

Collector Wind Farm Community Consultative Committee (CCC) – Annual Report 2021-2023

CCC project name:	Collector Wind Farm	Reporting period:	From 2021 (commencement of generation) to December 2023
Independent chairperson:	Margaret Harvie	Proponent contact:	Melinda Loew

1. Executive summary / introduction

The Collector Wind Farm is located on the Cullerin Range between the Hume Highway and the Collector-Gunning Road in the NSW Southern Tablelands. The wind farm is approximately 30 minutes south of Goulburn and an hour north of Canberra by car. The village of Collector is approximately 4 kilometres south-east from the nearest of the turbines.

The whole project site covers around 6,200 hectares, of which 75-100 hectares was disturbed during construction.

The proponent, RATCH-Australia Corporation (RAC), consulted with the community from the outset when preparing the application for project approval. The Community Consultative Committee (CCC) was originally formed in 2012. Positions on the CCC were readvertised prior to construction for the project in 2019. The CCC met 3-4 times a year up until 2021. It continues to meet but there have been only two meetings since August 2021.

The project had its development application approved in 2013. After two years of construction the Collector Wind Farm commenced operations and reached full generation in February 2021 with 226.8MW capacity.

The CCC operates in accordance with the Department of Planning & Environment's Community Consultative Committee Guidelines for State Significant Projects (June 2023).

The committee's membership more recently has been:

- Five individual community representatives
- One Upper Lachlan Shire Council delegate
- One Collector Community Association Representative
- Two representatives of RAC as the proponent; and
- One Independent Chairperson.

2. CCC activities in the past two years:

The CCC met on 25 August 2021 and since that time there have been three meetings, 10 March 2022, 9 February 2023 and 6 December 2023.

Members of the CCC were invited to attend the official opening of the Collector Wind Farm with an on-site event held on 29 November 2022. This had been somewhat delayed due to the fact that full operation had occurred just post the Covid restrictions.

The CCC had six rather than the suggested seven community members since the resignation of a member in December 2021. Since the last meeting in February 2023 there have been two more resignations. Despite some attempts by RAC to advertise and replace the vacant position from 2021 there has not been much interest from the community to join the CCC. It should be noted that the community is quite small and there is also demand for volunteer representatives on the committees that oversee the distribution of funds made possible through the wind farm.

While the CCC has been effective over its many years of operation the topics for discussion that are relevant to the purpose of the CCC have dwindled since the project has moved to the operation phase. The remaining topic of most interest is the distribution of community funding from RAC and this is formally the remit of other bodies that also include representation of the community.

Topics for discussion in the past three meetings have included:

- Finalisation of the Operational Noise Management Plan and presentation of this plan/ information about where to find it on the Department of Planning website.
- The community funds - discussion of the effective operation of these funding bodies and reporting on where funds have been distributed
- Finalisation of landscaping screening commitments and communication about this form of mitigation
- Operational roles and responsibilities of RAC and Vestas in the transition from construction to operations
- Community concerns expressed about the potential impacts of noise and what can be heard at different times of the day under various conditions.

The CCC has been an effective communication forum between the community, the Council and the company. It has fulfilled its objectives under the Department's guidelines and represents a range of views and types of residents and landholders in the community.

There were no joint CCCs held in the region.

3. Key issues

Issue	Actions taken	Next steps
<p>Community Benefit Funds (as result of funds provided by RAC)</p>	<p>Adequate management and timely and full distribution from these funding sources</p>	<p>Grants are provided to the Collector region through two mechanisms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Enhancement Fund (CEF) managed by an Upper Lachlan Shire Council (ULSC) via a Section 355 committee (Section 355 Management Committees are provided under the Local Government Act 1993 for Councils to delegate some of their functions to a Committee of Council), which comprises two ULSC representatives, two community nominated representatives and a RAC Trustee representative. • Community Fund Trust overseen by committee of three nominated community representatives and a RAC Trustee representative. <p>As result of discussion about the processes and outcomes from the operation of these community funds, the actions that have been sought include the desire that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more funds be distributed from the CEF. • surplus funds from the CEF are reinvested and/or provided to the Collector Community Trust, consistent with section 6.5 of the CEF Deed of Agreement.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There be more transparency around CEF committee decisions and feedback to unsuccessful applications to allow them to have success in the future. • There be more timely payment from Council to CEF grant recipients
Landscaping	Finalisation of landscape screening and promises to impacted residents.	<p>The CCC wanted to be sure that residents were aware that the offer for landscaping was coming to an end. That is, residents cannot continue to ask for further screening into the future.</p> <p>They sought confirmation that all landscape promises were fulfilled.</p>
Future operation	Transition from RAC to Vestas	The CCC has been informed about who is responsible for management of the site going forward and there are dedicated RAC community email and phone contact details available for complaint and enquiry management.


4. Focus for the future:

Collector is now an operating Wind Farm and most of the ongoing issues are managed by project managers on site along with the RAC community engagement advisor. There does not seem to be ongoing community concerns that might be the topic of discussion for the CCC beyond the issues around management of the Community Enhancement Fund via the Council s355 committee.

Regarding community issues, only one complaint related to the quality of landscape regeneration has been received in the past two years through the RAC community email or 1800 contact points. The complaint was resolved. General enquiries in 2022 and 2023 have related to requests for public tours, community fund grant eligibility or grant application status.

There appears to be no specific agenda items for further meetings that are directly related to the operation of the windfarm.

The CCC came together in December 2023 to review the community concerns mostly as they relate to distribution of funds from the Wind Farm. It was resolved at that meeting that a potential way forward to tackle community and CCC issues of concern was to have the two funding bodies meet prior to each funding round. This was a way to create more effective communication and coordination with Council and with the funding. The CCC has expressed interest in the administration of the two fund being more closely aligned. The CCC at this meeting also questioned the future role and continuation of this CCC in the light of lack of volunteers to serve on this group and the demonstration of willingness by Ratch to engage with the community through other forums.

Signature of chairperson:	
Date:	18 December 2023