

Ag Energy Taskforce Record of Meeting

30 July 2026: 10 am – 12.10 pm
(*Eastern Time, virtual meeting*)

Item	Topic
Item 1	Chair welcome: Joy Thomas Present: Greg McCarron (Central Irrigation Trust, SA), Toby Campbell & Indrani Persaud (Victorian Farmers' Federation), Chris Gillitt (Canegrowers), Warwick Ragg (National Farmers' Federation) Karin Stark (Farm Renewables Consulting), Chris Sounness (Wimmera Southern Mallee Development), Jennifer Brown (Cotton Australia), Anna Fiskbek (AgForce Queensland), Tracy Lefroy (Grain Industry Association of WA), Kristin Favaloro (Australian Dairy Products Federation), Sabiene Heindl & Roger Marshall (The Energy Charter), Joy Thomas (Ag Energy Taskforce). Welcome to the following new members of the Taskforce: • Tracy Lefroy, Grain Industry Association of WA • Kristin Favaloro, Australian Dairy Products Federation A special welcome was extended to Roger Marshall, soon to join The Energy Charter. Apologies: • Stephanie McKechnie – Queensland Farmers' Federation (unable to attend due to illness) • Dale Holliss – Bundaberg Regional Irrigators' Group • Tanya Howard – Bundaberg Regional Irrigators' Group
Item 2	Joy Thomas: Recap since March 2026 Taskforce meeting Overview of key developments since the March Taskforce meeting, noting the reduction in wholesale electricity prices recently reported, though not translating into a reduction in retail prices <u>National energy policy:</u> Gas policy: Federal Govt's East Coast Gas Reservation Scheme, initially intended for the east coast – now announced as a <i>Domestic Gas Reservation Scheme</i>, designed to operate on a national basis and set to commence on 1 July 2027. • Recent Labor national conference, an expected debate over a proposed 25% gas export tax – proposed motion did not proceed; instead, a compromise reached and broad wording agreed which supported “fairer return” from natural resources, including through taxation arrangements; (<i>speculation on how the Govt might deal with the issue of export commodities in the future, including expanding the Petroleum Resource Rent Tax or implementing a gas export tax</i>). WA Urea plant: \$4.2 billion urea manufacturing facility near Karratha, under construction by Perdaman, to be supported by Perdaman's 30 megawatt solar installation to supply clean power to the project. Project Ceres expected to reach full production by June 2027. WA Fuel refinery: WA State and Fed Govts recently announced \$4m for pre-feasibility study for a large-scale fuel refinery facility at Karratha; Perdaman to build facility (adding to existing facilities in Brisbane and Geelong). Reports to note: CSIRO GenCost report and AEMO's Integrated System Plan 2026 released June 2026. Diesel fuel rebate: Recent Labor national conference motion to remove the diesel fuel rebate did not proceed in original format, though amended to the extent that it could provide a future mechanism to curtail the tax concession as a de-carbonisation measure.

	Data centres: focus on energy and water use; the Prime Minister's recent statement recognising the physical footprint / social licence needed and the economic, legal and social licence issues involved. Joy noted that social licence issues around data centres should help decision makers to understand the lessons from the renewable energy transition and related social licence issues. • Fed Govt commitment to develop a set of Australian standards for AI data centres under one regulatory framework; intention to go to national cabinet and aim to bring legislation into Parliament early 2027; and commitment to consult with industry, trading partners, communities. • A requirement that data centres will minimise their water use, maximise their energy efficiency and pay for any additional water infrastructure required. The location, the energy and the water obligations take in every level of government and their overlapping powers, hence the need for national standards. <i>(discussion re securing states/territories sign off on national standards)</i> Power Stations closures: • Origin Energy Limited (Origin) has advised the Australian Energy Market Operator that it will extend the operation of all four units of the Eraring Power Station from 19 August 2027 to 30 April 2029 to support NSW through the energy transition. • Torrens Island B Power Station (SA): AGL Energy expected closure date for three of its gas-fired units (units 2, 3, and 4) from 30 June 2026, to 30 June 2028, to assist with grid stability. • Vales Point Power Station (NSW): Delta Electricity has updated its technical life assessment with AEMO, extending the anticipated operational window by four years from 2029 out to 2033 • Gladstone Power Station (Qld): dates moved forward notifying an earlier expected retirement from 2035 to 31 March 2029. • Yallourn Power Station (Vic): earlier speculation there might be an extension of operation past its 2028 retirement target, but Vic Govt and Energy Australia have confirmed no such extension has been requested or planned. Decommissioning of renewable infrastructure: currently there is no formal regulatory framework for decommissioning of renewable projects, nor the remediation of land following decommissioning; the absence of any terms in this respect, act as a significant barrier to landowner trust and with no financial security underpinning those obligations, landowners and developers are left to negotiate these matters alone with uncertainty around end-of-life risk, restoration standards etc. A Bill has been introduced into the NSW Legislative Assembly proposing amendments to several pieces of legislation, intended to impose significant new obligations for certain solar and wind projects. The Clean Energy Council and Queensland Renewable Energy Council have developed a Decommissioning Security Framework for Renewable Energy Projects (Oct 2025) And to note the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner's statement on decommissioning (Oct '25) Community engagement remains critical The Taskforce welcomed the continued focus on improving community engagement, noting that while progress has been made following the Aust Energy Infrastructure Commissioner's (AEIC) Review of Community Engagement, further work is required to ensure farmers and communities are genuine participants in the energy transition. Upcoming Renewables in Agriculture Conference, Orange on 12/13 August 2026.
Item 3	Sabiene Heindl, CEO, The Energy Charter Sabiene provided an update on The Energy Charter's current work, including the Developer Rating Scheme, Regional Energy Accord, Lived Experience Panel and emerging discussions regarding community benefit models.

	1. Developer Rating Scheme Members discussed the early implementation of the voluntary Developer Rating Scheme and noted that while developer participation remains limited, valuable work undertaken through the scheme—including the maturity framework and lived experience process—will continue to inform broader industry initiatives, including the #BetterPractice Social Licence Guideline. 2. Regional Energy Accord Members welcomed progress towards establishing the Regional Energy Accord under the leadership of AEIC, Tony Mahar. Discussion reinforced the importance of place-based leadership and ensuring regional communities play a central role in shaping the energy transition. 3. Community Benefits Members discussed the Clean Energy Council's proposal for nationally consistent community benefit arrangements, including the role of local government. There was broad discussion that while community benefits are strongly supported, governance arrangements should: • Deliver lasting regional economic outcomes; • Provide transparency and accountability; • Reflect local circumstances; and • Avoid funding projects that do not create enduring community value. Members shared perspectives from Queensland, Victoria and Western Australia, noting different approaches emerging across jurisdictions; there is unlikely to be a single national model. Discussion also highlighted opportunities to apply lessons from the energy transition to other emerging industries, including data centres.
Item 4	Stephanie McKechnie, Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF) Energy Information Service for Landholders. Stephanie was unable to attend due to illness. An update on the Energy Information Service for Landholders will be provided at a future Taskforce meeting. 1. Renewable energy decommissioning Members welcomed emerging work to develop nationally consistent approaches to renewable energy decommissioning, noting the importance of providing certainty for landholders, communities and project proponents. Discussion reinforced the need for clear obligations, effective regulation and lessons learned from previous initiatives, including the voluntary Developer Rating Scheme. 2. Data centres Members discussed the rapid growth of data centres and the importance of applying lessons from the energy transition to future infrastructure development. Particular focus on energy demand, water use, planning and the need for nationally consistent approaches to community engagement and social licence. 3. Environmental and water policy <u>Warwick Ragg, National Farmers' Federation</u> A number of concurrent national policy reviews affecting agriculture and energy transition: Environment Protection and Biosecurity Conservation (EPBC) reforms; the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, the Productivity Commission review of the National Water Initiative; review of the Water Act and the Inspector-General's review of the Murray Darling Basin Sustainable Diversion Limits (SDLs). Energy issues focused on data centres and renewable energy decommissioning. Discussion highlighted the importance of ensuring renewable energy development is considered alongside broader environmental, agricultural and water policy objectives.

Item 5	Andrew Henderson, Founder & Principal, AgSecure: Food Security, Agricultural Supply Chains & National Security Overview of AgSecure's work examining Australia's preparedness across food security, agricultural supply chains and critical inputs. The presentation explored vulnerabilities within Australia's food production system and highlighted opportunities to strengthen national resilience through improved preparedness and policy coordination. First step was the publication of a food security green paper through the Australian Strategic Policy Institute – looking at a series of theoretical concepts that would create a methodology for identifying and prioritising vulnerabilities in the supply chain, specifically of critical inputs. The work has been predicated on aligning Australia's preparedness activities as a sector in a food system to that of what defence and national security agencies are preparing for in the context of Aust's changing strategic circumstances or rapidly evolving strategic circumstances. Then followed pilot work, starting with crop protection products, effectively a practical application of those theoretical concepts. Then the liquid fuels assessment, which the Govt announced a national food supply chain assessment. The work involves a targeted national food supply chain vulnerability assessment of selected critical inputs. The work is funded by AgriFutures Australia, and working in partnership with Agribusiness Australia with the primary focus working with the private sector. Forward roadmap: digital models completed early July, then AgriBusiness Australia to lead a food security summit late Sept; modules to be packaged together into a body of work to be submitted to AgriFutures and DAF, which it is hoped to positively inform National Food Security Strategy; only looking at those critical inputs that are a selected group, recognising there are many more things and more to be done to secure the supply chains to support Australia's food system function on a day-to-day basis. Key Discussion Themes 1. Food security as a national priority Members discussed the importance of recognising food security as a core element of Australia's national security, noting increasing interdependence between ag, energy, fuel, transport and supply chains. 2. Building sovereign capability Discussion highlighted the importance of strengthening Australia's sovereign capability in areas such as liquid fuels, fertiliser and other critical inputs to improve resilience during future disruptions. 3. Embedding food security into policy Members supported further consideration of food security impacts in government decision-making, including the concept of a food security impact assessment to help inform future infrastructure, planning and policy decisions. Members recognised the importance of maintaining social cohesion and domestic stability. Andrew expressed a desire for the Federal Agriculture Minister to have a permanent seat on the National Security Committee of Cabinet. Link to paper: https://agrifutures.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/EXECUTIVE-SUMMARY-National-Food-Supply-chain-Interim-Assessment-23042026.pdf
Item 6	National, jurisdictional and industry updates on key issues <u>Toby Campbell, Victorian Farmers' Federation</u> Significant pressure points and community concerns re energy infrastructure rollout in Victoria.

- Proliferation of battery storage systems and concerns regarding toxic pollutants in the case of fire
- Focus on data centres and water needs.
- Top priority is decommissioning renewable energy infrastructure and rehabilitation of landscape.

Jennifer Brown, Cotton Australia

- Cotton Australia Conference, 4-6 August, Gold Coast
- NSW Farmers recent conference and several motions focusing on renewable energy.
- Squadron Energy announcement, cancelling development of the 426-megawatt Boorolong Wind Farm northwest of Armidale, NSW; several other Squadron projects (*Benandra wind farm, SE of Darlington Point, NSW; Jeremiah Wind Farm, around 25km east of Gundagai, NSW; Bookham Wind Farm, around 30km west of Yass*).
- Significant focus on EPBC Act
- [NSW Legislative Council report](#): Impact of Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) on rural and regional communities and industries in New South Wales: The Report finding 9 notes: *The NSW Government has failed to adequately address known risks relating to agricultural productivity, land value impacts, and insurance availability, leaving landholders exposed to ongoing uncertainty*

Tracy Lefroy, Grain Industry Association of Western Australia

Re suggestion that LGAs receive community benefits funds, would not work in WA context, given small LGA populations; a preferred approach would reflect a regional focus and flavour in line with priorities.

Update on WA activity and projects:

- Cargill Australia proposal for a canola crush plant adjacent to the CBH Kwinana Grain Terminal. If approved, the plant to bring benefits including increased processing capacity for canola oil and meal in WA, servicing domestic and export oil, meal market and supply emerging biofuel market in Aust and internationally. Poss the most credible processing proposal to date.
- Urea manufacturing facility near Karratha under construction by Perdaman, expected to produce 2.3 million tonnes pa; seen as a reliable and accessible fertiliser option.
- Important to ensure that rural/regional and agriculture voices have a seat at the table with all key decision makers, including on all national bodies relating to energy / climate.

Greg McCarron, Central Irrigation Trust, SA

- Data centre proposals announced for SA regional areas, including the Riverland; mixed views during consultation; SA Govt looking to put their own obligations around operators, some companies flagging what they will provide in local communities.
- Discussions with transmission companies re community benefit schemes; strong push towards genuine long-term economic regional drivers;
- Starting to understand the cost of a new state govt scheme to underwrite reliability in SA; with SA significantly renewable, the state's energy reliability has reduced at times; state govt have produced some long-term contracts for stable energy at a significant cost which will be charged back to consumers through transmission companies.
- Overview of ElectraNet - *Project Energy Connect*; new proposed lines not previously in the ISP; discussions on proposed routes, including to Whyalla, Port August and the mining sector; ElectraNet previously claiming no social licence issues; public consultation, communities now coming together & some disquiet upon receipt of information; AER suggesting additional lines not required in the next 10 years; brings into focus the additional RAB (regulatory asset base) that would otherwise be built into ElectraNet.

Anna Fiskbek, AgForce Qld

- AgForce working with QFF on renewables rollout, including on community benefits.

	• Producer concerns if community benefit funds were directed to the LGAs. <u>Chris Gillett, Canegrowers</u> • PowerLink working on strengthening network capacity ahead of Gladstone Power Stn retirement 2029; Qld heavy industries focus on decarbonisation. • Increased demand for clean energy with associated transmission bolstered and additional system strength with synchronous condensers, the latter become more commonplace. • Energy Qld hosting Canegrowers for a co-design process in prep for next round of AER regulatory determination - 2020 to 2035. • Regulated regional Qld electricity pricing and updated tariffs; equate to a decrease for residential and small business customers of around 7-8%; large businesses, a decrease of around 2%; generally, an increase in the network cost due to capital / infrastructure requirements. • Significant discussions re data centres; Qld & NT Govts seek flexibility in energy mix to supply data centres (<i>contrary to the PM seeking national guidelines</i>); • Liquid Fuel Supply (Ethanol and Other Biofuels Mandate) Amendment Bill 2026, before Parl. • Alinta Mt Challenger wind farm, Whitsunday Regional Council; strong community opposition has resulted in a scaling back and turbines removed from the site's southern portion. <u>Karin Stark, Renewable in Agriculture Conference, Orange, 12/13 August</u> Karin provided a snapshot of the range of speakers/presenters at Orange Conference: • Bangor Wind Farm and host farmer's decommissioning fund and plan to be discussed. • A 'Facts v Fiction' session to help address issues causing angst in communities. • Discussions on biofuels and creating green ammonia from renewable energy; and focus on sovereign energy and independence. • Clean Energy Council folk continue to participate on the Renewables in Ag Conference committee and understand the need of landholders and farmers. • Trialling a new 'Farmer Only' event, prior to the Conference for farmers to share knowledge and talk openly and informally; 27 farmers signed up. • Hoping to host the Conference in WA in 2027; currently working on sponsors, details.
Item 7	Roger Marshall, Director Energy Transition, The Energy Charter #Better Practice Social Licence Guideline, 2nd Independent Review: Overview Roger provided an update on the outcomes of the second independent review of the #Better Practice Social Licence Guideline and outlined the proposed approach to developing the next set of Priority Actions. Members were invited to continue contributing through the Community Outcomes Group. Key Discussion Themes 1. Continuous improvement Members supported the ongoing review of the Guideline and acknowledged its role in sharing better practice across the energy sector. 2. Co-design Importance of continuing to co-design future Priority Actions with industry, landholders and community reps was reinforced to ensure the Guideline remains practical and responsive to emerging issues. It was agreed a survey would be sent to Ag Energy Taskforce members, followed by an invitation to be part of the Community Outcomes Group.
Item 8	Joy Thomas • Next Taskforce meeting, Thursday 5 November 2026.
Item 9	Meeting close