

# Minutes

## Gippsland Renewable Energy Zone™ project

Community Advisory Group (GCAG)

### Meeting #1

**Date:** Thursday 24 November 2022

**Time:** 4:30pm – 7:30pm

**Location:** The Drawing Room, The Criterion Hotel, 90 Macalister Street Sale, VIC 3850

<b>Attendees:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mary Aldred</li> <li>• Kirra Bott</li> <li>• Marcus McKenzie</li> <li>• Hamilton Gerrand</li> <li>• Graeme Stuckey</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dianne Best</li> <li>• Lorraine Bull</li> <li>• Tony Cantwell</li> <li>• Ian Hill</li> <li>• Mathias Wood</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wendy Bezzina</li> <li>• Ian Bye</li> <li>• Ian Crooke</li> <li>• Peter Mooney</li> <li>• Colin Young</li> </ul>
<b>GREZ project team attendees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lily Habib</li> <li>• Kellie Nichols</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Renee Kurowski</li> <li>• Brett Millsom</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marisa Feher</li> <li>• Gary Stevens (secretariat)</li> </ul>
<b>Apologies:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Christine Shanahan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• John Petrakos</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nathan Misiurka</li> </ul>

No.	Time	Agenda item
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**1 4:40pm Welcome, Acknowledgement of Country and introductions**

Brett Millsom (BM) opened the meeting and acknowledged the Traditional Owners of the land on which the meeting was taking place and on which the Gippsland Renewable Energy Zone™ project (G-REZ™) is proposed, the Gunaikurnai people. He expressed that the GCAG was made up of a diverse group of individuals with valuable opinions and views that would be of benefit to the G-REZ team.

Members of the GCAG and G-REZ each introduced themselves and gave a brief explanation of their interest in the project as follows:

**Lorraine Bull (LB).** Past president and current treasurer of Latrobe Valley Sustainability Group, is associated with the Gippsland Climate Change Network, has been involved in campaigns on climate action and forward thinking to transition the region away from coal.

**Tony Cantwell (TC).** CEO of Committee for Gippsland, with a background in journalism and law, looking forward to G-REZ enabling developments in onshore and offshore wind to go ahead.

**Mary Aldred (MA).** Former CEO of Committee for Gippsland, is passionate about the region and wants to transition as a region with jobs and capability.

**Kirra Bott (KB).** Part of the community that's directly affected, wants to see G-REZ done to the community's benefit, would like the transmission infrastructure to go underground.

**Ian Crooke (IC).** Affected landholder on the north side of project, beef farmer, hopes the group can work together for the best result.

**Hamilton Gerrard** (HG). From Stradbroke, family farm is near the southern end of the project, is part of the GCAG to ensure it happens in the best possible way.

**Peter Mooney** (PM). Electrical Trades Union local organiser and president of the Gippsland Trades and Labor Council. Is involved in various community advisory groups and wants to make sure the local community is looked after.

**Mathias Wood** (MW). Works at AGL Loy Yang, has a maintenance and projects background. Wants to be ambassador for the Gippsland region's transition.

**Ian Hill** (IH). Has a beef farm in West Gippsland, previously worked in power engineering design and construction including underground and overhead power lines. Also is involved in Landcare and on community radio.

**Graeme Stuckey** (GS). Beef farmer from Flynn and a passionate community member.

**Wendy Bezzina** (WB). Grew up in Gippsland with a background working in health, was CEO of Latrobe Valley Enterprises and is a passionate member of the community who wants to see the best outcomes.

**Colin Young** (CY). A landowner in Gippsland for more than 40 years and was involved in the design, construction and management of Loy Yang A power station, now working with ICN maximising the match between local employment and projects.

**Ian Bye** (IB). Was born in Sale and is a retired accountant. Currently serving a second year as Mayor of Wellington Shire. As a Council representative, Cr Marcus McKenzie will attend GCAG meetings when Ian is not available.

**Dianne Best** (DB). Local landowner who is passionate about the area and will fight to get what the community needs and deserves.

**Lily Habib** (LH). G-REZ Project Director. Joined AusNet in February 2022, has worked around 20 years in energy, 13 years in renewable energy.

**Marisa Feher** (MF). G-REZ Environment and Land Manager. Has an environmental and engineering background working in infrastructure for 25 years.

**Renee Kurowski** (RK). G-REZ Stakeholder and Community Engagement Manager. Has worked in state government and came to AusNet from AGL Loy Yang. As a Gippslander with her family based in the region, wants what is best for the community.

**Kellie Nichols** (KN). G-REZ Land Engagement Lead. Came to AusNet from AGL because the G-REZ project could benefit the community, has an environmental and land management background.

**Brett Millsom** (BM). G-REZ Stakeholder and Communications Lead. Has a communications and engagement background, most recently with government.

**Gary Stevens** (GS). G-REZ Stakeholder Officer, GCAG secretariat. Has a journalism background and previous communications roles at AGL Loy Yang and Wellington Shire Council. Wants the transition to renewables to benefit the Gippsland community.

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## 2 5:03pm Nomination and selection of GCAG Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson

Members considered nominations received for the role of Chairperson to select a member by means of a majority vote in accordance with the group's *Terms of Reference*.

Prior to the meeting, the following nomination was received for the role of **Chairperson**:

- **Mary Aldred**

Mary spoke to her nomination. Mary currently holds a role as Chair of Gippsland Water's Customer Reference Group. She emphasised that in the GCAG Chairperson role she would ensure that all members felt free to contribute and that AusNet staff would also feel comfortable. She said the GCAG would be an opportunity for people to ask for more information, further clarification and detail about the G-REZ project. With members having diverse perspectives, she highlighted the importance of respect among the group.

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A show of hands vote was taken and with a majority vote, **Mary Aldred** was elected as Chairperson.

A Deputy Chairperson was also elected by means of a majority vote of GCAG members in accordance with the *Terms of Reference*.

BM called for nominations for the **Deputy Chairperson** and the following nomination was received:

- **Wendy Bezzina**

Wendy spoke to her nomination. She has been a member of several boards including Committee for Gippsland, Latrobe Valley Enterprises and Latrobe Valley Racing Club. She reiterated the importance of robust conversations where everyone is enabled to have a voice.

As no other nominations were received, a show of hands vote was taken and with a majority vote, **Wendy Bezzina** was elected as Deputy Chairperson.

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**3 5:11pm Committee administration**

**1 – GCAG Terms of Reference:**

Members endorsed the *GCAG Terms of Reference*.

**2 – GCAG Code of Conduct:**

Members endorsed the *GCAG Code of Conduct*

**3 – Meeting dates for 2023**

GCAG to meet on the second Thursday of every second month starting in February 2023. This would be split into afternoons and evening meetings and between central locations. The following meeting schedule is proposed, with venues TBA:

- **Thurs 9 February 2023** 1-3pm Sale
- **Thurs 27 April 2023** 4.30-6.30pm Traralgon
- **Thurs 8 June 2023** 1-3pm Traralgon
- **Thurs 10 August 2023** 4.30-6.30pm Sale
- **Thurs 12 October 2023** 1-3pm Sale
- **Thurs 14 December 2023** 4.30-6.30pm Traralgon

**4 – Members' bios on website**

Members agreed to a short bio of each of them being published on the G-REZ project website.

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**4 6:12pm Presentation by members of the G-REZ project team giving an overview of the project with questions by GCAG members throughout the presentation**

The presentation was made as follows:

'What is a renewable energy zone?'

An introduction was provided into the concept of a Renewable energy Zone (REZ) as a coordinated approach to deliver renewable energy from multiple large-scale generators to the grid. Members discussed whether Star of the South or Basslink could open up their transmission lines to accept other renewable developments.

'With and without a REZ'

The difference was shown between a coordinated approach and one in which all developers build their own transmission to the grid.

'Original proposal'

The original proposal was presented to members, and it was acknowledged that some elements had changed following feedback from stakeholders and landowners. The project is in its early stages and multiple design options are being considered, including monopoles, lattice towers and underground.

'Infrastructure – overhead vs underground'

A video presentation outlined some of the differences between overhead and underground transmission infrastructure. Members asked for more information about the underground option to be presented at the next meeting, including the depth of cables, permitted land use within the easement and the timeline for the repair of faults.

'Landowner sentiment'

AusNet has spoken with all landowners along the preferred route, with a desire from some to have infrastructure underground, concerns raised over visual amenity if developed overhead, questions about biosecurity and compensation frameworks, and concerns over potential mental health impacts. GCAG members raised concerns about fire mitigation around overhead transmission lines.

'Community pop-ups'

A series of pop-ups have been held in the community, with people expressing mixed views about the project. There are concerns from the community about overhead infrastructure with a preference for underground, and questions about why the Basslink/Star of the South alignment is not being considered. There is recognition that the project is needed to support the transition to renewable energy, as well the creation of jobs in the region.

'Environmental assessments' and 'approvals timeline'

AusNet outlined the environmental assessments needed for the project to proceed and reported that the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC)* referral is now online and is open for comment for 10 business days.

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**5 7.09pm Agenda items for 2023**

Each member nominated topics about the G-REZ project they would like to explore in further detail at a future meeting. A general summary of topics is below:

- More details on underground vs overhead – costs, permitted land use, easements, technical details, health impacts
- Transition station land usage
- More detail on tower types including monopoles vs lattice towers
- Employment opportunities, training requirements and supply chain, as well as flow-on to housing, education and health services needs
- Environmental values and sites, as well as cultural heritage and engagement with Traditional Owners
- Fire risk
- Dealing with disputes over payment amounts, route, etc.
- Could the project go through more Crown land?
- Impacts on agricultural businesses during construction
- Tourism impacts
- Potential future transmission infrastructure needs beyond a 3-4GW project, including VicGrid's role

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**6 7:29pm Meeting was declared closed**

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