

Stakeholder Advisory Council Minutes Tuesday 30 April 2024

Name	
Stakeholder Advisory Council members	
Tracey Stinson (proxy for Christiaan Zuur)	Clean Energy Council
Melissa Smyth	Queensland Government
Chris Hazzard	St Vincent's de Paul
Steve Bates	Callide Dawson Chamber of Commerce
Lance McManus (online)	TSBE
Wendy Miller (proxy for Ian Lowry)	Powerlink
Apologies	
Marion Callope	Acting Manager, Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships
Andrew Richards	EUAA
Ian Mackinnon	Centre for Clean Energy Technologies and Practices, QUT
Paul Hodgson	Centre for Hydrogen and Renewable Energy, CQUniversity Australia
Claire Mitchell	Queensland Government
Abhiney Arora	Queensland Manufacturing Institute
CS Energy	
Rebecca Kelly	Head of Corporate Affairs
Emma Roberts	EGM Customer and Growth
Darren Busine	CEO
Brett Clark	Head of Customer & Retail Growth
Darrin Crompton (online)	Retail Business Lead
Nev Hoehne	Indigenous Engagement Adviser
Andrew Broadbent	Business Planning Manager
Pauline Elliott	Head of Commercial Partnerships
Lynda Crawford	Manager Engagement and Employee Communication

Meeting summary

1. CEO update

The meeting began with an introduction from CEO Darren Busine and an overview of what his focus and vision is for CS Energy. Key points included:

- CS Energy's immediate priorities are to restore, improve and build.
- Callide C3 has returned to service and we are working on restoring Callide C4, which is nearly complete. This is our immediate focus.
- We have also been on a path of improvement, and maintaining our existing assets, while at the same time building a new portfolio for the future.
- Eventually clean energy hubs will replace our existing portfolio.
- We are very focused on people as we work through this. The key question is *how to create a future for people that work for us?* We have a mindset that we want to create opportunities for our people, which in turn creates opportunities for our communities.
- What we do locally is for global benefit, but if we don't also think about the local benefit and impact on communities we're not going to get the transition right – that is a message that came through at a recent Clean Energy Council event.
- There was agreement from Council members that different regions will have different needs in the renewable energy roll out. However, in all areas, we have to be clear about what the benefits are for the local community.

2. Vulnerable customers

Throughout the meeting we discussed the needs of vulnerable customers. Key points included:

- Vulnerable customers do not have as much opportunity to participate in the energy transformation as others. For example, they may be renting and therefore not have control over putting solar panels on their house, or making improvements to insulation, heating, cooling or changing appliances etc that makes their energy use more efficient.
- One path is education. Government funds \$720 a year for people struggling with electricity bills, but many people do not know about that. Retailers also offer concessions.
- This provides short term relief, but there is a need to educate and help them in the long term, while helping navigate the change 'shocks' that will be occurring over time.
- There is also the perspective that as the impacts of climate change continue to take effect we can see projections that in Queensland there is an emerging issue of heat and health.
- It was discussed that hot water systems provide a big opportunity to work in with the solar output pattern. A switch can be retrofitted to take advantage of using the system when the sun is shining.
- Energy will be required for cooling to maintain health and it's important that it is accessible and affordable.
- We discussed that CS Energy has an impact on customers, but we don't have a connection with residential customers except through a joint venture in SEQ. CS Energy suggested that someone from a retailer could attend our next session to give us their perspective.
- It was discussed that CS Energy could expand its definition of vulnerable customers.

3. Social impact of the transition

Following on from the discussion on education, the council talked about why the world is decarbonising and the social impact of the transition. Key points included:

- There was discussion around the accuracy of information in the community about wind farms and renewables. There is a perception these technologies will cost more and have just a big an impact on the environment as coal fired power. As people are struggling to make ends meet every week, they are scared about what renewable subsidies mean for them. The key is to get more education to grassroots level so people understand that people in charge of their energy for the future are trying to work for them. This may mean information nights etc.
- We can't afford to be left behind – there is a race for global capital.
- Everyone has the best of intentions to engage early with communities, but as contracts for assets and projects move through different hands this falls through the cracks. The only thing that remains constant is the land and the community. Frustrations can arise as the asset ownership changes.
- In addition, renewable energy projects are more of a funnel than a pipeline – which ends up with discussion with the community about multiple projects, some of which might not get up. There is anxiety and uncertainty that doesn't need to be there.
- There is a balance between price and achieving green targets, as well as needing to do this quickly.
- There is also concern about the length of time that it takes for these projects to get online and get commissioned.
- At the moment in Australia there is probably a five to seven incubation period from idea to commissioning (including going through environmental approval, the supply chain, transmission line connections etc).
- Queensland is on track to achieve our target for 2030. However, we need to start more projects now and be busier than we already are.
- There was discussion about housing pressure, particularly in Biloela. There is limited room for expansion in the town and there is not a lot of supply in the rental market.
- There was discussion about how groups like First Nations people could be investors in these projects – providing low interest loans for this to happen.
- How can the community own a part of these projects and use the profit to offset against their electricity bills? It is something to be explored.
- CS Energy is expanding our social investment programs. There is an opportunity to work with the council on how these programs are set up and what money is spent on.
- CS Energy could also articulate more in layman's terms why we are participating in the energy transformation.

4. Energy Charter disclosure

The council discussed which areas would be covered in this year's Energy Charter Disclosure Report. Key points included:

- Looking at engaging our customers more in the energy system
- Making sure customers are rewarded for a variety of energy sources – e.g. virtual power plants etc.
- Working with United Care to put in place a program for hardship customers.
- Working with our joint venture partner and looking at tariff structures and how we can manage them.
- Offer custom energy assets as much as possible.
- We are transforming our systems, but maintaining personalised customer service so that people can understand their bills, get changes made if things are wrong and talk to a real person.
- Customers are locking in contracts now while renewables are available as there is some worry about security and not being able to access renewable energy.
- CS Energy is focused on restoring Callide and we have plans to create an energy hub, like there is at Kogan Creek. The vision at Callide has been developed with employees and is about community. It is about ideas of what we could put on the site.
- It will include hydrogen, batteries on the site, but we have also been working with neighbours on a project with solar and batteries. The vision extends to the Central Queensland including the Lotus Creek Wind Farm and the Boulder Creek Wind Farm.
- CS Energy launched our first reflect RAP and we have now onboarded five indigenous businesses that can offer services to our power stations.
- It was noted the Clean Energy Council has released guidelines on First Nations best practice engagement that could be useful to CS Energy.
- It was agreed this year that CS Energy will circulate a draft report for feedback before it needs to be submitted on 30 September, and will once again hold a joint accountability forum with Powerlink and Energy Queensland.
- In that forum we could look at reporting how the three companies have worked collaboratively on the energy transformation. We may also invite Uniting or someone else to come in and speak about vulnerable customers.