

Meeting Minutes

Meeting name	Borumba Pumped Hydro Project - Stakeholder Reference Group regular meeting
Location	Kandanga Bowls Club
Date and time	Tuesday 28 November 2023, 9:00am – 12:00pm
Attendees	<p>Facilitator: Leisa Prowse</p> <p>Environment group members: David Arthur (Wide Bay-Burnett Environment Council), Nigel Parratt (proxy for Dave Copeman, Queensland Conservation Council), Steve Burgess (Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee) Ian Mackay (Conondale Range Conservation Association), Glenda Pickersgill (Save the Mary River Coordinating Group)</p> <p>Business representative members: Janelle Parker (Mary Valley Chamber of Commerce), Petra Van Beek (Gympie Chamber of Commerce), Graeme Elphinstone (Gympie District Beef Liaison Group), Sotera Trevaskis (Wide Bay-Burnett Regional Development Australia)</p> <p>Community members: Carolyn Harris (adjoining landholder), Don MacAulay (Mary Valley Fishing Club), Ian Stehbens (local community member)</p> <p>Business representative members: Dan O'Regan (HQPlantations Pty Ltd)</p> <p>Queensland Hydro representatives: Natasha Patterson, Julie Spencer, Cindy Thomas, Michael Price, Nirvana Searle, Travis Graham, Bek Grady, Georgia Southern, Lynda Williams</p>
Apologies	<p>Environment group members: Dave Copeman (Queensland Conservation Council), Narelle McCarthy (Sunshine Coast Environmental Council)</p> <p>Business representative members: Luke Barden (Plumbing and Pipe Trades Employees Union)</p> <p>Community members: Bruce Horsfall (Lake Borumba Fish Stocking Association), Senior Constable Bill Greer (Imbil Rural Watch), Gary Rozynski (local irrigator),</p> <p>Queensland Hydro representatives: Leah McKenzie</p>

Minutes

Agenda item	Minutes and Actions
Welcome and introductions	<p>JS opened with introductions, Acknowledgement of Country, and provided of the agenda overview.</p> <p>NP and CT introduced themselves to the SRG members.</p> <p>LP spoke to terms of reference for SRG meetings.</p>
Environment and approvals	<p><i>NS spoke to environmental approvals slide 6 and 7.</i></p> <p>Question from SRG: How does the bilateral agreement between the State and Commonwealth governments affect the EPBC referral?</p> <p>NS advised that the bilateral agreement does not affect the EPBC Act referral. However, there are potential effects to the main works. This will be addressed on a future slide.</p>

Question from SRG: Are all the submitted EPBC referral documents on the website?

NS advised the documents are still under assessment by the Commonwealth are not currently publicly available. The documents will be published on the QH website when the Commonwealth are satisfied they have all the documentation they require.

Question from SRG: Will there be a Terms of Reference (ToR) available for community comment for the exploratory works.

NS advised there is no ToR for the exploratory works. The exploratory works will be assessed through the standard state approvals processes.

Question from SRG: When will the ToR for main works be released for public comment?

NS advised that Queensland Hydro anticipates that this would occur in early 2024.

Question from SRG: What will the community be commenting on for the exploratory works in the Commonwealth approvals?

NS advised the community will be commenting on the preliminary documentation for the EPBC Act referral.

Question from SRG: What occurs as a result of public comments to the Commonwealth?

NS advised the comments are compiled and reviewed by the Commonwealth. The Project then addresses the comments as appropriate. The preliminary documentation either gets updated or the comments get addressed separately.

Question from SRG: How will the public know their comments have been considered or incorporated into the preliminary documentation?

NS advised the Commonwealth will decide what information is released to the public.

Question from SRG: Can you take on notice how the Commonwealth take these comments into consideration?

NP noted that in Queensland Hydro's documentation, we will record the input and comments we have received (outside of the formal public comment process and how we have addressed such input and comments.

MP added that the Commonwealth will only provide comments back that relate to matters of national environmental significance.

Question from SRG: Will there be opportunities for public comment on the state development applications?

NS advised this is dependent on which state process is being undertaken and if public comment is part of the usual process.

Question from SRG: The public comment referred to on the EPBC approvals slide 6, what does that relate to?

NS advised the 'public comment' on slide 6 relates to the Commonwealth and is via the Commonwealth agency.

Question from SRG: When can we make comment directly to the State?

NS advised this will be available through the standard development application processes when they arise.

NP advised the bilateral agreement does not apply for the exploratory works, which is being assessed through the Preliminary Documentation process. If the Commonwealth decides the main works is a controlled action, it will also need to decide whether the assessment will occur under the bilateral agreement.

Question from SRG: Does the Commonwealth still have the final decision?

NP advised the Commonwealth always has the final decision for EPBC Act matters. If the bilateral agreement applies, the State undertakes its assessment, which is provided to the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth then makes its decision pursuant to the EPBC Act.

Question from SRG: If the EPBC Act is amended by parliament, will the project be assessed under the old act or the new act?

NS advised the Commonwealth will decide which version of the Act the preliminary documentation will be assessed under.

NP noted that when legislation is amended, the usual practice is for the amending legislation to contain transitional provisions.

NS spoke to approvals timing diagram slide 8.

SB provided input that the new Mary Basin Water Plan is anticipated to be released in February 2024.

Question from SRG: Will the exploratory works, once underway, uncover information that might affect the main works documentation that will be assessed under the EIS?

NS advised that the Project team is making some assumptions on what the project footprint will look like, which will be assessed in the EIS. There may be geological findings during the exploratory works which will influence a change in the project footprint and impact assessment considerations. To try and address this, the project area being assessed is larger than the proposed project footprint. This allows the Project team to carry out assessments of the ecology and other environmental factors on a broader scale so that there is an understanding of areas where project elements may need to be moved to.

NS spoke to the bilateral agreement slide 9.

Question from SRG: What happens if a bilateral process is not agreed on?

NS advised this would result in two EIS processes being undertaken by the Project.

SRG members discussed the approvals process for the Traveston Dam Project.

Question from SRG: Was there an additional process on 15 November 2023?

NS advised that 15 November 2023 was the date which public comment closed on the Main Works EPBC referral.

Comment from SRG: It is worth noting that the Coordinator General's report in support of the EIS contains recommended conditions which pertain to state and federal legislation.

NS advised that the Commonwealth could accept or decline those recommendations.

MP advised the Commonwealth can insert their own conditions.

Question from SRG: What is the difference between state conditions, stated conditions and modelled conditions?

MP advised that modelled conditions relate to the environmental authorities for the DA, for example, batch plants. Stated conditions (previously imposed) which apply to anyone undertaking the construction or operation of the action. Recommended conditions are provided to guide other agencies in imposing conditions on other approvals, but does not limit the agencies in imposing their own conditions or seeking additional advice (e.g. the evaluation report will likely have recommended conditions to DCCEEW).

Question from SRG: Is there a risk that the initial conditions placed can change?

MP confirmed the conditions can change. The initial advice statement outlines some conditions Queensland Hydro are seeking approval on.

NS spoke to prescribed project slide 10.

Question from SRG: Is the works regulation related to Powerlink?

NS advised this is separate to the work Powerlink is looking at undertaking.

Question from SRG: What is the works regulation requesting?

NS advised the Project is asking that the applications that would usually go to local government for assessment under the planning schemes go through the Office of the Coordinator General instead.

Question from SRG: Does fast tracking through the processes mean that the usual public comment processes are removed?

NS advised critical infrastructure and prescribed projects don't have public comment periods, but they provide capacity for the Coordinator-General to speak to the assessing agency and ask that the processes occur faster. If the works regulation is not being assessed through the planning scheme, public comment would not be available. DAs will still be submitted under the Planning Act through the state assessment referring agency. The Project team will confirm which agencies provide opportunity for public comment on DAs.

Question from SRG: On the slide, when talking about prescribed project, it says 'Minister may consider'. Is that at the Minister's discretion or is it a must?

NS initially took the question taken on notice. NP advised that we would look at the provision immediately and clarify in the meeting.

NS clarified later in the meeting that the legislation provides the minister "may" consider, and is not required to consider the matter as per the slide.

Project update

TG spoke to current works on slide 12 and 13.

Question from SRG: Is the bore hole photo from near the dam wall?

TG advised that the photo is taken from where the proposed new dam wall would go if the main works are approved.

Question from SRG: Didn't you find granite at the bore holes at 15 metres?

TG advised that this photo may be from a different bore location.

Question from SRG: What sort of spacing is there between the bore holes?

TG advised the borehole locations don't follow a specific spacing pattern. However, at the lower dam site, they are roughly 50 metres apart. If there is something concerning discovered at a bore location, drilling locations may be closer together.

Question from SRG: Has there been any blasting as part of the initial geotechnical drilling?

TG advised that no blasting has occurred to date.

Question from SRG: Will there be seismic blasting?

TG advised that there will be controlled drilling and blasting as part of the exploratory tunnelling work.

Question from SRG: Is the initial geotechnical drilling you are talking about part of the exploratory drilling?

TG advised there are a small number of geotechnical bore holes that are not subject to approvals, and that these are what are termed 'initial geotechnical drilling', which is currently being undertaken. The bulk of the geotechnical drilling does require approvals and will commence next year if exploratory works approvals are obtained.

TG spoke to the temporary workers accommodation camps (TWAC) slide 15.

Question from SRG: Is any of the workers camp site on flood plains?

TG advised that they are not located in areas that flood.

Question from SRG: Are any of the camps subject to EPBC Act approvals?

NS advised that the camps are not subject to EPBC Act approvals.

Question from SRG: Is approval required for the exploratory works, to commence construction of the TWACs?

TG advised that site mobilisation to construct the TWACs will not start until the relevant approvals are obtained. Queensland Hydro intend awarding a contract for the TWACs soon to ensure the supplier has adequate time to

fabricate the modules in their offsite factory in advance of work at site occurring if the exploratory works are approved.

TG spoke to the temporary bridges slide 16.

Question from SRG: Are there to be temporary bridges over Yabba Creek?
TG advised that there will be one over Yabba Creek and three over Sandy Creek.

TG spoke to the temporary water infrastructure and survey control slide 19.

Question from SRG: Do you have an elevation level for the water infrastructure?

NS advised that the water pump will be located close to full supply level.

Question from SRG: Is it a diesel pump?

TG advised that it will be an electric submersible pump.

Question from SRG: Do you require a licence for water allocation under the Water Plan?

NS advised that Queensland Hydro are speaking with Seqwater to purchase a medium priority allocation under the standard process.

Question from SRG: Is there sufficient medium water priority in Lake Borumba?

NS advised there is sufficient medium water priority.

Question from SRG: Where is the water coming from for the track upgrades?

TG advised the water is currently being drawn from the lake. The temporary water infrastructure will service the exploratory works. Other solutions will be established for the main works.

Question from SRG: Where is the water coming from to supply the camps?

TG advised the camp contractors will be supplying this. Gympie has class A recycled water facility. Imbil does not. Queensland Hydro are in conversations about required improvements to the Imbil water treatment plant to produce class A recycled water.

TG spoke to traffic slide 21.

Question from SRG: Are there any diagrams of traffic upgrade locations?

TG advised technical designs were provided to Gympie Regional Council (GRC). Public release of plans/designs have been taken on notice.

Question from SRG: What about the roads before Bella Creek Road? Yabba Creek Road can be narrow in places and has old bridges, is there any work being done there?

TG advised contractors are aware of load limits on bridges. Queensland Hydro are in discussions with TMR about opportunities to improve or replace those bridges. Deliveries will be scheduled outside morning and afternoon peak. Workforce will be bused to site throughout the day. Longer term, Queensland Hydro is investigating a new route with the goal to remove heavy vehicles from the suburban access route through the Imbil township. Sealing and maintenance works will be undertaken to some sections of Bella Creek Road.

Feedback from SRG: there should be signs put up to alert people to the hazards of increased heavy vehicles on the local roads.

TG took feedback on board and advised In Vehicle Monitoring Systems (IVMS) will monitor all QH and contractor vehicles.

JS spoke to notifying the community slide 22.

Question from SRG: Concerns were raised regarding the misinformation being spread by members of the community regarding the occupation of the medical centre.

JS thanked the SRG for the feedback and advised Queensland Hydro is aware of this commentary and will provide information to the community to address these questions.

Question from SRG: Where is the concreting and rock crushing plant?

TG advised that these sites are not confirmed for the main works. Further geotechnical testing will confirm the site locations.

MP advised the IAS and EPBC Act referral has proposed locations on the batching plants.

JS advised that the feedback has been taken on board to present this information to the community.

Feedback from SRG: Queensland Hydro should be managing stakeholder questions and assumptions via online community pages. It was suggested Queensland Hydro should respond to these comments.

JS advised social media comments are monitored. However, the difficulties in having productive conversations via online forums were recognised. JS noted feedback regarding the difficulty of community accessing information on the Queensland Hydro website.

TG spoke to exploratory works slide 23.

Question from SRG: Will the technical services and management contractor be SMEC?

TG advised that it cannot be SMEC as they are the owner's engineer. The technical services and management contractor must be an independent consultant.

Question from SRG: Is the exploratory tunnelling contractor going to be using tunnel boring or drill and blast?

TG advised that the contractor would use drill and blast. A tunnel boring machine is not suitable given the space parameters and angles of the proposed tunnel.

MP spoke to the environmental monitoring slide 24.

Question from SRG: Are there any environmental monitoring devices downstream?

MP advised there are two locations downstream. However, they are monitored by government departments and SEQ water.

Feedback from SRG: There should be more monitoring locations.

MP advised Queensland Hydro will be identifying more locations for possible future monitoring.

Feedback from SRG: This monitoring should have been put in earlier to establish baseline data.

MP agreed. This learning is helping inform the Pioneer-Burdekin Project.

Feedback from SRG: Baseline data is very important. It will affect the local wildlife. Noise travels so it needs to be monitored for residents.

MP advised that Queensland Hydro will use the lessons identified from exploratory works to apply to the main works.

JS agreed an additional point will be added to the slide to address noise impacts.

Question from SRG: What number of environmental offsets are required and where will the offsets be sourced from?

MP advised for exploratory works Queensland Hydro are focussing on matters such as threatened ecological communities, koalas, two species of glider, long-nose potoroo, spotted tail quoll and thesium austral.

Offsets vary based on the species and the number is yet to be confirmed. The location will be focussed to Queensland Hydro and surrounding state land. Queensland Hydro will be looking at a holistic approach with a combination of land-based and other offsets. Queensland Hydro are looking at the bigger picture; offsets, catchment health and where the best solutions are. A procurement process is currently underway to engage consultants to assist with the offsets package.

NP recognised the Project is in an area of high ecological significance, as such Queensland Hydro is aiming to ensure that environmental offsets deliver net biodiversity benefits, over and above the climate benefits and wants to involve environmental groups, community groups, Kabi Kabi, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and other relevant stakeholders to co-design the offset solution.

MP added that consultants do not have the local knowledge like the community groups and stakeholder do, so Queensland Hydro's aim is to involve these groups and stakeholders to assist with identifying the best way to deliver offsets.

Feedback from SRG: We want the offsets process to be front of mind rather than an afterthought.

MP advised that Queensland Hydro leaders are driving this discussion now and it is a key part of our planning.

NP committed that Queensland Hydro will not push offsets to the back of the Project planning. Queensland Hydro needs to identify an offset solution for the exploratory works, but wants to co-design the offset solution for the whole of the project. Queensland Hydro wants to start that as soon as possible, and we can roll the exploratory works solution into the whole of project offset solution.

Question from SRG: How will the Project deliver on the Minister's commitment to deliver additional environmental, social, and economic benefits?

MP took the question on notice to confirm the Minister's commitments.

JS advised Queensland Hydro will undertake special interest meetings to further discuss offsets.

Question from SRG: The environmental and sediment monitoring are showing high levels of metals. Can you brief us?

MP took the question on notice to discuss at a special interest meeting.

Feedback from SRG: The current and future risks if the Project proceeds is key for community.

Regional update

JS spoke to the regional update slide 27.

Comment from SRG: Regarding the housing strategy and considering the impacts of drought, an opportunity exists for producers to capitalised on the accommodation strategy for a dual income.

Comment from SRG: The SRG recognised the difficulty for building accommodation on properties due to council regulation and planning instruments.

NP advised that Queensland Hydro's intent is to work with the community on the accommodation strategy. The EIS will speak to housing and the potential project impacts. The accommodation strategy will not only include housing project workers, but also housing issues such as housing affordability more broadly. Queensland Hydro will collect early information to inform a longer-term accommodation strategy. The Project will work closely with council and stakeholders on this process.

Question from SRG: Where do the housing impacts sit in the social impact statement process?

NP advised it is within the EIS process. The terms of reference will include environmental impacts and social impacts, including housing.

Comment from SRG: The dam break risk assessment is complicated. The location of new housing development needs to be considered before building.

JS spoke to the stakeholder update slide 28.

Questions

LP opened the floor to final comments and questions from the SRG.

Comment from SRG: Request for jobs, skills, and employment for a special interest meeting.

Comment from SRG: Request for the:

- SRG site visit to be scheduled
- design principles document to be released to community
- two extraordinary meeting minutes to be uploaded to the website.

GS advised the minutes from the October 2023 extraordinary meeting are on the Queensland Hydro website. The November 2023 extraordinary meeting minutes are being finalised and will be uploaded soon.

JS advised the design principles are a government document and fall under the Department's jurisdiction for public release.

JS advised once the track safety upgrades are completed, a site visit will be organised.

Question from SRG: There was initial modelling done to show if there is adequate water in Yabba Creek. Has this been completed and when will it be published?

BG advised this forms part of the new Mary Basin Water Plan.

JS advised the SRG will be briefed on this topic in 2024.

Suggestion from SRG: When the new water plan is completed, the SRG should be briefed on how the plan fits with project planning.

Feedback from SRG: Transmission line alignments have been outsourced to Powerlink but it is in the vicinity of the Project therefore, the two projects will be associated in community minds.

Question from SRG: If there is going to be additional private accommodation, who is going to monitor land clearing and proximity to the waterways.

JS advised this will be confirmed in the accommodation strategy.

Question from SRG: SEQ water owns/operates the lake currently. Who will own/operate the lake after the project is completed?

TG advised that this has not been confirmed.

Question from SRG: Who is responsible for environmental flows?

TG advised this would form part of the agreement for ownership/operation of the system.

Comment from SRG: The Project is using the 2006 Mary Basin Water Plan rather than the new one.

NS advised that the Project is limited at this time to the 2006 plan as it is what is currently legislated.

Comment from SRG: It is positive that the new plan will be used once it's legislated.

Question from SRG: Is baseline biological monitoring being undertaken in terms of microbes, bugs, larger animals?

MP advised Queensland Hydro are currently capturing this data.

Meeting closed at 12:13pm.