Prepared for Marble Energy Pty Ltd ABN: 11 649 803 798



# Cobbora Solar Farm Environment Impact Statement

Community & Stakeholder Engagement Plan

29-Apr-2022 Commercial-in-Confidence

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Cobbora Solar Farm Environment Impact Statement Commercial-in-Confidence

#### DRAFT

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Community & Stakeholder Engagement Plan

Client: Marble Energy Pty Ltd

ABN: 11 649 803 798

Prepared by

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## **Quality Information**

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## DRAFT

#### 1.0 Introduction

#### 1.1 Project description

Marble Energy Pty Ltd (Marble Energy) proposes the construction and operation of the Cobbora Solar Farm Project (the Project). this would be a large-scale photovoltaic (PV) generation facility located approximately 20 kilometres south-west of Dunedoo and 55 kilometres east of Dubbo in NSW. This location (the Site) is approximately 3,300 hectares in size and spans two local government areas (LGAs): Warrumbungle Shire Council and Dubbo Regional Council. The Site is bordered to the north by the Golden Highway and is accessed via Spring Ridge Road, which forms the Site's eastern border. Currently, the Site is primarily used for agriculture with several rural residences also present.

The Project is proposed to have a capacity to generate up to 700 megawatts (MW) of electricity from PV solar panels. The Project would also include a 200 MW/ 200 megawatt hour (MWh) battery energy storage system (BESS). The Project would also include other supporting facilities and infrastructure such as: on-site staff office, operations and control room, meeting facilities, amenities and car parking, storage facilities, new internal roads, fencing and landscaping

The Project's connection to the National Electricity Market (NEM) would be via the proposed Central West Orana (CWO) Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) transmission line. The specific nature of this connection will be confirmed as further details of the Project and the proposed transmission line are known.

Development consent under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act) is required to construct and operate the Project. the Project has been defined as State Significant Development (SSD) by virtue of being greater than \$30 million capital investment value.

#### 1.2 Purpose

An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is being prepared to obtain development consent for the construction and operation of the Project. Stakeholder and community engagement is a key component of the development of the Project and will be required to inform the EIS, as outlined in the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs).

The Community and Stakeholder Engagement Plan (CSEP) (this Plan) outlines the engagement objectives and proposed strategy to inform relevant stakeholders and the community of the Project and to obtain their feedback and input into its development.

#### 2.0 Engagement strategy

#### 2.1 Engagement objectives

The engagement objectives for the Project are to:

- Consult early, regularly, and proactively with stakeholders to identify community/stakeholder concerns and opportunities and address these as part of the development of the Project
- Reduce the risk of delays due to stakeholder or community opposition
- Continue to build stakeholder understanding and support for the Project through clear and consistent communication
- Identify advocates to garner and build support for the Project within the wider community
- Provide different avenues for stakeholders and the community to have input into the development of the Project
- Ensure that community and stakeholder concerns and issues are properly understood and responded to in a timely manner
- Enhance Marble Energy Energy's reputation as a responsible developer of renewable energy projects.

#### 2.2 Engagement approach

#### 2.2.1 **Previous engagement**

Marble Energy and their consultants have been engaging with stakeholders and neighbouring property owners since early 2020. The results of consultation undertaken by EMM as part of the EIS Scoping Report (EMM, 2021), were largely positive, with a general acknowledgement that the region is undergoing a transformation due to the establishment of the REZ.

Key issues raised by community members during consultation at the scoping stage were:

- Visual impacts
- Traffic management
- Noise impacts
- Availability of housing for the construction workforce
- The extent of benefit sharing with the community.

These issues will be explored in greater detail during development of the Project. Marble Energy will seek to further understand the nature and specifics of these issues, and to mitigation adverse impacts and enhance benefits where feasible.

#### 2.2.2 Lessons learnt from other energy projects

As part of the development of this CSEP a review was undertaken of selected utility scale solar developments NSW. This included the following projects:

- Moree Solar Farm (FRV Renewables)
- Springdale Solar Farm
- New England Highway Solar Farm.

The following issues were identified relating to the consultation method and/or the main issues identified by the community or stakeholders:

- Location of the site
- Visual impacts

- Impact on land values in the area
- How the community would benefit
- Whether there would be an increased bushfire risk
- The use of good agricultural land
- Impact on traffic flow, safety, and conditions of the local roads

Based on the above review it is recommended that the CSEP include consideration of the following:

- Clear explanations on why the site was chosen for the solar farm
- How potential visual, land, traffic and bushfire impacts will be addressed in the EIS
- Build strong messaging around how the community would benefit from the Project

#### 2.2.3 EIS engagement approach

The engagement approach will be guided by:

- Marble Energy's community objective to be a good community member through proactive engagement
- Engagement undertaken previously by EMM for the Scoping Report (2021)
- The SEARs
- The Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) guidelines on community engagement as detailed in *Undertaking Engagement Guidelines for State Significant Project (DPE, 2021)*
- The International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) engagement spectrum and values
- Lessons learned on other utility scale solar projects in western NSW.

#### 3.0 Stakeholder identification and analysis

#### 3.1 Stakeholders

**Table 3-1** below considers the specific stakeholders that will be relevant to the development of the Project. This table also outlines their likely interests and provides initial guidance on a recommended approach to engaging with each. This table has been prepared on the basis of the Project's scoping report, as well as existing stakeholder knowledge.

#### Table 3-1 Stakeholders, interests and engagement method

Stakeholder	Interest/issues	Engagement Method
<ul><li>DPE including:</li><li>Environment and Heritage</li><li>Water Group.</li></ul>	<ul> <li>Project progress and development</li> <li>Meeting the consultation requirements of the SEARs</li> <li>How issues raised by the community have been addressed in the EIS</li> <li>Application of DPE consultation guidelines to engagement activities</li> <li>The potential for specific impacts to heritage items or water resources.</li> </ul>	Briefings (face to face / online) Phone Email.
Transport for NSW	<ul> <li>Vehicle access options for the Project</li> <li>Traffic management during construction, particularly heavy vehicles</li> <li>Upgrade of access route connection with the Golden Highway.</li> </ul>	
Warrumbungle Shire Council	<ul> <li>Project progress and development</li> <li>Access options for the Project including Council requirements for any required road upgrades</li> </ul>	
Dubbo Regional Council	<ul> <li>Project progress and development</li> <li>Traffic management during construction, particularly heavy vehicles</li> <li>Details around as the number of workers and how they are accommodated within the Project, including parking and traffic implications</li> <li>Access options for the Project including Council requirements for road upgrades (should roads within this LGA be impacted by the Project)</li> <li>Development contributions (monetary or in kind) via direct contributions or a voluntary planning agreement.</li> </ul>	
NSW Rural Fire Service Orana	<ul> <li>implications of the Project for bushfire protection and other matters of consideration under the <i>Planning for Bush Fire Guidelines 2019</i></li> <li>Mitigation measures for bushfire management / hazards risk.</li> </ul>	
Dubbo Local Aboriginal Land Council	<ul> <li>Project progress and development</li> <li>Construction and / or operation impacts on Aboriginal cultural heritage</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Notification letters</li> <li>Briefings (face to face / online)</li> </ul>

Stakeholder	Interest/issues	Engagement Method
Bradley R. Bliss J.P Wellington Valley Wiradjuri Aboriginal Corporation (WVWAC) Contact Officer	Mitigation measures for identified impacts on Aboriginal cultural heritage.	<ul><li>Email</li><li>Community updates</li><li>Phone.</li></ul>
Property owners within 3 kilometre radius of the Site (private residences and businesses / local services)	<ul> <li>Project progress and development</li> <li>Visual impacts</li> <li>Noise impacts</li> <li>Air quality impacts</li> <li>Traffic management</li> <li>Property impacts</li> <li>Availability for housing for the construction workforce</li> <li>Extent of benefit sharing the with the community</li> <li>Cumulative impacts of other nearby renewable energy projects.</li> </ul>	Email Website information Notification letters Phone Face to face/online meetings Community drop-in sessions Project hub Social meeting updates FAQs.
Transgrid	<ul> <li>Project progress and development</li> <li>Project design and interface with the transmission network.</li> </ul>	Briefings (face to face / online) Email
APA Group	Project design and interface with the existing gas pipeline.	Phone.
NSW Crown Lands (Dubbo)	Potential impacts on crown roads due to the Project's access routes.	
NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA)	<ul> <li>Project progress and development</li> <li>Ensuring EPA technical assessment guidelines are implemented.</li> </ul>	
NSW State MPs Dugald Saunders (Member for Dubbo) Royal (Roy) Butler (Member for Barwon)	<ul> <li>Project progress</li> <li>Benefits to the local economy and community</li> <li>Engagement with the local community to ensure issues are addressed.</li> </ul>	Briefings, if requested (face to face / online) Emails.
NSW Farmers Association	<ul> <li>Insurance premiums increasing for neighbouring properties</li> <li>Potential loss of agricultural production</li> <li>The potential effect on land prices</li> <li>The ability for long term community benefit sharing arrangements to be implemented for the Project</li> <li>Partnership/research opportunities with local farmers.</li> </ul>	
<ul><li>Wider community</li><li>Elong Elong</li><li>Dunedoo</li><li>Ballimore.</li></ul>	<ul> <li>Project progress and development</li> <li>Visual impacts</li> <li>Traffic management</li> <li>Extent of benefit sharing with the community.</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Project email</li> <li>Website information (including Facebook)</li> <li>Notification letters</li> <li>Community drop-in session</li> <li>FAQs</li> <li>Project hub</li> <li>Factsheet</li> </ul>

Stakeholder	Interest/issues	Engagement Method		
Dubbo Chamber of Commerce and Industry	<ul> <li>Project progress and development</li> <li>Benefits to the local economy and community</li> <li>Commercial benefits of the project for the wider community</li> <li>Local employment or supply chain opportunities</li> <li>Partnership/research opportunities with local farmers</li> <li>The ability for long term community benefit sharing arrangements to be implemented for the project</li> <li>Potential loss of agricultural production.</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Briefings, if requested (face to face / online)</li> <li>Stakeholder emails.</li> </ul>		

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#### 4.0 Key messages

The following key messages will be used to develop communication material, respond to enquiries, and maintain consistency of messaging when engaging with the community and stakeholders. Key messages will continue to be developed as the Project progresses:

- The Cobbora Solar Farm consists of a 700 MW solar farm, complemented with 200 MW/200 MWh battery energy storage system. The Project is located within the NSW CWO REZ and intends to connect into the new CWO REZ transmission line. The site has favourable topography, and has a low degree of constraint by physical, biological or social factors.
- Cobbora Solar Farm will provide clean, cheap electricity for NSW and support the planned closure of over 3 gigawatts of NSW coal generators in the next decade by filling in the anticipated generation shortfall.
- Cobbora Solar Farm will improve network reliability by storing excess energy during periods of low demand and dispatching energy during periods of peak demand or during network disruptions.
- Cobbora Solar Farm will create direct employment opportunities during construction and operation, benefiting the local economy and community.
- Marble Energy intend to commence construction in 2024, feeding electricity into the network by 2026.
- Marble Energy has commenced planning activities and is currently preparing the necessary assessments to lodge a planning application with the NSW Government.
- Marble Energy has engaged engineering and environmental consultancy, AECOM Australia Pty Ltd (AECOM) to prepare an EIS to identify potential impacts of construction and operation of the solar farm, as well as measures to avoid and minimise any such impacts.
- Marble Energy will consult with stakeholders and the community during the development of the EIS so that concerns and issues are considered and appropriately addressed wherever feasible.
- The EIS will assess key issues including biodiversity, Aboriginal cultural heritage, land use, visual impacts, noise, transport, surface water and groundwater, hazards management including bushfires and development in close proximity to other services (an existing gas line,).
- The EIS is expected to go on public exhibition in late 2022 or early 2023. At this stage you will have the opportunity to provide formal feedback directly to DPE. All submissions will be responded to in a Submissions Report.
- DPE will prepare the development assessment report for the Project. The consent authority, likely to be the Minister for Planning, would then decide whether to approve or refuse the project. If approved, the Minister will outline the conditions of consent that Marble Energy will be required to adhere to during construction and operation of the Project.
- Marble Energy is committed to working with the community and key stakeholders to minimise disruption to property owners, businesses, services and the broader community during construction and operation of the Project.
- There will be a number of ways stakeholders and the community can get more information and provide feedback about the project, including community drop-in sessions or via contact through the website. All feedback will be considered and responded to within a timely manner.
- For more information about the Project, please contact us by email or stop by at our project hub in XXX to talk to the project team. [drafting note: Marble to confirm location of project hub]

## 5.0 Communication and engagement tools and activities

**Table 5-1** provides a snapshot of the communication and engagement tools to be used at each stage of the EIS. More detail on the tools and methods is provided in **Appendix A**.

#### Table 5-1 Snapshot of engagement activities and tools for each EIS phase

	Project email	Website info	Notification letter	FAQs	Council briefing	Stakeholder briefing	Stakeho Ider email / Ietter	Engagement with adjacent properties (phone/email /in-person)	Community drop-in session	Facebook page updates	Project hub
EIS commencement of technical studies											
During this phase early engagement will be undertaken to inform of the EIS process, studies and to capture feedback (concerns and opportunities).	$\checkmark$	~	√	~	~	if requested	1	~	~	√	TBC
EIS preparation											
Community and stakeholders engaged to provide update on assessments, capture any other issues to minimise submissions during EIS exhibition.	$\checkmark$	~	~	V		if requested	V	$\checkmark$	Optional	~	TBC
EIS completion & exhibition											
Briefings to key stakeholders on EIS findings prior to EIS exhibition and call for submissions.	$\checkmark$	~	$\checkmark$	~	Optional	Optional	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	Optional	V	TBC

#### 5.1 Community Development and Benefits Program

Marble Energy have committed to establishing a community benefit sharing fund. An amount of \$250 per installed megawatt (AC) will be contributed towards this fund annually. it is intended that the money will be spent on initiatives selected by the community. Marble Energy will work with the community to determine the specific initiatives. [drafting note: Marble to confirm funding based per MW or MWh]

#### 6.0 Engagement action plan

Table 6-1 outlines the timing of engagement activities and tools to be undertaken during each phase of the EIS.

#### Table 6-1 Engagement activities, timing, stakeholder and responsibility

Program phase	Activity	Timing	Stakeholder(s)	Responsibility
Commencement of EIS technical studies	Set up communication channels: project email – <u>cobbora_solarfarm@aecom.com</u> Prepare communication materials	May 2022	All stakeholders	AECOM C&SE Team
	<ul> <li>First community information session:</li> <li>Inform of EIS</li> <li>Invite early feedback</li> <li>Upcoming consultation, next steps and timing.</li> </ul>	3-May 2022	All stakeholders	AECOM C&SE and Technical Team
	<ul> <li>Stakeholder email with invitation for an optional briefing (if requested):</li> <li>Inform of EIS</li> <li>Invite early feedback</li> <li>Upcoming consultation, next steps and timing.</li> </ul>	May 2022	<ul> <li>DPE – Environment and Heritage</li> <li>DPE - Water Group</li> <li>Transport for NSW</li> <li>Transgrid</li> <li>NSW EPA</li> <li>Dugald Saunders MP</li> <li>Roy Butler MP</li> <li>NSW Crown Lands</li> <li>NSW Farmers Association</li> <li>Registered Aboriginal Parties</li> <li>WVWAC Contact Officer</li> <li>Heritage NSW.</li> </ul>	AECOM (C&SE and Technical Team) Marble Energy
	Council briefing(s) to inform of the Project, invite early feedback, next steps and timing.	May 2022	Dubbo Regional Council and Warrumbungle Shire Council	AECOM (C&SE and Technical Team)

Program phase	Activity	Timing	Stakeholder(s)	Responsibility
				Marble Energy
	Coordinate property/land access for Aboriginal heritage surveys to be undertaken (as required)	May 2022 - June 2022	<ul> <li>Identified landowners and stakeholders</li> <li>Registered Aboriginal Parties</li> <li>WVWAC Contact Officer</li> <li>Heritage NSW.</li> </ul>	AECOM C&SE and Technical Team
	Landowner engagement via phone or face to face EIS, invite early feedback, next steps and timing.	June 2022	Landowners within 3km radius to the Project site	AECOM C&SE Team
	Update website: <ul> <li>Information on the EIS</li> </ul>	June 2022	All stakeholders	AECOM C&SE Team Review and approval by Marble
	<ul> <li>embedded feedback form</li> <li>FAQs.</li> <li>Distribute notification letter to community:</li> </ul>	June 2022	Landowners in the Warrumbungle and	Energy AECOM C&SE Team
	<ul> <li>Inform of EIS</li> <li>Invite early feedback</li> <li>Upcoming consultation, next steps and timing.</li> </ul>	June 2022	Dubbo LGAs	Review and approval by Marble Energy
EIS preparation	Organise property access for remaining environmental assessments (as required)	October 2022	Identified properties	AECOM C&SE Team and Technical Team
	Update website information:	October 2022	All Stakeholders	AECOM C&SE Team
	<ul> <li>Progress of EIS</li> <li>Tailored information to respond to issues raised during early consultation</li> <li>Update FAQs.</li> </ul>			Review and approval by Marble Energy
	Prepare and distribute notification letter on EIS progress	October 2022	Landowners in the Warrumbungle and Dubbo LGAs	AECOM C&SE Team Review and approval by Marble Energy
	Hold landowner meetings to discuss issues and mitigation	October 2022	Landowners within 3 km radius of the Site	AECOM C&SE Team
	measures			Marble Energy

Program phase	Activity	Timing	Stakeholder(s)	Responsibility
	EIS on exhil	bition December	2022	
	Optional activity: Brief stakeholders on EIS findings and mitigation measures, how to make a submission.	December 2022	<ul> <li>DPE – Environment and Heritage</li> <li>DPE - Water Group</li> <li>TfNSW</li> <li>TransGrid</li> <li>NSW EPA</li> <li>Dugald Saunders MP</li> <li>Roy Butler MP</li> <li>NSW Crown Lands</li> <li>NSW Farmers Association</li> <li>Dubbo Local Aboriginal Land Council</li> <li>APA Group</li> <li>Registered Aboriginal Parties</li> <li>WVWAC Contact Officer</li> <li>Heritage NSW.</li> </ul>	AECOM (C&SE and Technical Team) Marble Energy
	Optional activity: Council briefing on EIS findings and mitigation measures, how to make a submission.	December 2022	Dubbo Regional Council <ul> <li>Warrumbungle Shire Council</li> </ul>	AECOM (C&SE and Technical Team) Marble Energy
	Inform landowners by phone of EIS completion, findings and mitigation measures and how to make a submission.	December 2022	Landowners within 3km radius to Project site	AECOM C&SE Team
	<ul> <li>Update website information:</li> <li>EIS completion</li> <li>Exhibition and how to provide feedback</li> <li>Community drop-in sessions.</li> </ul>	December 2022	All stakeholders	AECOM C&SE Team Review and approval by Marble Energy
	<ul> <li>Prepare and distribute notification letter on:</li> <li>EIS completion</li> <li>Exhibition and how to provide feedback</li> <li>Community drop-in sessions.</li> </ul>	December 2022	All stakeholders	AECOM C&SE Team Review and approval by Marble Energy
	Community drop-in session in Dubbo and Warrumbungle LGA to present EIS.	December 2022	All stakeholders	AECOM C&SE Team

# Appendix A

## Engagement activities and tools

## Appendix A Engagement activities and tools

The following tools will be implemented during the EIS commencement, preparation and exhibition.

#### EIS commencement activities

- Communication channels: to receive and respond to enquiries. Project email Cobbora\_solarfarm@aecom.com
- Website information: with information specific to the environmental impact assessment including an embedded "feedback / enquiry" submission form to encourage early feedback on the EIS process hosted on the Marble Energy website.
- **Facebook page**: Marble Energy to post latest project information, timing, consultation information and contact details on Facebook page.
- **Notification letter:** outlining the environmental assessment and consultation process and timing. Contact details for the enquiries will be provided should the community require further information.
- **FAQs:** frequently asked questions and responses posted on the website to provide further Project information and address any negative perceptions about the Project.
- Council briefing (with Dubbo and Warrumbungle Shire Councils): following the preparation of this Plan and program for the EIS a meeting with Councils to update them on the Project, EIS timing, assessment, negotiable and non-negotiable Project aspects and seek feedback on points of concern. We would also request to use Council communication platforms (Facebook, community newsletters) to host Project information and advertise drop-in information sessions.
- Landowner engagement: prior to distributing information to the broader community, contact directly affected and adjacent landowners by phone to update them about the Project, negotiable aspects, discuss access that may be required for environmental studies and conditions of access, and identify key issues and concerns. A follow up meeting either virtually or face to face when we are in the area for community drop-in sessions if required.
- **Stakeholder letter:** to inform about the EIS preparation, timing, consultation process, the upcoming information sessions and to contact the team should they like a briefing.
- **Community drop-in sessions:** in Warrumbungle and Dubbo LGAs to ensure the community have a good understanding of the Project, the EIS timing and studies and to identify issues and / or concerns early in the EIS process so they can be addressed and managed. The information session will be 3 hours and up to three A0 colour posters and the factsheets will be prepared. Advertisements in the local paper (digital advertisement), through Council platforms and we would also request stakeholders to share the invite thorough their contacts list.
- **Project hub:** Marble Energy to establish a 'project hub' in one of the nearby towns, potentially Dunedoo, for community members and stakeholders to drop in at their convenience, ask questions and for Marble Energy to have a presence in the local area and strengthen relationships with the community. Timing to be confirmed.

#### **During EIS preparation**

- **Communication and engagement for private property access:** contact landowners where access to their land is required for investigations.
- **Update website information:** updated to inform of the progress of the EIS and tailored to respond to interest themes identified through the engagement process.
- **Facebook page**: Marble Energy to post latest project information, timing, consultation information and contact details on Facebook page.
- **Notification letter:** an update on EIS progress distributed to stakeholders and landowners in the Warrumbungle and Dubbo LGAs. The update will also be posted on the Project website.

- Update FAQs based on first round of engagement: to respond to issues and questions raised.
- Landowner meetings: to maintain and strengthen relationships and to address key issues that have been raised by stakeholders and landowners to follow up and discuss with them how issues have been addressed.
- **Project hub:** Marble Energy to establish a 'project hub' in one of the nearby towns, potentially Dunedoo, for community members and stakeholders to drop in at their convenience, ask questions and for Marble Energy to have a presence in the local area and strengthen relationships with the community. Timing to be confirmed.
- **Optional activity: Community drop-in session:** to provide the community with an opportunity to ask the Project team about outcomes of the assessments.

#### EIS completion and exhibition

- **Update website information:** to inform of EIS completion, exhibition and the upcoming information sessions with a link to the DPE portal to view the EIS and how to make a submission.
- **Facebook page**: Marble Energy to post latest project information, timing, consultation information and contact details on Facebook page.
- **Notification letter:** summary of EIS findings, inform of exhibition period and opportunity to make a submission and advertise the upcoming information sessions.
- **Optional activity: Council briefing:** briefing / presentation to Council on environmental assessment findings and proposed mitigation measures prior to submission to DPE.
- Inform landowners on completion of EIS: courtesy call to directly impacted and adjacent landowners to inform of EIS completion and how issues have been considered / addressed.
- **Optional activity: Stakeholder briefings (by request):** provide a presentation on the EIS findings, mitigation measures and how issues raised have been addressed.
- **Optional activity: Community drop-in session:** to provide the community with an opportunity to ask the Project team about outcomes of the assessments.
- **Project hub:** Marble Energy to establish a 'project hub' in one of the nearby towns, potentially Dunedoo, for community members and stakeholders to drop in at their convenience, ask questions and for Marble Energy to have a presence in the local area and strengthen relationships with the community. Timing to be confirmed.

#### **Community Development and Benefits Program**

Marble Energy have committed to establishing a community benefit sharing fund. An amount of \$250 per installed megawatt (AC) will be contributed towards this fund annually, and it is intended that the money will be spent on community driven initiatives. Marble will work with the community to determine how this scheme will be implemented appropriately.