



Clean Energy Council: Best Practice Charter for Renewable Energy Projects

EDF Australia

EDF's engagement approach is guided by the principles outlined in the CEC's Best Practice Charter for Renewable Energy Projects and shaped by the values of transparency, inclusiveness, responsiveness, and accountability.

From the earliest stages of project development, EDF engages with local stakeholders to ensure community voices are heard and factored into planning from the outset. As soon as a project footprint is identified, EDF reaches out to neighbours to introduce the organisation and the project and offer a meeting so neighbours can understand the project and its potential impact on them. The early insight into key issues and opportunities identified through this process shape the ongoing engagement program, as we tailor our activities to ensure stakeholders who hold strong beliefs on specific aspects of project development can understand that aspect in more detail and, where possible, influence our approach to development.

EDF prioritises the selection of sites that minimise potential social and environmental impacts. This includes avoiding highly productive agricultural land and areas of high environmental sensitivity, with the aim of reducing the likelihood of significant land use concern and disruption.

At both the Dungowan Pumped Hydro Project and Balala Wind Farm Projects, early engagement with Traditional Owners has been a central element. Please see the Case Study below for a detailed overview of our approach.

While most of our projects are still in early development, our intent will be to find opportunities for stakeholders to contribute to a broad range of project considerations, particularly around impact management and benefit-sharing initiatives.

To acknowledge and address concerns or opportunities raised by community members, EDFA seeks to provide opportunities for stakeholders to have direct access to technical experts via a series of engagements designed to align with the questions and perspectives raised locally, ensuring issues are addressed and local knowledge informs project development. A previous example of this approach is the Yarrowyck Wind Farm Biodiversity Workshops.

By combining careful site selection, early and ongoing engagement, and a commitment to locally tailored, inclusive practices, EDFA seeks to ensure its projects are developed in a way that delivers shared value and builds lasting trust with the communities in which we operate.

Case Study: Dungowan PHES and Balala WF TO Engagement

EDFA has adopted co-design and Indigenous-led activities as part of their initial considerations for both the Dungowan PHES and Balala WF projects. These approaches have aligned with but surpass established guidelines for Indigenous engagement, including *Ask First: A guide to respecting Indigenous heritage places and values* (Australian Heritage Commission, 2002) and *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Consultation Requirements for Proponents* (Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water, 2010).

EDFA initially identified Gomeroi and Anaiwan traditional owners whose Country the projects are proposed to be undertaken. Prior to any external public engagement, EDFA subsequently contacted these traditional owners and undertook on-Country meetings with them. Attended by key EDFA decision-makers, these meetings provided information on the proposed project, captured any concerns or issues for integration into project design and assessment processes, and sought direction on opportunities for the local Indigenous community. Information on any other traditional owners that needed to be integrated into the process, free, prior and informed consent, intellectual and Indigenous cultural property, and preferred methods and timing for ongoing communications as the project progresses were also discussed.

For the Gomeroi traditional owners, a focus on the importance of the cultural flows of Dungowan Creek (that feeds the Peel River and ultimately Namoi River) and proposed activities in the vicinity of Moonbi and Bendemeer formed a focus of discussions. All of these areas have strong cultural histories and values. EDFA has undertaken several further on-Country meetings that has resulted in substantive project re-design to avoid places and stories of value as a result of these engagements. Additional activities have included exploration of renaming the project to a Gomeroi word at the suggestion of the cultural owner of Dungowan Valley, the inclusion of traditional ecological knowledge into the project, and development of an Indigenous-led artwork. All of these activities are in various stages of progression by EDFA.

In relation to the Balala WF, the Anaiwan traditional owners focus was on highlighting the importance of Bulagaranda (Mount Yarrowyck) – a highly significant Aboriginal place – and the need for the project to be sympathetic to the surrounding cultural landscape. Critically, they also had a strong interest in providing opportunities for young Indigenous people to get involved and be able to stay on their Country, with a lack of employment in the Armidale region resulting in them travelling elsewhere for work. Discussions on supporting and enabling education and vocational training opportunities for young people in the Armidale region were undertaken, and EDFA is exploring how it can input and support these activities to achieve the Anaiwan traditional owner's concerns. Additional activities have continued to ensure the traditional owners have been fully briefed and involved in proposed early works activities (e.g. establishment of temporary meteorological masts).

Engagement with the Gomeroi and Anaiwan traditional owners in accordance with their preferences remains ongoing for these projects and will continue throughout the assessment process. Critically, as was raised by all traditional owners of the breakdown between the assessment of a project and its construction by third parties. As such, EDFA plans on



ensuring engagement continues throughout construction and into operation of the projects (if approved).