

MOVING BEYOND TRANSITION
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ABSTRACT

A good beginning, makes a good ending: how good engagement can help keep your project on track and the data that shows what (not so good) engagement does to your bottom line

Renewable energy infrastructure projects are vital for the transition to a low-carbon economy, but they often face challenges and delays in the environmental approvals stage due to the variable nature of community and stakeholder engagement. This presentation explores how good engagement can help keep your project on track and we will show you the data on what (not so good) engagement can cost your project in terms of time and money. We will outline the benefits of effective engagement for renewable energy projects, such as building trust, reducing conflicts, enhancing social acceptance, and improving project design and outcomes. Using the ANU Institute for Infrastructure in Society's model focused on engagement in the infrastructure sector, we can estimate the potential costs of these delays for different types of renewable energy projects, such as wind, solar, battery and hydro. We consider both the direct costs, such as increased financing and operational expenses, and the indirect costs, such as lost revenues and environmental benefits. We show that the costs of delays can be substantial and can outweigh the costs of investing in good engagement practices. We conclude by offering some practical recommendations for how to plan and implement effective engagement strategies for renewable energy projects, based on the principles of early, inclusive, transparent, and responsive communication. We argue that a good beginning, with good engagement, can make a good ending for your project, stakeholders and the environment.

Three key takeaways

1. Proactive engagement is worthwhile and can create better outcomes for your projects
2. How much delays due to objections can actually cost your project
3. How you can implement better methods for better engagement maintain the integrity of the impact assessment process.

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY

Romina Cavallo

Erin Pears For over 18 years' Erin has provided environmental advice in roles across the public Romina is an infrastructure communications and engagement specialist. Her extensive experience includes the strategic development and implementation of effective communication and engagement campaigns for some of Australia's largest infrastructure projects. Romina combines her research background, analytical expertise, and understanding of communities and stakeholders to create evidence-based engagement campaigns, as well as other communication solutions that are relevant, engaging and deliver the right message. At the heart of this, Romina works to ensure that major projects apply a community and stakeholder lens to key project decisions. This is to minimise community impacts, ensure broader support for the project, maintain resilience in the scope and execution of projects, and manage risks to project outcomes. Romina is also a lecturer at the University of NSW for third-year City Planning students, where she passes on her knowledge and understanding of community and stakeholder engagement with each cohort. In addition, this also advises on undergraduate thesis projects and mentoring students in this topic area.

Kirsty O'Connell

Kirsty O'Connell is the co-founder and industry director for the ANU Institute for Infrastructure in Society - the world's only research Institute focused on social licence, social risk management, social value and engagement in the infrastructure sector. Kirsty's passion for understanding and improving decision making around the social aspects of infrastructure delivery come from leading engagement for more than \$30B in major infrastructure projects. With an MBA and a major in finance gained at QUT, the University of Exeter (UK) and the Grenoble Graduate School of Business (France) she is keenly attuned to the cost and time implications of engagement performance. Kirsty is a fifth-generation farmer and mum to two spirited girls.



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