

Ag Energy Taskforce Record of Meeting Developer Rating Scheme

28 April 2026

1.00 pm – 2.00 pm (EST, virtual meeting)

Item	Topic
Item 1	<p>Present: Steven Ford (Pioneer Valley Water, Mackay), Chris Gillitt (Canegrowers), Karin Stark (Farm Renewables Consulting), Stephanie McKechnie (QFF), Chris Sounness (Wimmera Southern Mallee Development), Toby Campbell (Victorian Farmers’ Federation), Dr Simon Maddocks (Chair, Primary Producers SA), Caleb Connor (Farmers for Climate Action), Alex Shaw (DCCEEW), Paul Nissen (Equifax), Sabiene Heindl (The Energy Charter), Joy Thomas (Chair, Ag Energy Taskforce)</p>
Item 2	<p>Developer Rating Scheme Overview Alex Shaw (DCCEEW) and Paul Nissen (Equifax) provided an overview of the Developer Rating (DRS), including its purpose, methodology and implementation timeline. The DRS has been co-designed following extensive stakeholder consultation, including input from landholders via the Landholder Lived Experience Panel convened by The Energy Charter.</p> <p><i>(The Developer Rating Scheme emerged as a recommendation from the Australian Community Engagement Review, conducted by the former Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner, Andrew Dyer in 2023–2024. The objective of the review was to improve community engagement and trust regarding renewable energy infrastructure developments)</i></p> <p>The DRS is a voluntary, evidence-based, annual rating system assessing renewable energy developers across seven criteria, with a public-facing star rating (1–5) focused on community engagement.</p> <p>The DRS aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build trust and confidence in renewable energy developers • Provide transparency for landholders and communities • Support improved industry capability and behaviour <p>Refer to attached slide packs for additional information.</p>
Item 3	<p>Key Discussion Themes</p> <p>1. Importance of Communications and Awareness A central theme of the discussion was that the success of the DRS is fundamentally dependent on awareness and uptake. Participants strongly emphasised that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “People don’t know what they don’t know” – awareness across regional communities is critical • The DRS will only be effective if landholders, councils and communities actively use it to inform how they may, or may not, engage with developers • A coordinated communications strategy is required, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Commonwealth-led communications at launch ○ Industry association amplification ○ Trusted local intermediaries (e.g. farmer groups, regional organisations) <p>It was noted that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The public register launch should be a key trigger for broader communications rollout • A “bottom-up and top-down” approach is being pursued:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bottom-up: communities encouraged to ask developers to obtain a rating through the DRS ○ Top-down: governments exploring use of DRS in eligibility and policy settings such as the CIS and incoming DRS <p>Participants highlighted the need for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Resourcing local communities and regional organisations to communicate and socialise the DRS ● Addressing mis-and dis-information in regional communities through broader communications for the context regarding the DRS ● Leveraging existing forums (e.g. Ag Energy Taskforce, ag conferences, Taskforce networks, Regional Energy Accord processes through The Energy Charter etc)
Item 4	<p>2. Resourcing and Delivery Challenge</p> <p>A consistent concern was the lack of resourcing for community-level engagement. Participants noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Regional organisations are member-funded and capacity constrained ● Effective awareness-building will require: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Funding ○ Local facilitation ○ Practical engagement support <p>One participant emphasised that:</p> <p>“It’s going to take an effort... if local communities are resourced and understand the DRS, they will be the biggest advocates.”</p> <p>There was a strong call for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Clarity on who funds and delivers on-the-ground awareness ● Consideration of who should contribute to resourcing whether: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Equifax (as delivery partner) ○ Commonwealth and State Governments ○ Industry
Item 5	<p>3. Driving Uptake and Accountability</p> <p>Discussion focused on how to ensure meaningful industry participation in a voluntary DRS.</p> <p>Key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The DRS will only deliver value if developers participate and publish ratings ● Lack of participation or visibility may be interpreted negatively: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “If you’re not on the register... that’s problematic” <p>Participants explored mechanisms to strengthen uptake:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Potential for government policy levers (e.g. procurement, underwriting, approvals) ● Role of communities in setting expectations e.g. “No rating, no go” as a potential community-driven standard <p>There was discussion on whether governments would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Back regional communities who require a rating before engagement ● Align future programs with DRS participation
Item 6	<p>4. Transparency and Continuous Improvement</p> <p>The DRS was recognised as a significant step toward transparency, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Public register of participating developers ● Visibility of community engagement performance ● Annual reassessment to ensure currency <p>It was also noted that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ratings may be withdrawn or lapse, providing signals to the market

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The DRS is designed as a continuous improvement mechanism, with future criteria (e.g. decommissioning) under consideration.
Item 7	<p>Closing Reflections</p> <p>Participants reinforced that the success of the DRS depends on practical implementation at the community level, not just design. Key reflections included:</p> <p>“It’s great words... but we need to close the loop.”</p> <p>“If communities understand it, they will be the biggest advocates.”</p> <p>“That’s going to take time and money from these groups.”</p> <p>They highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The opportunity to leverage existing structures, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ag Energy Taskforce Regional Energy Accord The need for resourced, place-based engagement and an alignment between community expectations and government action The importance of moving beyond concept to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practical uptake Clear incentives and consequences for those that don’t sign up.
Item 8	<p>Summary</p> <p>The Ag Energy Taskforce welcomed the DRS as a critical mechanism to improve trust, transparency and accountability in the energy transition. However, members emphasised that its success will depend on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong, coordinated communications and awareness campaigns implemented through trusted regional voices Adequate resourcing for regional and community-level engagement Clear signals from governments to reinforce uptake Active use by communities to hold developers to account
Item 9	<p>Next Steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Energy Charter to provide summary notes to Ag Energy Taskforce members Ongoing engagement with Commonwealth and Equifax on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications strategy Opportunities for Taskforce and regional networks to support awareness Further briefing to Taskforce as DRS progresses and public register goes live.
	Meeting closed at 2.01 pm