systemic challenges and opportunities in the Western Downs and South Burnett regions using Participatory Systems Mapping. Roundtable members are invited to the public forum on 19 April 2024, which marks the culmination of the Shape Your Energy Future program. Roundtable members can register here. Land Access Code, Lisa Gervasoni, VFF: Tasmanian Farmers and VFF have developed a Farm Access Code of Conduct, which is aimed at promoting respectful and sensible infrastructure development on agricultural land. Committed to collaborating with government and infrastructure developers to see the principles of the Code adopted better protect the rights of farmers and regional communities.



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			ACTION COMPLETE: Circulate the Farm Access Code of Conduct to Roundtable participants (completed in session)
			 Electricity and Energy Sector Plan, Janine Waller, Australian Dairy Products Federation: To support the Net Zero Plan, the Australian Government is developing an Electricity and Energy Sector Plan. The plan will set out a credible pathway to reach reduce emissions in Australia's electricity and energy sector, while ensuring reliable, secure and affordable energy supply. Janine, ADPF quired if submissions had been put forward by the ag sector. Members suggested NFF, QFF and Cotton Australia had made submissions, noting consultation closes on 12 April 2024.



	SES	SSION 2: STRATEGIC CO	DMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT WORKSHOP 3:00pm – 5:00pm
1.	Overview of the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner Community Engagement Review key recommendations + What's social licence?	Amy Abraham, Energy Charter (Facilitator)	 Refer to presentation. Community Engagement Review summary of key points: In July 2023, the Commonwealth Minister for Climate Change and Energy commissioned the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner (AEIC) to do an independent Community Engagement Review of renewable energy. The purpose of the Review was to advise on improving community engagement on renewable energy infrastructure developments and sought input from a range of stakeholders, including landholders and community members living close to renewable developments. The Review was released publicly in February 2024 and the Australian Government has accepted in principle all recommendations from the AEIC. Recommendation 1- That the Federal Minister initiate a process to appoint a suitably qualified and experienced independent body or person to design, develop, implement and operate a developer rating scheme. This recommendation focusses on a nationally managed scheme to provide transparent and periodic ratings of renewable energy developer engagement performance and capability. The developer ratings could then be used by States and Territories as part of the selection criteria for renewable energy projects within a region.
			 Summary of key points: The findings of the Review align with previous research conducted through the development of the Energy Charter <u>Better Practice Social Licence Guideline</u> collaboration, which concluded that landholders felt frustrated with the methods and quality of their engagement and want to be respected, meaningfully consulted and have access to reliable, transparent information on projects.



			 Social licence to operate is a concept that reflects community acceptance or approval around the operations of an organisation and its developments. Prioritising trust is essential, recognising that relationships matter and need to be actively considered across all stages of a project lifecycle and in all areas of planning and decision-making related to energy infrastructure projects. Engaging meaningfully with landholders and affected communities means putting the principles of procedural fairness and partnership into practice. The Energy Charter has published a separate Better Practice In Energy Charter Practice In Engagement Guideline to support Better Practice in this area. Ongoing monitoring, assessment and iteration of energy businesses' approach to building social licence should be a continuous endeavour. In practice this means adopting adaptive management approaches that adjust practices to ensure ongoing effectiveness. This continuous improvement approach can be supported by the Energy Charter's Accountability framework.
2.	Lessons from Coal Seam Gas in Queensland: what works and what doesn't?	Warwick Squire, CEO Gas Fields Commission, Queensland	 Refer to presentation. Warwick Squire, CEO Gas Fields Commission, key lessons: Queensland resource tenures were previously 'over the counter' No criteria were applied, meaning inefficient utilisation of resources, poor practices, land use conflict, non- compliance. Tendering processes were introduced to address this including applications now assessed against rating criteria. Community and social considerations were recently included in selection criteria for competitive tenders. The process has established minimum regulatory standard, however, it is noted that community expectations remain higher than these standards. The scheme provides an example of a framework that sets a regulatory baseline, however, community and societal expectations of behaviour and practice are higher in reality.



3.	Ideas for Queensland approach: leveraging the Energy Charter	Katie-Anne Mulder, CEO Queensland Renewable Energy Council (QREC) and Sabiene Heindl, CEO Energy Charter	 QREC is an industry body that represents solar, wind, pumped hydro, electricity transmission, battery storage and hydrogen proponents, operators and their suppliers. QREC's role is to be a leader in policy development and ensure best practices and successful coexistence with communities. QREC sees an option to address the concerns and issues raised in relation to renewable energy industry engagement performance and conduct is to work with potentially affected stakeholders in the community to develop a solution that focusses on culture and capability of organisations and the renewable energy industry more broadly. To address these challenges, QREC, in partnership with the Energy Charter, would lead a collaborative approach with community, local government, agriculture, conservation, environment, small business and First Nation representatives to co-design a fit-for-purpose accountability and transparency process, aligned to community expectations for renewable energy development in Queensland that leverages the Energy Charter Accountability Process. The intent of this collaborative approach is to improve community engagement practice and most importantly, outcomes for communities. It is important that the working group provides recommendations that provide a practical approach for the renewable energy industry in Queensland whilst also delivering better shared value outcomes for landholders and communities. The collaborative development of an accountability process in the context of the renewable energy industry in Queensland has the potential to lead the way for other States and Territories to follow suit. Energy Charter Accountability Model, summary of key points: Key elements of the Energy Charter Accountability Model are:
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			 Accountability – organisations report annually on how they are meeting their commitments, together with validated self-assessed maturity ratings. This is signed off by CEOs and Boards Transparency – CEOs meet with customer and community representatives to discuss what worked and what didn't – and most importantly, make future commitments. These discussions are reflected in public Feedback Reports and embed the culture change and capability build needed to deliver better customer and community outcomes. There is a unique opportunity to leverage the Energy Charter Accountability Model that was co-designed with customers and communities and has operated successfully to drive better customer and community outcomes over 5 years within the Queensland context.
4.	Plenary Discussion – How might we respond?	All	 Discussion summary: Sabiene, Energy Charter noted that the outcomes of the AEIC Review reinforce the importance of the renewables sector taking immediate action to address poor community engagement outcomes. Ian, Dairy Australia commented that effective and considered consultation with the farming communities with respect to regional energy infrastructure developments is essential. He added, many dairy farming communities have been impacted by poor consultation which has led to negative social outcomes. Guest noted her experience as a host landholder and transition to a role working for a (wind developer) in her community. Commented on the importance of ensuring easy access to information and face-to-face, in-community engagement. Guest reinforced that any rating scheme must be conscious of existing State and Federal regulation and compliance regimes, noting that the importance of not placing additional compliance burdens on renewable developers that don't genuinely yield outcomes.



- Bridget, Re-Alliance, noted the time required to develop rating schemes and that it is important to improve engagement outcomes now. Also noted the Capacity Investment Scheme (CIS) provides a national framework to encourage new investment in renewable capacity. Alignment to the scheme could be a consideration as it already includes merit criteria for, social licence, First Nations engagement, local community benefits, Australian supply chain benefits and commitments to high labour standards and workforce training.
- Connie, NSW Farmers, noted the importance of Community Benefit Schemes that deliver benefit to those most impacted and do not act to detract from compensation for losses taken by farmers hosting energy infrastructure. Also noted, that misinformation frequently circulates within communities experiencing renewable energy development, and that it can be difficult to know which sources to trust.
- Amy, Energy Charter confirmed that typical Community Benefit Schemes sit separately to host compensation, which is managed under State legislation for transmission. Noted that, inline with Connie's comments creating equity the fair distribution of benefit is the core intent, and challenge, of contemporary benefit sharing schemes.
- Lisa, VFF noted the progress made through the collaborative efforts of the Energy Charter to date and support to work with renewable energy developers in this way moving forward.
- Rosie, Energy Estate, acknowledged that the suggestion of a rating scheme initially raised
 questions within the developer community, including what community outcomes would
 be realised as a result of a compliance-based scheme? In considering the Energy Charter
 architecture and significant opportunities that a collaborative model offers, Energy Estate
 are now strong supporters of the proposed approach in Queensland and an advocate for
 greater collaboration in the sector.
- Chair, noted support for greater collaboration with the renewables industry, including via a co-design process with the Energy Charter.



Sabiene, Energy Charter shared that QREC and the Energy Charter would kick
collaboration in April. All welcome to participate and the co-design would be clea
guided by a Community Outcomes Group made up of presently:
 Queensland Farmers Federation (QFF)
o AgForce
 Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ)
 Queensland Conservation Foundation (QCF)
 First Nations Clean Energy Network
 Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS)
 Small business association (e.g. Business Chamber of Qld)
o Re-Alliance