Appendix D

Consultation outcomes report

TransGrid

EnergyConnect

Consultation outcomes report

October 2020

Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Glossary

Acronym / proposal term	Definition
AEMO	Australian Energy Market Operator
AER	Australian Energy Regulator
CSSI	Critical State Significant Infrastructure
DPIE	(NSW) Department of Planning Industry and Environment
EES Group of the DPIE	Environment, Energy and Science Group – a division of the Department of Planning Industry and Environment (DPIE) (formerly NSW Office of Environment and Heritage)
EIS	environmental impact statement
EMF	electromagnetic fields
EnergyConnect	An electrical interconnector of approximately 900 km between the power grids of New South Wales and South Australia, with an added connection to north-west Victoria
ISP	Integrated System Plan
LALC	Local Aboriginal Land Council
NEM	National Electricity Market
NSW	New South Wales
proponent, the	The proposal is proposed to be undertaken by NSW Electricity Networks Operations Pty Ltd as a trustee for NSW Electricity Operations Trust (referred to as TransGrid). TransGrid is the operator and manager of the main high-voltage (HV) transmission network in NSW and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), and is the Authorised Network Operator (ANO) for the purpose of an electricity transmission or distribution network under the provisions of the *Electricity Network Assets (Authorised Transactions) Act 2015*.
proposal, the	The proposal is known as 'EnergyConnect (NSW – Western Section)' The proposal would involve the following key features: > Construction of new high-voltage transmission lines and associated infrastructure between the SA/NSW border near Chowilla and the existing Buronga substation > An upgrade to the existing transmission line between the Buronga substation and the NSW/Victoria border at Monak, near Red Cliffs > An expansion and upgrade of the existing Buronga substation from an operating capacity of 220 kV to 330 kV > Establishment and upgrade of access tracks and roads, as required > Other ancillary works required to facilitate the construction of the proposal e.g. laydown and staging areas, concrete batching plants, brake/winch sites, site offices and accommodation camps.

Acronym / proposal term	Definition
RIT-T	Regulatory Investment Test for Transmission
REZs	Renewable Energy Zones
SA	South Australia
SEARs	Secretary Environmental Assessment Requirements

1. Executive summary

TransGrid has undertaken a program of community and stakeholder engagement to support the lodgement of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for EnergyConnect (NSW – Western Section) (the proposal). EnergyConnect includes the construction of new transmission infrastructure and upgrades to existing transmission infrastructure. It is known as an *interconnector* as it connects New South Wales (NSW), South Australia (SA) and Victoria.

The primary objective for the proposal is to secure increased electricity transmission capacity between SA, NSW and Victoria of about 800 megawatts (MW) and to facilitate the longer-term transition of the energy sector across the National Electricity Market (NEM) as the energy generation mix changes.

EnergyConnect has been declared Critical State significant infrastructure (CSSI) by the NSW Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, and is listed as a priority transmission project in the NSW Government's *NSW Transmission Infrastructure Strategy,* an immediate priority project in the Australian Energy Market Operator's *2018 Integrated System Plan* (2018 ISP) and a 'no regret' Actionable project in the 2020 ISP.

TransGrid has a genuine desire to work with stakeholders in a proactive and transparent process. Since November 2018, TransGrid has been engaging to capture the needs and views of stakeholders and communities that are directly and indirectly affected by the proposal.

This report outlines the outcomes of over 890 stakeholder and community engagement activities undertaken to address the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) in support of the EIS process. This has been achieved through a variety of different engagement activities tailored to the needs of specific stakeholder groups. This approach has created broad awareness about the project and enabled stakeholders and the community to provide input and feedback on areas of interest or issues of concern. Key communication channels and stakeholder engagement activities included:

- direct consultation with key stakeholders including:
  - Members of Parliament (Commonwealth and State)
  - Government departments and agencies (Commonwealth and State)
  - local government
  - Traditional Custodian groups
  - industry and interest groups
  - landholders
- communication and engagement with the broader community, including public information sessions and local media advertisements to generate project awareness and participation
- dedicated toll free 1800 community information line and email address
- the EnergyConnect website
- interactive EnergyConnect map focused on collecting stakeholder feedback on the proposed route.

Landholders, as directly-affected stakeholders, have been prioritised and proactively engaged, receiving detailed project information and predominately engaged through face to face engagements. Bespoke holding maps were developed to enable landholders to identify opportunities and constraints specific to their properties. This feedback was then used to refine the alignment, both on specific properties and through the corridor more generally.

To build project awareness and maximise engagement opportunities a diverse range of communication mechanisms have been used to date. These include:

- a project website and other digital tools (such as an online interactive map)
- direct correspondence and engagement (letters, emails and phone calls)
- meetings and face to face engagements with stakeholders including community events
- advertising in traditional print media and social media posts
- community feedback channels (community information line and email)
- project collateral (such as fact sheets).

Stakeholders have explored and provided feedback across numerous themes. These vary from overarching comments about the consultation process through to detailed questions about longer term considerations such as operations and maintenance. To date, the vast majority of stakeholders have demonstrated a willingness to work with TransGrid, shown interest in identifying a preferred route and indicated a desire to remain informed and engaged on the progress of EnergyConnect.

2. Introduction

TransGrid's network enables more than three million homes and businesses to access a safe, reliable and affordable supply of electricity. The network comprises more than 100 substations and more than 13,000 kilometres of high-voltage transmission lines, underground cables, and interconnections with Queensland and Victoria.

This report has been prepared to support the EIS of EnergyConnect (NSW – Western Section), which is submitted to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces under Division 5.2, Part 5 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*. TransGrid is the proponent of the proposal.

In particular, this report outlines the program of communication and community engagement activities undertaken by TransGrid and its consultants to address the SEARs issued by the DPIE. It includes details of the tools and activities used to engage a broad range of stakeholders since November 2018, along with a summary of the key issues raised and how they have been considered or addressed.

An expansive engagement program was developed prior to and during preparation of the EIS to consider the range of stakeholders who may be potentially impacted by or interested in EnergyConnect and the proposal. This included providing opportunities for general community participation as well as more targeted consultation with the various tiers of Government, interest groups and landholders.

TransGrid recognises the need to build community and stakeholder interest in EnergyConnect to achieve effective and genuine consultation outcomes. Activities documented in this report include:

- initial engagement with stakeholders introducing EnergyConnect
- detailed communication and engagements with landholders, Aboriginal group representatives and industry stakeholders
- broader communication and engagement with the local community
- further consultation with the relevant agencies and stakeholders during the preparation of the EIS.

3. Document purpose

This report has been prepared in accordance with the relevant SEARs demonstrating how the general and consultation requirements have been achieved. In addition, evidence of complimentary consultation undertaken to inform the wider community and provide opportunities for feedback has also been included.

3.1 SEARs requirements

The consultation requirements of the SEARs and where they have been addressed in this report are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1 Relevant SEARs requirements

Reference	Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements	Where addressed in this report
General requirements	The EIS must include: > a description of the engagement that was carried out during the preparation of the EIS, the key issues raised during this engagement and the proposed engagement strategy for the project if it is approved.	Sections 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10
Consultation	During the preparation of the EIS, you should consult with the relevant local, State or Commonwealth Government authorities, service providers, community groups, affected landowners and lease holders, exploration licence holders and mineral title holders.	Sections 7 and 8

4. Background

The Australian energy landscape is transforming with an increased focus on low-emission renewable energy sources. The reasons for this transformation are multi-faceted and include:

- pressure on future supply of energy due to the expected closure of coal-fired power plants
- increasing appetite for renewable energy generation and transmission solutions
- commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- technological advancement of cost-competitive, low-emissions generation
- predicted increases in electricity consumption over the next ten years.

4.1 Current energy landscape

The NEM, which connects the southern and eastern states in Australia, delivering around 80 per cent of Australia's electricity consumption, has a system dominated by coal-fired generation.

The retirement of coal generation is predicted to be most rapid in NSW, with Mount Piper likely to become the sole remaining coal fired generator after the expected closure of the Liddell, Eraring and Bayswater power stations by 2035. This has the potential to put pressure on the future supply of energy, with electricity consumption across NSW increasing consistently over recent years and forecast to continue accelerating over the next decade.

In Australia, electricity generation is the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions, accounting for 34 per cent of the country's total emissions. Initiatives to transition to renewable energy generation and supply are an opportunity to honour the Commonwealth Government's emissions policy commitments and achieve the NSW Government's Net Zero Plan, including a 35 per cent cut in emissions by 2030 compared to 2005 levels.

4.2 Transition to renewable energy

To transition from traditional energy sources, like coal-fired generation, to lower emission alternatives including renewable energy, the NEM requires infrastructure to connect to new energy generation sources. Current interest in new, low emission energy generation projects in the NEM exceeds the existing transmission network capacity in several locations, meaning that not all projects would be viable.

In response, several Renewable Energy Zones (REZs) with high energy resource potential have been identified across the NEM. To unlock the potential of the REZs, the transmission grid itself needs targeted enhancement, including strategically placed large-scale interconnectors, substations and transmission line extensions.

To facilitate the strategic transition from traditional energy sources to lower emission alternatives, the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) developed the *2018 Integrated System Plan* (ISP), with an updated 2020 ISP released in July 2020. Also in November 2018, the NSW Government developed the *NSW Transmission Infrastructure Strategy*, which aims to prioritise transmission infrastructure projects to increase NSW's energy capacity through Energy Zones including the South West region of NSW.

Given the expected life span of aging coal-fired generators, government commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, growing energy demand and increasing consumption, the timing of solutions to escalate the existing transmission network's capacity is growing in urgency and importance.

4.3 EnergyConnect

EnergyConnect is one of these strategic transmission infrastructure upgrades and has been identified as one of four priority transmission projects in the *NSW Transmission Infrastructure Strategy* (DPE, 2018), an immediate priority project in the 2018 ISP and a 'no regret' Actionable project in the 2020 ISP. TransGrid will deliver the NSW and Victorian sections of EnergyConnect, facilitating improved mechanisms for energy sharing between states and enabling the connection of future renewable energy projects to the power grid.

The primary objective for the proposal is to secure increased electricity transmission capacity between SA, NSW and Victoria of about 800 megawatts (MW) and to facilitate the longer-term transition of the energy sector across the National Electricity Market (NEM) to low emission energy generation sources.

EnergyConnect is subject to approval processes, through the Australian Energy Regulator (AER), and, for the NSW sections of EnergyConnect, approvals under the NSW *Environment Planning and Assessment Act 1979* and the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act).

The AER approved the Regulatory Investment Test for Transmission (RIT-T) for EnergyConnect in January 2020. The next step involves the lodgement and review of a Contingent Project Application with the AER for approval. A determination on the Contingent Project Application is expected in late 2020.

In addition:

- the NSW Minister for Planning and Public Spaces has declared the NSW portions of EnergyConnect to be Critical State significant infrastructure (CSSI)
- The Australian Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment determined the NSW portions of EnergyConnect to be a separate controlled actions under the EPBC Act and that each section will be assessed using the bilateral assessment process.

Further detail on the environmental approvals required for the proposal are provided in Chapter 1 of the EIS.

5. Overview of proposal

TransGrid (electricity transmission operator in New South Wales (NSW)) and ElectraNet (electricity transmission operator in South Australia (SA)) are seeking regulatory and environmental planning approval for the construction and operation of a new High Voltage (HV) interconnector between NSW and SA, with an added connection to north-west Victoria. Collectively, the proposed interconnector is known as EnergyConnect.

EnergyConnect comprises several components or 'sections' (shown on Figure 1). The NSW – Western Section (the proposal) is the subject of this report.

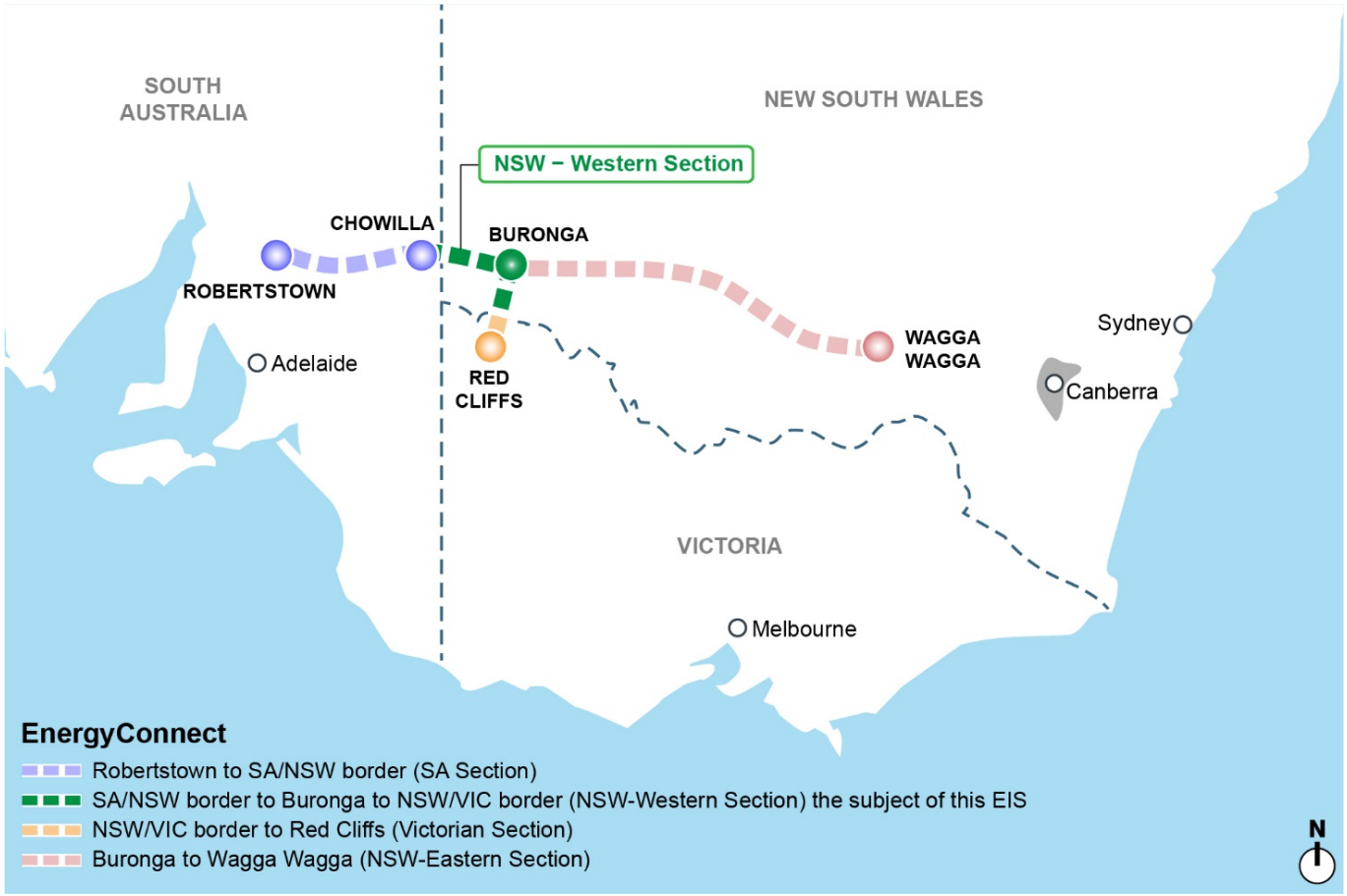


Figure 1 EnergyConnect overview map

The key components of the proposal include:

- a new 330 kilovolt (kV) double circuit transmission line and associated infrastructure, extending around 135 kilometres between the SA/NSW border near Chowilla and the existing Buronga substation
- an upgrade of the existing 24 kilometre long 220 kV single circuit transmission line between the Buronga substation and the NSW/Victoria border at Monak (near Red Cliffs, Victoria) to a 220 kV double circuit transmission line, and the decommissioning of the 220 kV single circuit transmission line (known as Line 0X1)
- a significant upgrade and expansion of the existing Buronga substation to a combined operating voltage 220 kV/330 kV
- new and/or upgrade of access tracks as required
- a minor realignment of the existing 0X2 220 kV transmission line, in proximity to the Darling River
- ancillary works required to facilitate the construction of the proposal (e.g. laydown and staging areas, concrete batching plants, brake/winch sites, site offices and accommodation camps).

Subject to approval, construction of the proposal would commence in mid-2021. The construction of the transmission lines would take approximately 18 months while the Buronga substation upgrade and expansion would be delivered in two components to be operational by mid-2023, with site decommissioning and rehabilitation to be completed by mid-2024.The final construction program would be confirmed during detailed design.

The proposal is further described in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

The primary objective for the proposal is to secure increased electricity transmission capacity between SA, NSW and Victoria of about 800 megawatts (MW) and facilitate the longer-term transition of the energy sector across the National Electricity Market (NEM) to low emission energy generation sources. More specifically, the proposal aims to:

- lower power prices
- improve energy security
- increase economic activity
- support the transition to a lower carbon emission energy system
- support a greater mix of energy generation in the NEM.

6. Engagement overview and objectives

TransGrid is committed to an engagement process that is proactive, transparent and represents a genuine desire to work with stakeholders. TransGrid recognises that a two-way feedback process is the key to understanding the needs and views of stakeholders and communities who are directly and indirectly affected by its operations.

Additionally, TransGrid acknowledge DPIE's emphasis on effective and genuine community consultation, including a comprehensive and transparent process during the preparation of the EIS, to ensure the community is provided with an understanding of the proposal. This includes a description of any potential impacts and ensuring stakeholders are actively engaged in issues of concern.

To date, the scope for community and stakeholder engagement has focussed on the early work being undertaken to support the route selection process.

To meet the requirements of the SEARs and to ensure a consistent approach across various stakeholder groups, the methodology for community and stakeholder engagement was coordinated across three key areas:

1. engagement with relevant interest groups, agencies and authorities to address specific requirements of the SEARs
2. targeted engagement with the community and stakeholders, particularly those with a direct interest in the proposal, such as landholders, neighbours and other identified community stakeholders
3. broader communication and engagement with stakeholders in the region.

6.1 Objectives

TransGrid recognises the importance of early and effective engagement with communities and stakeholders in alignment with principles from IAP2's Quality Assurance Standard and Clean Energy Council's Best Practice Charter.

Fundamental to the engagement approach was a focus on ensuring the community and stakeholders were provided with an early understanding of what is proposed, were actively engaged in issues of concern and had the opportunity to provide feedback.

The objectives of community and stakeholder engagement were to:

- identify and engage early with community and stakeholders in genuine, honest and transparent engagement
- enable stakeholders to provide informed feedback, through the provision of tailored, timely and meaningful information
- provide clear communications on what the proposal is, relevant/potential impacts and the underlying project need
- encourage stakeholders to actively participate in and build acceptance towards the route selection methodology and process
- consult on the potential environmental and social impacts of the proposal
- conduct the engagement and communications process in a manner that addresses regulatory requirements and is regarded as providing stakeholders with just and fair opportunities to participate
- develop and maintain respectful working relationships with stakeholders.

These objectives will be in place throughout the life of the proposal.

7. Stakeholder engagement activities

A dedicated program of communication and engagement occurred prior to and during the preparation of the EIS, to identify the range of stakeholders who may be potentially impacted by or interested in the proposal.

Stakeholder groups were identified early to facilitate targeted messaging and engagement approaches to best meet their shared interest, needs and concerns.

Since November 2018, over 890 engagement activities have been undertaken for EnergyConnect (including the proposal), ranging from community drop-in sessions and council briefings to face-to-face meetings with directly affected landholders, and phone calls and direct correspondence via email. Table 2 details the stakeholders, consultation process and overview of consultation.

Table 2 Stakeholder engagement activities

Stakeholders	Engagement activity	Summary
Energy Regulator / Operator		
> Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) > Australian Energy Regulator.	> Project briefings and subsequent updates > Regulatory consultation (RIT-T).	> 11 briefings and project updates have been provided.
Local Members of Parliament (State and Federal)		
> Federal Member for Riverina, The Hon Michael McCormack MP [Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure, Transport & Regional Development] > Federal Member for Farrer, The Hon Sussan Ley MP [Minister for Environment] > Federal Member for Hume, The Hon Angus Taylor MP [Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction] > NSW Member for Albury, Justin Clancy MP [Chair, Legislative Assembly Committee on Investment, Industry and Regional Development] > NSW Member for Murray, Helen Dalton MP > NSW Member for Hornsby, Matt Kean MP [Minister for Energy and Environment] > SA Member for Stuart, Dan van Holst Pellekaan MP [Minister for Energy and Mining].	> Project briefings and subsequent updates > Community consultation discussions > Regulatory consultation and project updates with Energy Ministers.	> 29 briefings and project updates have been provided.

Stakeholders	Engagement activity	Summary
Government – Departmental and Agency		
> Australian Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment > Australian Department of Education, Skills & Employment > Australian Department of Industry, Innovation & Science > NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) and its divisions NSW Crown Lands, NSW Environment, Energy and Science, and NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service > NSW Department of Regional NSW, and its divisions NSW Local Land Services and Forestry Corporation NSW > NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet (heritage) > Property Acquisition NSW > Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning > Parks Victoria.	> Project briefings and subsequent updates > Subject matter specific engagements.	> 104 briefings, project updates, subject matter specific engagements and correspondence have been made.
Local government – Elected Officials/ Executive Staff		
The local government within the proposed study area is: > Wentworth Shire Council. Additional local governments within the larger EnergyConnect project area including: > Balranald Shire Council > Edward River Council > Hay Shire Council > Lockhart Shire Council > Murray River Council > Murrumbidgee Council > Federation Council > Narrandera Shire Council > Wagga Wagga City Council.	> Project briefings and subsequent updates > Route selection workshop > Community consultation discussions.	> 52 briefings and project updates have been provided to Wentworth Shire Council > Workshops have also been held with Council to secure their feedback into the route selection process > 495 briefings and project updates have been provided to nearby local governments.

Stakeholders	Engagement activity	Summary
Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal Groups		
> NSW Aboriginal Land Council > NTSCORP > Barkandji Traditional Owners (Native Title Group) > Barkindji Maraura Elders Council (BMEC) > Barkindji Maraura Elders Environment Team (BMEET) > Ta-Ru Board of Management / Maraura Barkintji Traditional Owners > Murra Bidgee Mullangari > Dareton Local Aboriginal Land Council.	> Project briefings and subsequent updates > Media advertisements > Direct letters and notices > Site walkovers and cultural heritage clearance activities.	> 70 briefings and project updates have been provided to Aboriginal groups and representatives > Media advertisements were published in the Koori Mail, Weekly Times and Mildura Weekly in April 2020 as notice and registration of Aboriginal interests > 19 consultation letters were issued in April 2020 to assist in the assessment of the proposal and provide input to the preparation of a cultural heritage assessment report.
Industry and interest groups		
> NSW Farmers Association > Lake Victoria Advisory Committee > Regional Development Australia > Western Landcare NSW Inc. > Industry Capability Network > Primary Producers SA > AI Group > Energy Consumers Australia > Energy Users Association of Australia > Public Interest Advocacy Centre > Business SA. > Relentless Resources > Morello Earthmoving > Essential Energy.	> Project briefings, regulatory consultation and subsequent updates > EnergyConnect website > Interactive map.	> 44 briefings and project updates have been provided to industry groups > 400+ individual businesses registered interest from NSW and Australia in working with TransGrid on EnergyConnect.

Stakeholders	Engagement activity	Summary
Directly impacted landholders		
Landholders (owners, occupiers, lease and other interest holders in the corridor).	> Direct letters and information packs > Project factsheets > Face to face meetings, emails and phone calls > Property maps > Drop-in information sessions and public events > Interactive map > Media advertisements.	> 44 introductory letters and additional information provided to each landholder > 494 engagement contacts, including face to face meetings, emails and phone calls > Invitations to community information sessions and public events.
Community members		
Community and local land users (considered not directly impacted)	To cover the broad area affected by the Project, it was important to provide a number of channels to communicate with the local community and solicit feedback on the project proposal. This included: > Toll free number > Email address > EnergyConnect website > Drop-in information sessions and public events > Interactive map > Fact sheets > Media advertisements.	> Invitations to community information sessions and public events via newspaper advertising and radio interview (ABC Mildura) > Attendance at community events > 1,894 interactive map views, since 29 February 2020 > 1,345 website views, since 9 March 2020.

8. Stakeholder feedback

General feedback, issues and suggestions from community and stakeholder engagement have been received through a variety of different channels. The information captured has been documented to better understand stakeholder concerns, trends analysis and continuous improvement.

This includes engagement prior to and during the EIS development process.

A summary of stakeholder feedback by engagement to date is outlined below. Further detail on topics raised and TransGrid's response is provided in section 9 Topics raised and responses.

8.1 Government departments and agencies

The project team focused on two key themes within its engagement of government departments and agencies, specifically the engagement necessary to prepare for the project approvals process and the regulatory consultation process.

The preparation for environmental planning approvals focused on seeking inputs from decision makers and subject matter experts on project requirements. Relevant feedback included:

- management of local environment and biodiversity, including potential offset strategies
- planning requirements, project applications and ongoing reporting
- engagement on cultural heritage matters
- project development activities.

The regulatory consultation process focused on planning of infrastructure investment (RIT-T) and future energy demands, to ensure the EnergyConnect development would meet the needs of energy consumers. Feedback was also specifically provided on:

- route selection
- prioritising local procurement
- management of land access and acquisition process
- engagement on cultural heritage matters
- project timeframes and staging.

8.2 Local government

The project team has regularly engaged Wentworth Shire Council on the proposal, especially in regard to the proposed route and community consultation. Specific feedback included:

- route alignment
- overview and consideration of local issues
- local employment and procurement opportunities
- exploration to improve mobile phone coverage in the region.

In addition, surrounding local governments have received similar briefings and updates with similar feedback provided.

8.3 Aboriginal groups and representatives

Initial meetings with the various Aboriginal group representatives was focused on sharing project information and facilitating Aboriginal cultural heritage assessments, including participation in cultural heritage surveys and site supervision during preliminary activities.

In addition, representatives also provided feedback more generally, including:

- willingness to continue participating and speaking for Country across aspects of project development (site walkthrough) and construction activity (such as excavation)
- encouraging EnergyConnect to undertake skills development and training with Aboriginal people
- a desire for TransGrid to promote Aboriginal finds, and to facilitate visits to cultural places on private land to explore shared values and enhance cultural heritage
- noting Fletcher's Lake as an important place with great cultural value, similarly, areas near Lake Victoria and Darling River contain Women's Sites
- advised that the project should implement culturally appropriate ceremonies of recognition aligned with project activity and milestones.

8.4 Industry and interest groups

A range of briefings and subsequent meetings with industry and interest groups were held prior to and during the EIS preparation. These briefings and meetings focused on a project overview, context of the project with AEMO's ISP and the current challenges and opportunities within the NEM. Industry stakeholders were particularly interested in the cost and benefits of EnergyConnect, the impact of potential earlier than anticipated closure of coal and gas generation and noting the social value of increased reliability in energy supply and EnergyConnect's role in supporting increased reliability.

8.4.1 NSW and Australian businesses

Over 400 NSW and Australian businesses have registered their interest in working with TransGrid on EnergyConnect. This includes registering their interest in multiple work packages, including civil engineering, quarry products, haulage, logistics, traffic management, concreting, fencing and workforce accommodation.

8.4.2 Exploration licence and mineral title holders

Discussions with exploration licence and mineral title holders within the proposal area have been made, with current proposal scoping and locations provided. Continued conversations in regard to potential impact, if any, to their exploration or title holding are ongoing.

8.4.3 Service providers and utilities

Initial studies were carried out to identify utilities and service providers along the alignment, all asset owners were notified as part of this process. Due to the potential level of impact, a briefing and follow-up discussions were held with Essential Energy regarding the undergrounding of distribution lines where they cross the EnergyConnect corridor. Final designs will be provided to Essential Energy as part of their approval process, with ongoing meetings held as required. Remaining asset owners will be further engaged as part of the detailed design process.

8.4.4 Other interest groups

Other interest groups including Regional Development Australia, Riverina and Murray Joint Organisation and NSW Farmers Association, have expressed positive feedback regarding the economic development and employment opportunity that a large-scale construction project would provide in the region, advocating for use of local labour and suppliers. As representative groups, there was indication of support to work with TransGrid to maximise the spread of project information through their member base.

Groups with a focus on agricultural and environmental matters advocated for the importance of maintaining biosecurity practices to protect farming operations, and advocated to maintain or enhance local environments and biodiversity.

8.5 Local landholders and the community

8.5.1 Landholders

The project team engaged directly with potentially impacted landholders during the consultation process to help inform the alignment of the proposed transmission line and understand potential impacts of the proposal including associated access tracks. Landholders expressed a range of sentiment towards the proposal and potential impact on their properties. Overwhelmingly, landholders displayed a willingness to be engaged by TransGrid to develop the best possible outcome for the proposed transmission line design in coexistence with existing operations and land use. During the engagements, TransGrid was able to incorporate landholders' preferences and/or solutions for a proposed easement on their property to best minimise impacts. Landholders also worked with TransGrid in the development of comprehensive Property Management Plans.

8.5.2 Community members

Community events and activities primarily focused on providing general proposal information, information about route selection and capturing stakeholder feedback.

Accordingly, the majority of feedback obtained over the course of the engagements related to route selection and the proposed methodology and measures to minimise impact as much as possible. Key topics of discussion included:

- potential impacts of the proposal
- utilising existing infrastructure corridors (e.g. roads and existing transmission line)
- visual amenity considerations
- better understanding of the impacts, if any, of electromagnetic fields on the area and community.

The local community also requested continuation of information sharing in relation to progress of the EnergyConnect and associated details.

9. Topics raised and responses

Stakeholders provided feedback across numerous themes.

TransGrid's analysis of the feedback provided during the engagement period found that although views expressed by specific stakeholder groups differed, several common themes emerged.

Table 3 provides a summary of the key themes, relevant topics of feedback within each theme and a high-level overview of responses provided.

Table 3 Topics raised and responses

Theme	Relevant topic of feedback	Response
Aboriginal heritage	Engagement with Aboriginal groups	TransGrid published its first *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Engagement and Participation Policy* in May 2020, affirming its commitment to the importance of cultural heritage, creating participation opportunities, developing sustainable relationships and enhancing cultural awareness. TransGrid will continue working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities during the development, delivery maintenance and operation of EnergyConnect. More information on TransGrid's policy is available online at https://www.transgrid.com.au/being-responsible/.
Biosecurity	Weed hygiene and biosecurity procedures	TransGrid is committed to limiting the impact of construction and operational activities on the communities in which we work, including weed management. TransGrid works with relevant authorities and landholders to understand any specific requirements to ensure that weed hygiene and biodiversity risk is prevented, eliminated or minimised.
Consultation	Landholder consultation process	Landholders and communities are helping identify regional constraints and opportunities that may impact the location of the transmission line, as well as providing insight into other local considerations. These considerations are being factored into the preferred route to minimise impact to environmental, social and cultural values that are important to landholders and the community.
Dust management	Dust management and impact to property operations	Pre-emptive dust suppression activities will be conducted during construction. Specific instances and concerns will be addressed as they arise.

Theme	Relevant topic of feedback	Response
Easement compensation	Land valuations and offers of compensation	In seeking to acquire an easement, TransGrid will engage qualified professionals to value the impact of the easement on the land in accordance with the *Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act 1991*. The landholder receives written advice outlining the offer. Depending on the circumstances, the offer would cover: > value of the easement > incurred costs (e.g. legal fees) > any 'special value' as defined by the *Just Terms Act* that may apply.
Electric and magnetic fields (EMF)	People, agriculture and environment.	TransGrid works to provide safe transmission services across its electricity network, including EMF and ensuring compliance with Australian Standards. TransGrid's EMF Fact Sheet provides further information on electric and magnetic fields and is available online at https://www.transgrid.com.au/being-responsible/public-safety.
	GPS enabled equipment and communications devices	TransGrid will design the transmission line to minimise impacts from radio frequency interference (RFI) emissions. The operation of residential, commercial or industrial devices on properties should not be impacted by the RFI emissions from the transmission line, as the devices and the transmission line will generally operate at different frequencies.
Employment	Expression of interest to work on EnergyConnect	TransGrid has encouraged local suppliers and business to register their interest in helping deliver EnergyConnect. Over 400 NSW and Australian businesses have registered expressions of interest across multiple work packages.
Environment (flora, fauna and bio-diversity)	Mature trees and other riparian vegetation	TransGrid is undertaking ecology surveys and investigations. These activities help identify existing animal and plant species, including their habitats within the local area. These surveys will help us understand the local environment, and identify issues to be taken into account during engineering design and project planning.
	Mallee woodland	
	Modified pastoral leases and conservation areas	
	Environmental offset areas	

Theme	Relevant topic of feedback	Response
Land use (current and proposed	Proximity to farm infrastructure and associated equipment	TransGrid has worked with landholders to understand current land use and any planned future activity, to minimise impact and refine the potential route alignment.
	Future land use	
	Co-existence between transmission line and farming operations	
	Local airstrips	
Maintenance and remediation	Maintenance of roads and other shared infrastructure	TransGrid will regularly inspect sites and shared infrastructure to ensure sites are safe.
	Remediation of proposal sites	
Property access	Access	TransGrid seeks agreements with landholders regarding property access. Prior consent is required for entry to a property for site investigations, or an easement is negotiated on the land for the purpose of construction, operation and maintenance of the transmission line. Any specific requirements regarding property access (prior notification, gate security, etc) are recorded during these engagements.
	Access notification process	
	Security	
Property value	Proximity of transmission line infrastructure	Factors like visual amenity and land use are taken into account during the route selection process. Opportunities to co-locate proposed and existing infrastructure is a key aspect of minimising impact to the community and the environment. TransGrid will continue to work with stakeholders to resolve concerns and minimise impacts, as much as possible.
	Duplication of transmission line and easement	
Route alignment considerations	Existing tracks, fence lines and disturbed areas	Within the area of investigation, TransGrid identifies: > constraints like social and environmental factors that must or should be avoided > opportunities to minimise the potential impact on local communities and the environment. TransGrid then refines the potential route in consultation with landholders, identifying local considerations that will assist in informing the proposed route.
	Farm infrastructure, agricultural equipment, communications equipment and access gates	
	Dwellings	
	Current and future land use	
Telecommunications	Mobile phone coverage	The resolution of local blackspots to mobile coverage is outside the scope for EnergyConnect, however opportunities to improve coverage are currently being investigated.

Theme	Relevant topic of feedback	Response
Tourism and recreation areas	Local recreation areas	TransGrid works with stakeholders and landholders to better understand the social, environmental and cultural values held by the community about the local area. These factors are considered as inputs to developing the proposed transmission route.
	Tourism	
Visual amenity	Tourism and recreation areas	TransGrid works with stakeholders and landholders to best understand the social, environmental and cultural values held by the community about the local area. These factors are considered as inputs to developing the proposed transmission route
	Local towns	
	Dwellings	
Water	Water supply and management	Water would be required during construction for a range of activities. TransGrid will engage with key stakeholders regarding the supply of water, complying with the relevant council and utility approval processes.

10. Conclusions and next steps

The consultation and engagement undertaken to support the preparation of the EIS has ensured the community and all stakeholders identified in the SEARs were made aware of and had an understanding of EnergyConnect and the proposal. It also ensured they had an opportunity to provide feedback on issues and matters of concern.

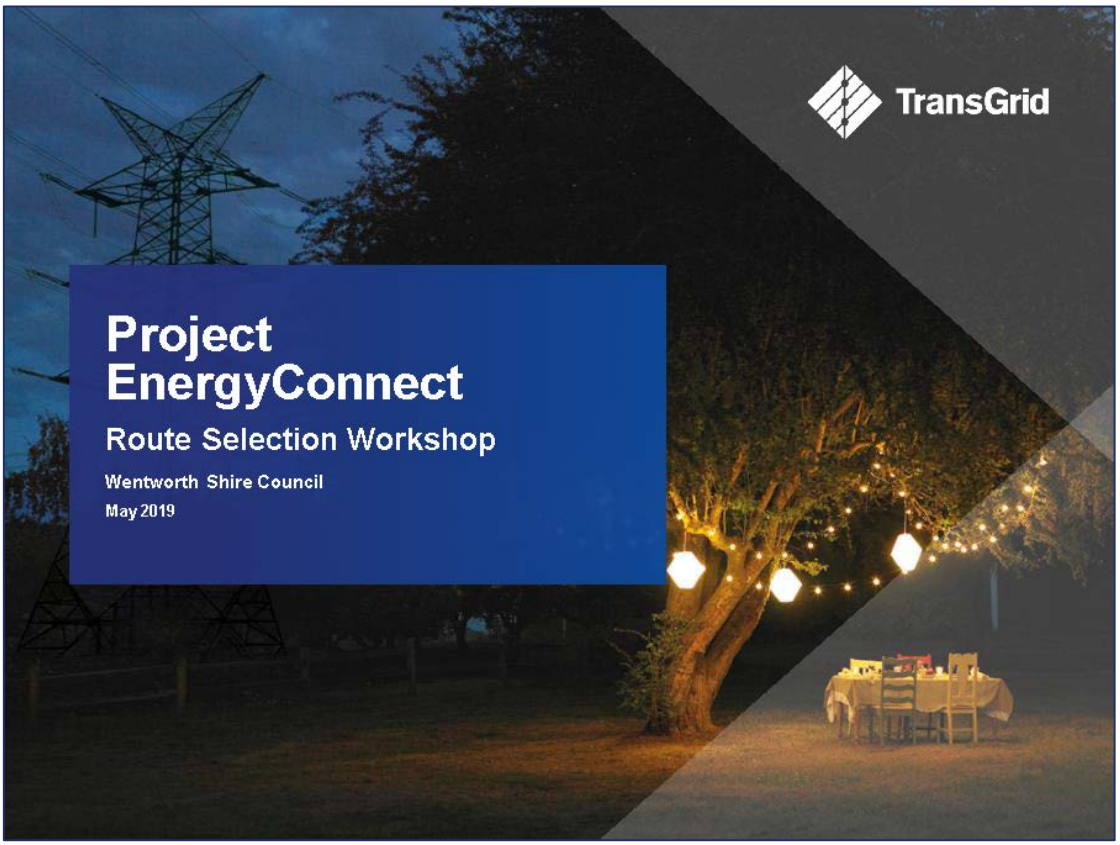
In addition to stakeholders identified in the SEARs, and in accordance with DPIE's expectations for effective and genuine community consultation, the program of communication and engagement undertaken also provided an opportunity to create broader awareness among a larger range of stakeholders including industry, interest groups and community members.

TransGrid will continue to work with stakeholders promoting participation, updating information and encouraging stakeholders to provide feedback throughout the assessment process and beyond. It is anticipated that the next stage of community and stakeholder engagement will build on relationships already established through early engagement activities and will complement the formal consultation required under planning regulations.

In addition to engagement coordinated by the project team, community members and other stakeholders will have the opportunity to 'have their say' during a future public exhibition period of the EIS.

11. Appendix

Attachment A: Route selection workshop presentation to Wentworth Shire Council



Welcome and introduction

- Purpose of today
- Project EnergyConnect – background and status
- Route selection process overview
- Constraints and opportunities feedback
- Engagement and local opportunities

2 Route Selection Workshop, Wentworth Shire Council, May 2019

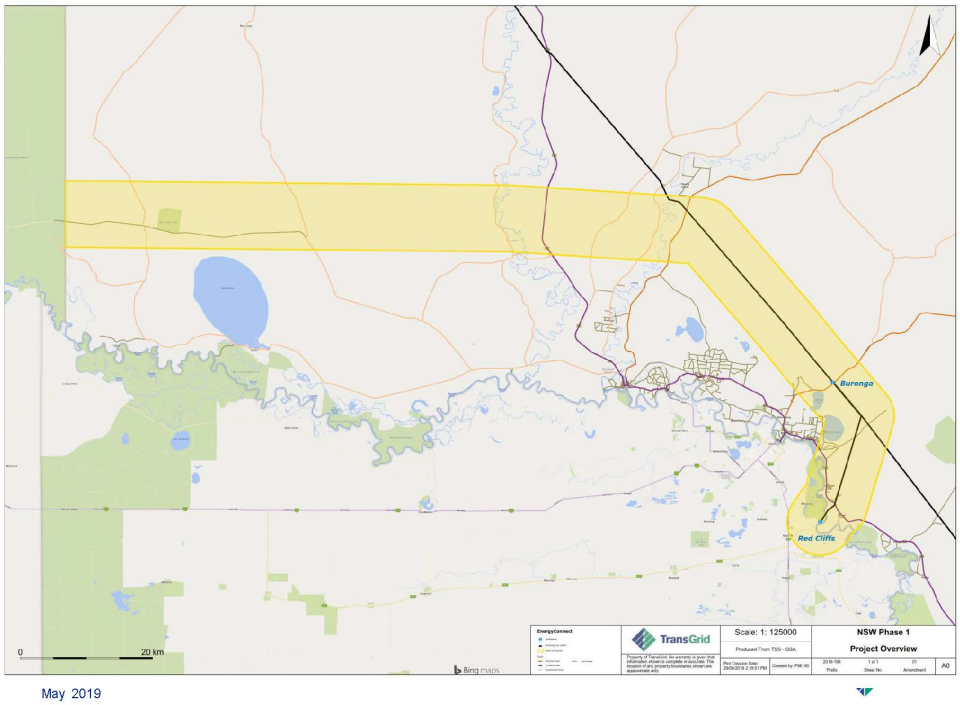
TransGrid

Project EnergyConnect – background and status

> Why an interconnector?
> How was the Interconnector indentified as an option?
> Overview of Project EnergyConnect
> Anticipated timelines

TransGrid

Route Overview - Border to Buronga



May 2019

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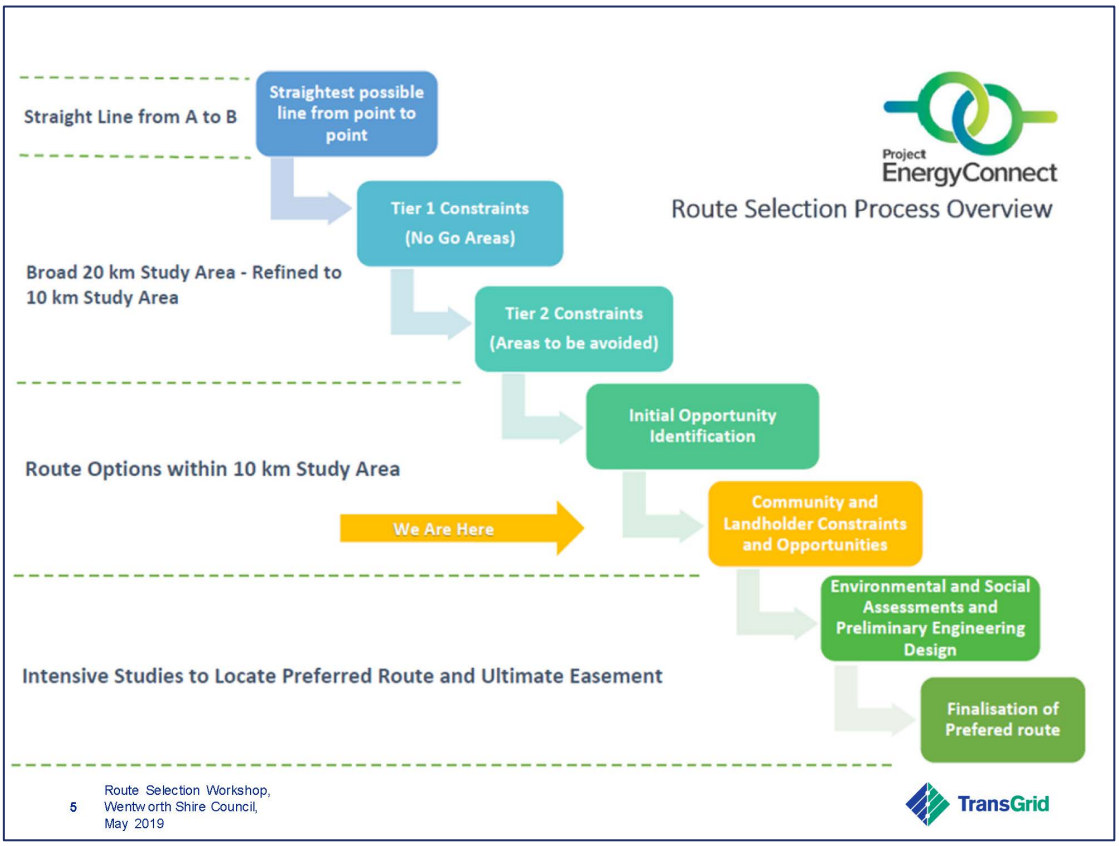
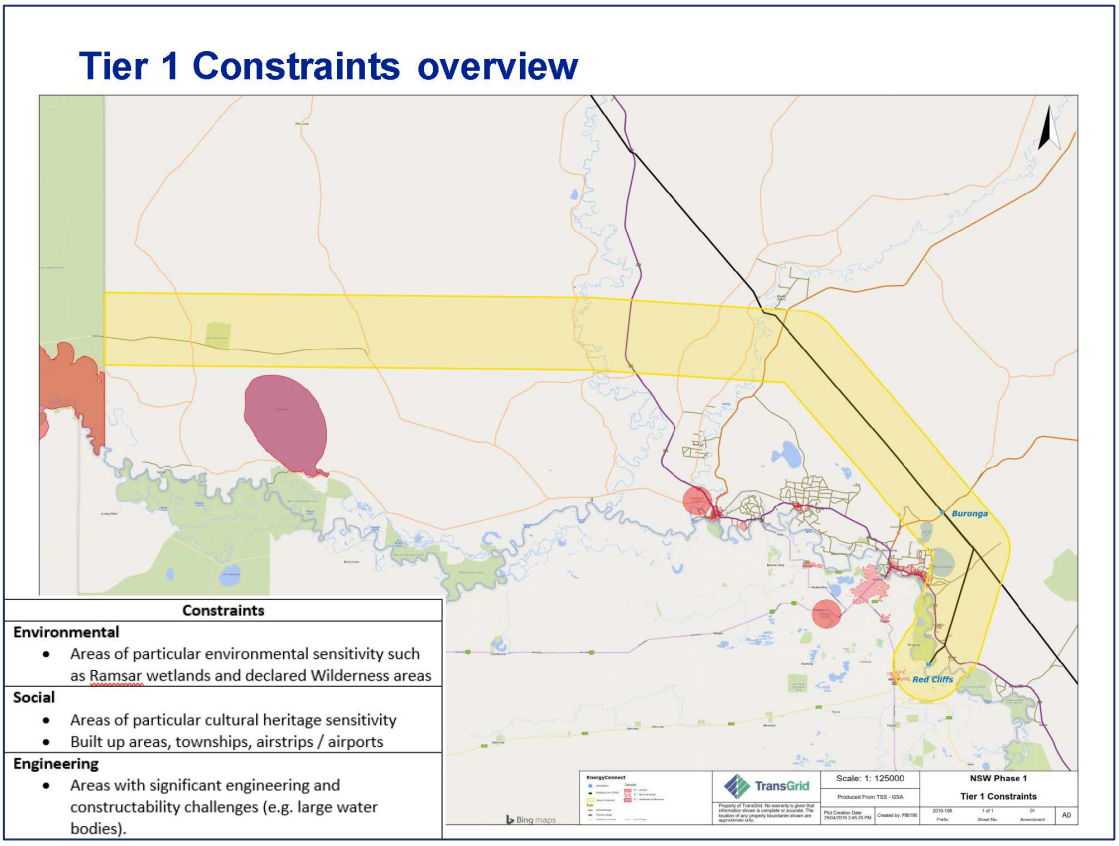
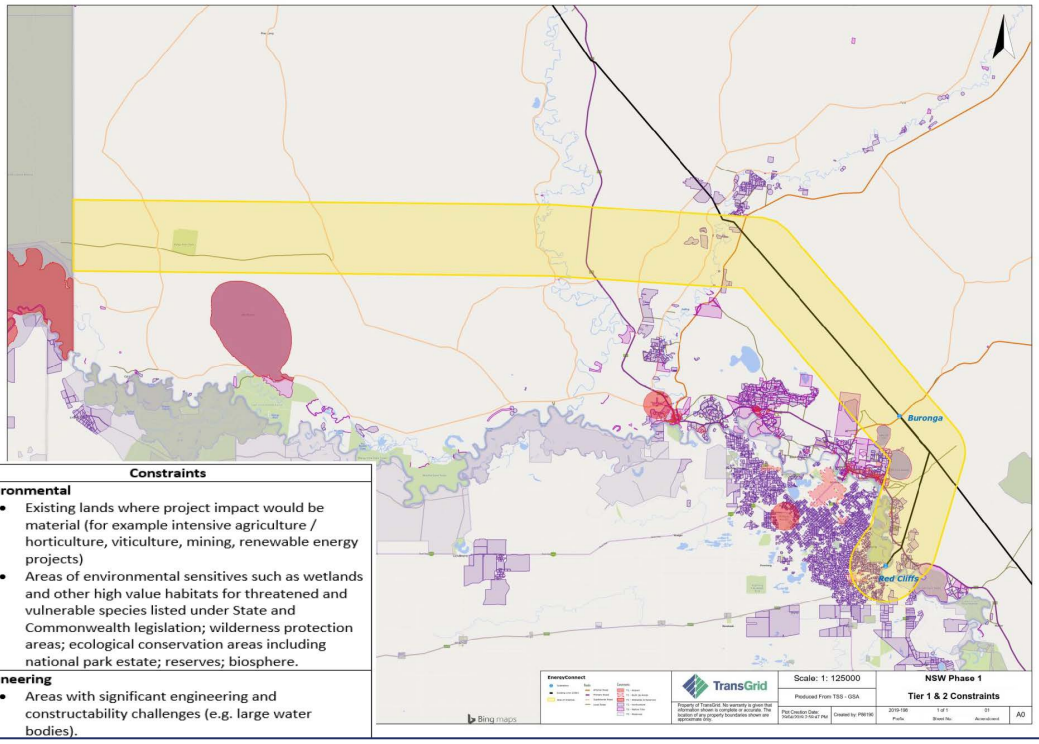
TransGrid


Straight Line from A to B
Straightest possible line from point to point
Tier 1 Constraints (No Go Areas)
Broad 20 km Study Area - Refined to 10 km Study Area
Tier 2 Constraints (Areas to be avoided)
Initial Opportunity Identification
Route Options within 10 km Study Area
We Are Here
Community and Landholder Constraints and Opportunities
Environmental and Social Assessments and Preliminary Engineering Design
Intensive Studies to Locate Preferred Route and Ultimate Easement
Finalisation of Prefered route
Project EnergyConnect
Route Selection Process Overview
5
Route Selection Workshop, Wentworth Shire Council, May 2019
TransGrid

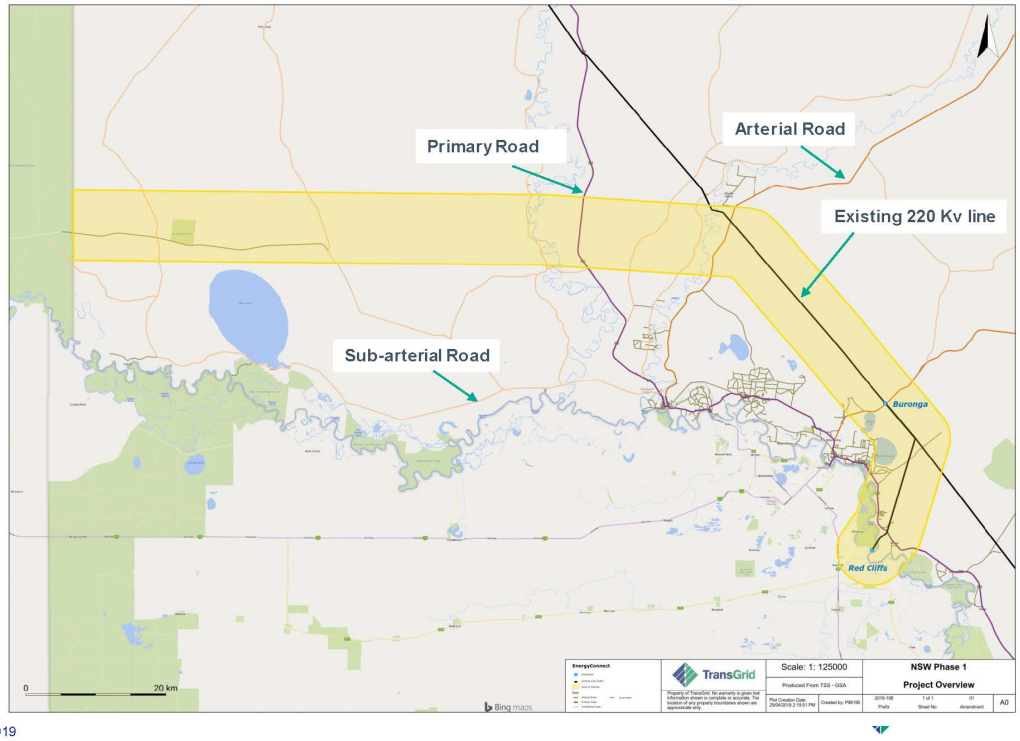

Tier 1 Constraints overview
Buronga
Red Cliffs
Constraints
Environmental
Areas of particular environmental sensitivity such as Ramsar wetlands and declared Wilderness areas
Social
Areas of particular cultural heritage sensitivity
Built up areas, townships, airstrips / airports
Engineering
Areas with significant engineering and constructability challenges (e.g. large water bodies).
TransGrid
Scale: 1: 125000
NSW Phase 1
Tier 1 Constraints

Tier 2 Constraints overview



Constraints
Environmental • Existing lands where project impact would be material (for example intensive agriculture / horticulture, viticulture, mining, renewable energy projects) • Areas of environmental sensitives such as wetlands and other high value habitats for threatened and vulnerable species listed under State and Commonwealth legislation; wilderness protection areas; ecological conservation areas including national park estate; reserves; biosphere.
Engineering • Areas with significant engineering and constructability challenges (e.g. large water bodies).

Landholder and community constraints & opportunities



Route
8 v
May 2019

Engagement and local opportunities

Upcoming engagement events

> Drop-in sessions

Online engagement

> Interactive mapping
> Online survey

Engagement moving forward

TransGrid

Thankyou

TransGrid

TransGrid

Attachment B: Project introduction landholder letter

TransGrid

ABN 70 250 995 390
180 Thomas Street, Sydney
PO Box A1000 Sydney South
NSW 1235 Australia
T (02) 9284 3000
F (02) 9284 3456

14/02/2019

[Landowner]
[Address]
[Suburb State Postcode]

Dear [Landowner]

Project EnergyConnect

Project EnergyConnect is a proposed new electricity interconnector between Robertstown in South Australia and Wagga Wagga in New South Wales, with a connection into Victoria. The Project was announced this week, by TransGrid and ElectraNet, who operate the transmission networks in New South Wales and South Australia.

An electricty interconnector is a connection that allows power to flow between states in the National Energy Market. The proposed new interconnector is currently being assessed under the formal Regulatory Investment Test for Transmission (RIT-T) required by the Australian Energy Regulator.

In parallel to the RIT-T process, TransGrid is undertaking preliminary investigations to better understand the environmental, social and land use constraints of an initial 10 km-wide study area that has been identified as a potential corridor for the interconnector.

We are writing to you as land you have an interest in is within the initial 10km-wide study area.

We would like to provide you with information about the Project and secure your input into the methodology being used to narrow the 10 km-wide study area. We would also like to understand more about your property and your initial feedback on the project.

As Project EnergyConnect is in its early stages, the feedback you provide will assist in informing the location of the potential interconnector route.

To enable us to make contact with you, please can you advise us of the most appropriate phone or email details. Please provide these details to us via:

Phone: 1800 222 537 or

Email: community@transgrid.com.au

Once we have received your details we will contact you with a view to setting up a face-to-face meeting in March 2019.

Please find enclosed additional, general information regarding Project EnergyConnect. Further information can also be accessed at www.projectenergyconnect.com.au.

If you have any questions or would like further information please get in touch on the above contacts.

Yours faithfully

Michael Lloyd
Community Relations
Project EnergyConnect

www.transgrid.com.au

Attachment C: Project overview factsheet

ENERGYCONNECT FACTSHEET

Connecting New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria

A new electricity interconnector is proposed between Wagga Wagga in New South Wales and Robertstown in South Australia, with an additional smaller connection to Victoria. TransGrid is partnering with ElectraNet to deliver EnergyConnect.

Why is this project needed?

The Australian energy landscape is transitioning to a greater mix of renewables. To support this transition, the national electricity grid needs to change to connect new energy generation sources to Australian communities and businesses. At the same time, customers are demanding lower power bills and a more secure and reliable service.

What is the project?

EnergyConnect involves the construction of a transmission line connecting New South Wales and South Australia, with connection into Victoria. The proposed interconnector would be around 900km long and run between Wagga Wagga in NSW and Robertstown in SA.

The interconnector is a key element of the Australian Energy Market Operator's *Integrated System Plan* and the New South Wales Government has declared it Critical State Significant Infrastructure.

What are the project benefits?

If approved, EnergyConnect would deliver a range of direct benefits for consumers in New South Wales, South Australia, and Victoria including:

Lower prices

- Typical residential electricity bills are estimated to be reduced annually by $30 in NSW
- Typical small business electricity bills are estimated to be reduced annually by $71 in NSW.

Energy security

- Enables a greater mix of renewable energy generation to connect to the network
- Increases reliability and security of electricity supply.

Increased economic activity and jobs

- Creates 1,500 jobs in NSW
- $4 billion net economic benefit in NSW
- Unlocks development of new energy projects.

What is an interconnector?

An electricity interconnector is a connection that allows power to flow between regions in the National Energy Market, providing access to a larger number of electricity generators.

Connect with us

1800 49 06 66 I pec@transgrid.com.au
transgrid.com.au/energyconnect

TransGrid

MAY 2020

How we work

Initial studies of a potential project corridor are underway to understand environmental, social and engineering considerations as well as stakeholder perspectives for the project.

TransGrid has been seeking feedback on a potential route between the NSW/SA border and Wagga Wagga since 2019, and is committed to open and transparent engagement across all phases of the project.

We will continue to engage with communities along the proposed route throughout the life of the project, including meetings with relevant landholders.

These discussions will continue as feedback is collected and the route is further refined.

Have your say online at:
www.transgrid.com.au/energyconnect

Key project dates

- **2018–19** — Preliminary investigations and project scoping
- **Q4 2019** — Community and landholder engagement underway; Expected regulatory determination by the Australian Energy Regulator
- **Late 2020** — Western Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on public exhibition
- **Mid 2021** — Eastern EIS on public exhibition
- **Late 2021** — Western construction commencement
- **Early 2022** — Eastern construction commencement
- **By 2023** — Project commissioning underway

Contact us

To contact the project team, phone **1800 49 06 66 (toll-free)** or email **pec@transgrid.com.au**

TransGrid | Project EnergyConnect | ElectraNet

Attachment D: Route refinement factsheet

ENERGYCONNECT

Route selection

EnergyConnect

TransGrid is reinforcing the transmission network in southern NSW to improve the flow of electricity between new generation sources and the State's major demand centres.

Reinforcing the southern transmission network will:

- Allow new energy sources to come online, including renewables
- Unlock the full capacity of the expanded Snowy Hydro Scheme
- Enable greater sharing of energy between the eastern states.

Route selection

TransGrid is committed to working with landowners and communities to identify the route for the interconnector.

To develop the transmission route, we are conducting:

- Landowner and community consultation
- Environmental field studies and site assessments.

What to expect?

TransGrid representatives are in the process of meeting with local landowners, communities and other stakeholders to better understand local considerations. This includes:

- Discussions with individual landowners
- Drop-in sessions for community members
- Meetings with local representatives.

In addition to this, you may see specialists undertaking field studies. These studies will occur on public and private land.

Route refinement process

To identify a preferred route for the transmission line, an area of investigation is initially determined. This area is between two known points being the start and end points of the transmission line. These points are usually at the location of a sub-station.

The area of investigation is then refined and further developed to identify an initial route. This involves:

- Identifying regional constraints and opportunities
- Refining the area of investigation
- Investigating local considerations.

Connect with us

1800 49 06 66 | pec@transgrid.com.au
transgrid.com.au/energyconnect

TransGrid

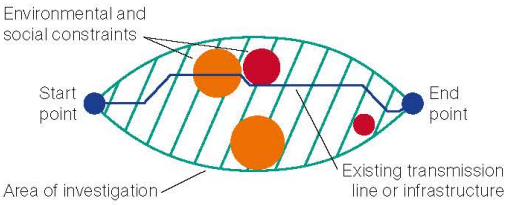
Regional constraints and opportunities

Within the area of investigation, we first identify:

- Constraints like social and environmental factors that must or should be avoided
- Opportunities to minimise the potential impact on local communities and the environment.

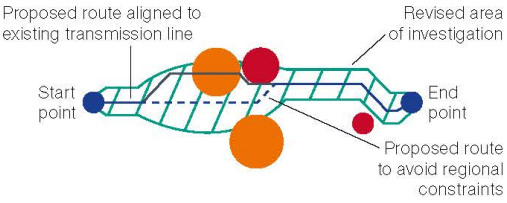
Constraints can include intensive agriculture, licensed airstrips, conservation areas and significant cultural heritage sites.

Opportunities can include aligning the new transmission line with existing transmission infrastructure, fence lines, roads and access tracks.



Refining the area of investigation

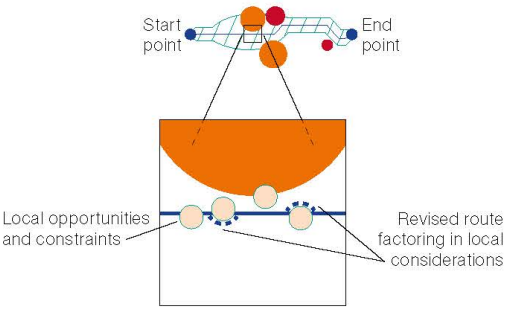
As constraints are identified and opportunities to minimise potential disturbance are confirmed, the area of investigation is refined to focus the potential route alignment.



Local considerations

TransGrid representatives are currently consulting various stakeholders, including landowners, community members and Traditional Custodians, to help identify local considerations that will assist in informing the proposed route.

In addition, the proposed transmission route will be further refined by detailed environmental and cultural heritage surveys, land access negotiations and engineering design.



Connect with us

TransGrid is committed to working with landowners and communities to understand local considerations that can be taken into account in developing the proposed route for EnergyConnect.

To share your views or find out more about EnergyConnect, please connect with us.

1800 49 06 66 (free call)
pec@transgrid.com.au
transgrid.com.au/energyconnect

TransGrid

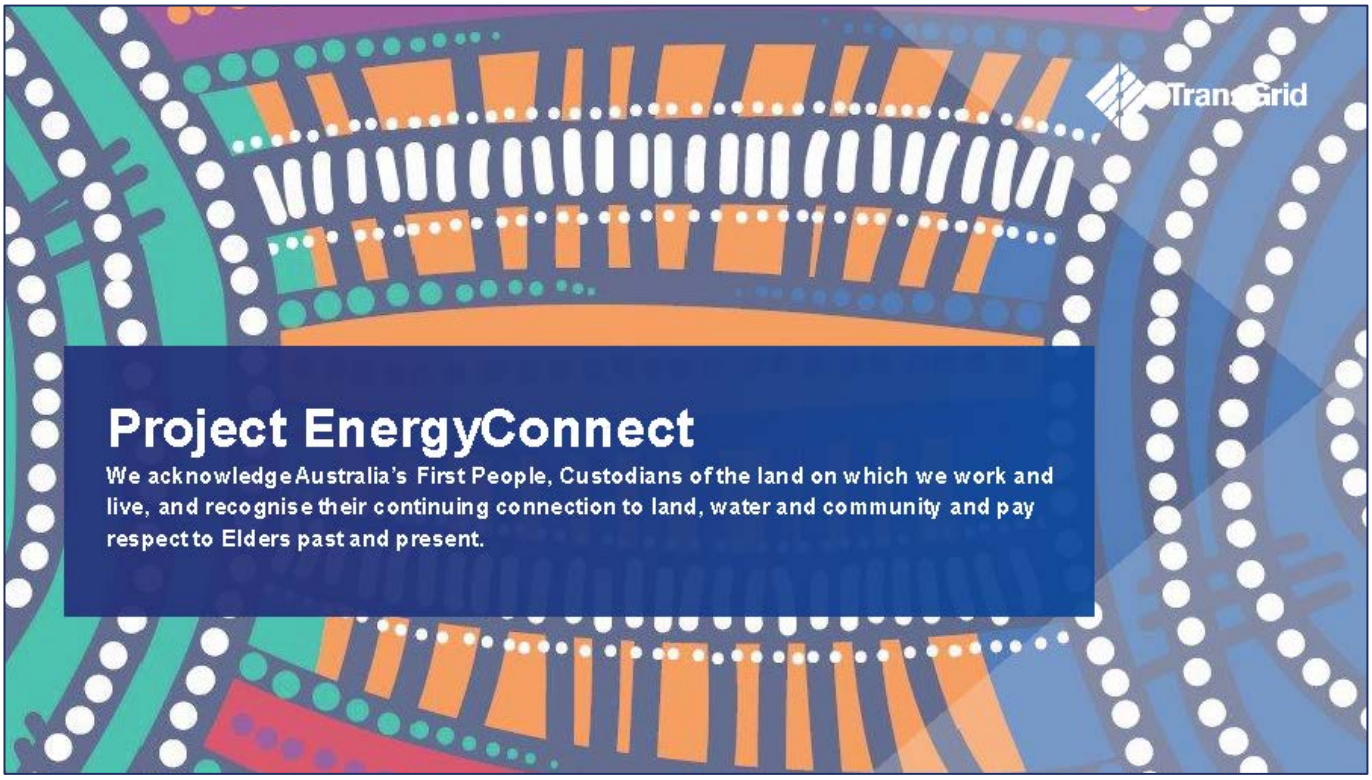
Attachment E: Community drop-in information advertisement and social media posts

TransGrid
23 August 2019 ·

Come and see us at the Wentworth Show this weekend! The team are there are ready to chat all things Project EnergyConnect South Australia.

#community #wentworthshow2019

Attachment F: Indigenous engagement presentation



Welcome

Meeting Agenda

> Introductions
> Who is TransGrid?
> Project EnergyConnect – background
> Corridor & Route selection process overview and feedback
> Cultural Heritage site surveys

TransGrid

About TransGrid

TransGrid is the operator and manager of the NSW transmission network.

NSW is the largest region in the National Electricity Market, connecting QLD and VIC

- 32% of Australia's population
- 32% of energy in the NEM

Our network comprises:

- 13,000 km transmission lines and cables
- 105 substations
- 4,000 km optical fibre

TransGrid

Where we fit in the NSW energy industry

Generators
Electricity is sourced from coal, gas, wind, hydro and solar power plants.

Competitors include
agl, EnergyAustralia, origin, Renew estate, innogy

Transmission
TransGrid keeps you and your way of life connected by moving high voltage electricity across NSW and the ACT.

Regulated monopoly
TransGrid

Distribution and direct connect customers
TransGrid transports electricity to the distributors and our direct connect customers.

Regulated regional monopolies
essential energy, Endeavour Energy, Ausgrid

Retailers
Retailers purchase electricity and sell to consumers.

Competitors include
agl, EnergyAustralia, origin, red energy, POWERSHOP, alintaenergy

Residential, commercial and industrial consumers
Buy and use electricity to power their everyday.

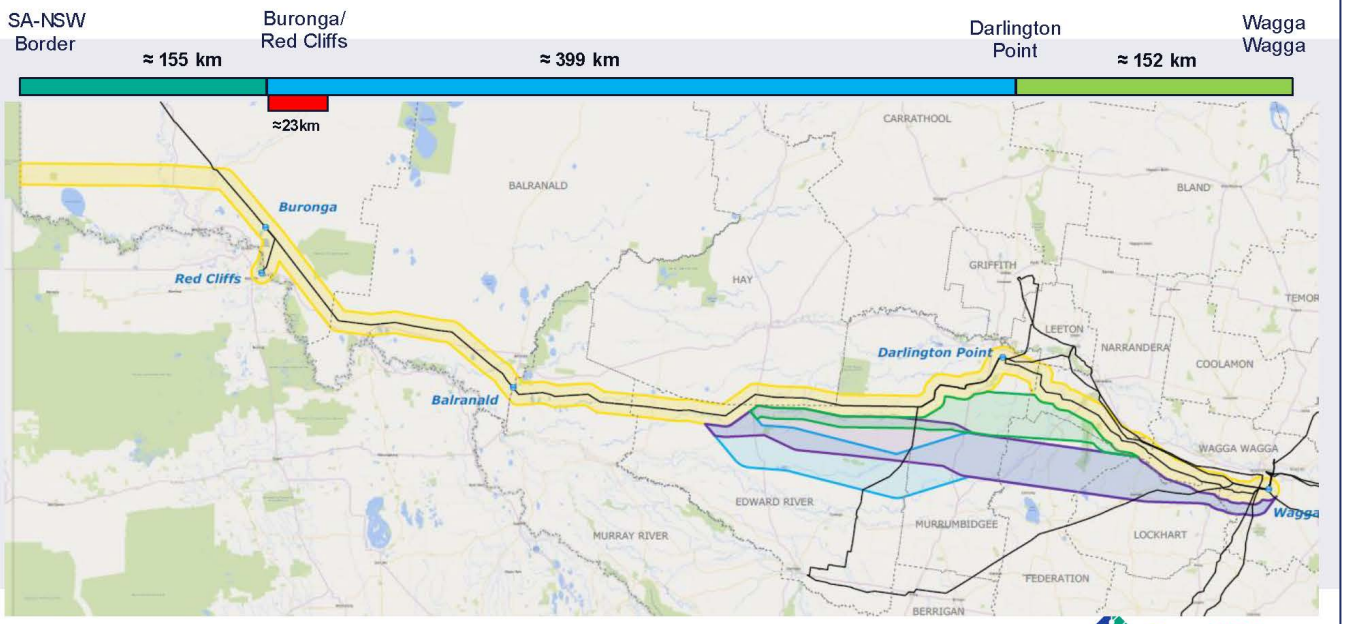
TransGrid

Project EnergyConnect

- The missing link between the SA and NSW transmission networks
- Greater access to diverse, low-cost renewable generation sources as existing coal-fired generators retire
- Red Cliffs connection would relieve system constraints and allow for NSW and SA consumers to benefit from access to low-cost renewable power from Victoria.

TransGrid

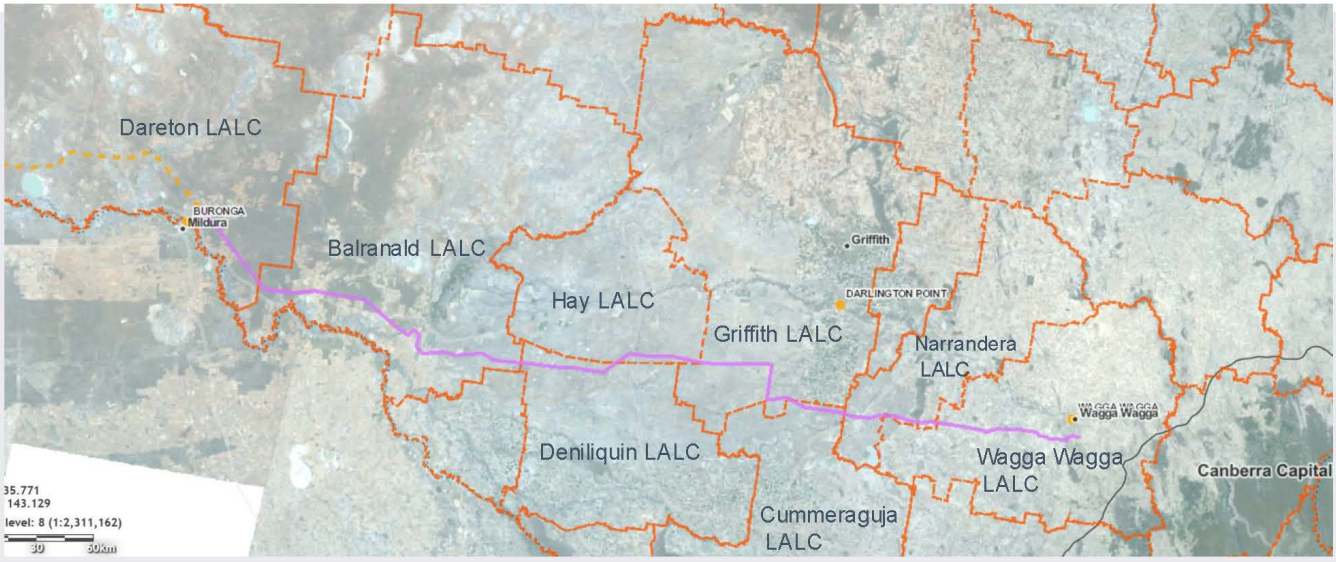
Project Overview



TransGrid

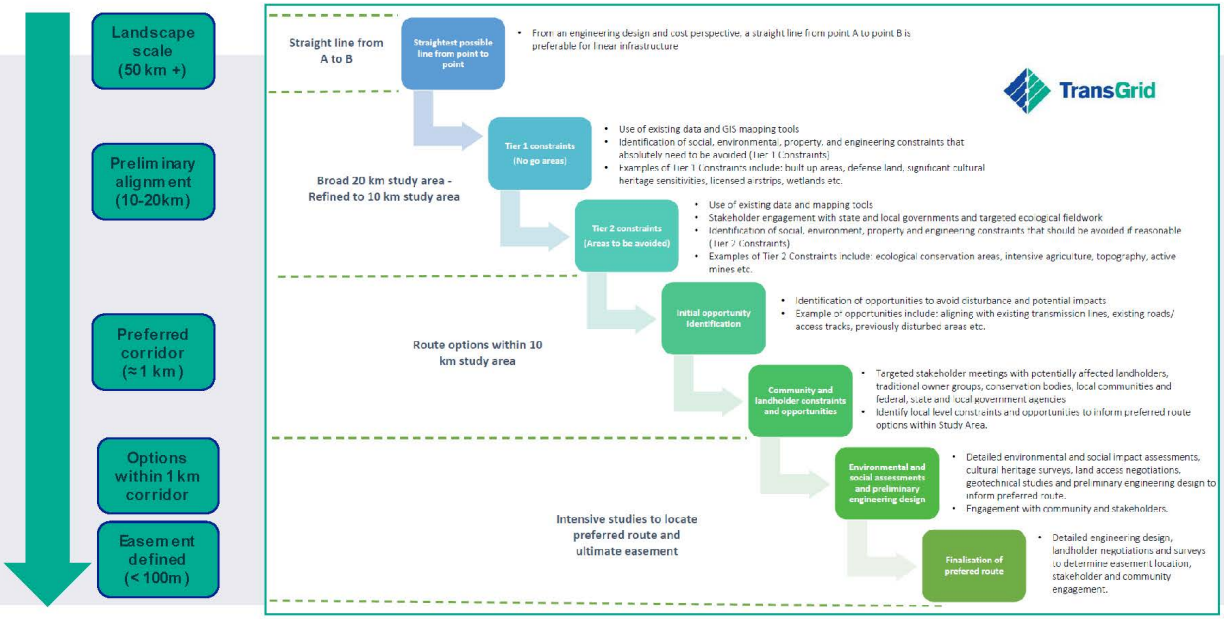
TransGrid

Project Overview Continued



TransGrid

Corridor identification and route selection



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TransGrid

TransGrid

Variation across Landscape








TransGrid

Engagement Process for the EIS

- Requires State and Commonwealth environmental planning approval
- Consultation with Aboriginal people is a fundamental part of the impact assessment process
- TransGrid are committed to engagement in accordance with the *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Consultation Requirements for Proponents 2010 (DECCW, 2010)*
- This guideline sets out the consultation requirements with Aboriginal people who hold knowledge about the significance of Aboriginal cultural heritage relevant to a planning proposal
- TransGrid will commence this process in February/March 2020 requesting registration of RAP's

TransGrid

Cultural Heritage Survey Approach

- Meeting place for morning pre-start will be communicated prior to works commencing
- Timesheets to be filled in and signed off at the beginning and end of each work day. Work day is from approx. 7am-4pm and weather dependent
- Payments will be processed once timesheets and invoices are received
- Safety is paramount at all times, if you spot a hazard or if there is an incident report it to the supervisor on site
- Zero tolerance to drugs, alcohol and violence (verbal and physical) on all TransGrid projects

- Remain hydrated and have regular rest breaks and meals, water will be available on site
- Smoke only in designated areas or at designated stops, there is no smoking on private properties
- PPE is to be worn, including enclosed footwear, long sleeve top and long trousers, cap and eyewear

TransGrid

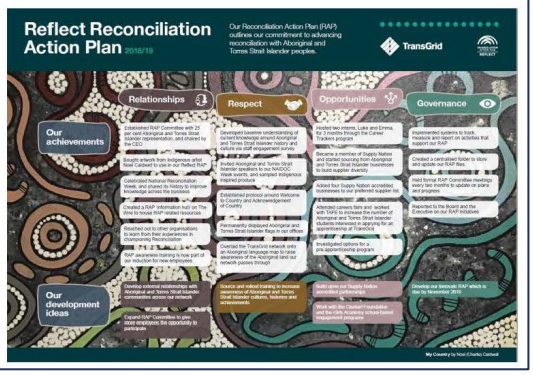
TransGrid's Commitment

TransGrid recognises that is has a significant role to play in reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We recognise that our transmission lines, substations and other assets exist on land that has belonged to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples for millennia before European settlement. We recognise the injustices perpetrated upon Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples over the past two centuries and the devastating impact this has had on communities, including disproportionate incarceration rates, reduced life expectancies and resulting reduced access to opportunities.

We envisage a future where educational and employment opportunities are of the same high standard as those enjoyed by other Australians, and a future where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People's deep knowledge of and connection to land is recognised, respected and celebrated by all Australians.

As we continue to develop our energy network we are in a unique position to play a part in nurturing a synergy with Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander organisations and communities as we recognise that they hold great knowledge of, and have deep connections to the lands upon which those assets will exist.

We will do this by improving relationships with, showing respect for and increasing opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as colleagues, stakeholders, community members and consumers of our services. We will maintain a culture that values diversity and equity, and encourage all TransGrid employees and contractors to be role models for reconciliation.



TransGrid


TransGrid
Thank you

Attachment G: Aboriginal heritage consultation advertisement

TransGrid

EnergyConnect (NSW - Western Section)

Notice and registration of Aboriginal interests

EnergyConnect is a proposed new electricity interconnector between Robertstown in South Australia (SA) and Wagga Wagga in New South Wales (NSW), with a connection into north-west Victoria. An electricity interconnector is a connection that allows power to flow between regions in the National Energy Market.

TransGrid is responsible for the NSW components of EnergyConnect, which are anticipated to be assessed and approved in stages, starting with the western section (the subject of this notice).

In the western section, TransGrid proposes to construct new high voltage transmission lines between the NSW/SA border and the existing Buronga substation as well as an upgrade to the existing transmission line between Buronga and the NSW/Victoria border at Monak, near Red Cliffs. The new transmission line structures would be up to 80 metres in height and spaced about every 300 to 600 metres along the line. The proposal would also require the upgrade of the existing Buronga substation from 220 to 330 kilovolts, new and upgraded access tracks and roads as well as ancillary works such as the establishment of brake and winch sites, crane pads, site compounds and equipment laydown areas.

TransGrid and our consultant, Navin Officer Heritage Consultants, are seeking registrations of interest from Aboriginal people who hold cultural knowledge relevant to determining the significance of Aboriginal objects and/or places within the western section of EnergyConnect. The purpose of consultation with Aboriginal people is to assist TransGrid to prepare advice to assist the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment in assessing the development application for the proposal.

Following registrations of interest, we will work with the registered Aboriginal people to determine our preferred consultation approach and assessment methodology over the coming months.

You can register in writing (email or letter) to:
Nicola Hayes
Navin Officer Heritage Consultants

U4 Kingston Warehouse, 71 Leichhardt St,
Kingston ACT 2604

Telephone: 02 6282 9415
Email: nhayes@nohc.com.au

Registrations must be received by close of business 6 May 2020.

TransGrid: PO Box A1000 Sydney South, NSW 1235 Australia

Attachment H: Aboriginal heritage consultation letter

ABN 70 250 995 390
180 Thomas Street, Sydney
PO Box A1000 Sydney South
NSW 1235 Australia
T (02) 9284 3000
F (02) 9284 3456

[Date]

[Contact]
[Organisation]
[Address]
[Suburb State Postcode]

Dear [Contact]

EnergyConnect (NSW – Western Section) – Invitation for consultation

EnergyConnect is a proposed new electricity interconnector between Wagga Wagga in New South Wales and Robertstown in South Australia, with an added connection into north-west Victoria. EnergyConnect is a joint project between TransGrid and ElectraNet, who operate the transmission networks in New South Wales (NSW) and South Australia (SA), respectively.

TransGrid is responsible for the NSW components of EnergyConnect, which are anticipated to be assessed and approved in stages, starting with the western section (the subject of this invitation and referred to as 'the proposal').

The proposal includes:

- construction of new high voltage transmission lines and associated infrastructure between the SA/NSW border near Chowilla and the existing Buronga substation
- an upgrade to the existing transmission line between the Buronga substation and the NSW/Victoria border at Monak, near Red Cliffs
- an expansion and upgrade of the existing substation from an operating capacity of 220 kV to 330 kV
- establishment and upgrade of access tracks and roads, as required
- other ancillary works required to facilitate the construction of the proposal e.g. laydown and staging areas, concrete batching plants, brake/winch sites, site offices and accommodation camps.

TransGrid is currently undertaking environmental, social and engineering studies as part of the corridor refinement and environmental and planning assessment processes for the proposal. The initial study area for the proposal is shown in **Attachment A**.

TransGrid is seeking Aboriginal knowledge holders (preferably those who have undertaken cultural heritage assessments and/or site monitoring) to assist in the assessment of the proposal and provide input into the preparation of a cultural heritage assessment report (CHAR) in accordance with the *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Consultation Requirements for Proponents 2010* (Office of Environment and Heritage, 2010). The results of the CHAR will inform an environmental impact statement, which will be prepared for the proposal in accordance with Division 5.2 of the NSW *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.

It would be appreciated if your organisation could please provide a list of the names of Aboriginal people who may hold cultural knowledge relevant to determining the significance of Aboriginal objects or Aboriginal places for the proposal within the study area. We will then work with the interested Aboriginal people to determine our preferred consultation approach and assessment methodology for the proposal over the coming months.

Thank you for your assistance and advice in this matter. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this further, please contact Nicola Hayes as per the contact details below. More information on the proposal can be accessed at www.projectenergyconnect.com.au.

Yours sincerely

Nicola Hayes
Principal Archaeologist – Navin Officer Heritage Consultants (on behalf of TransGrid)
Email: Phone:

www.transgrid.com.au

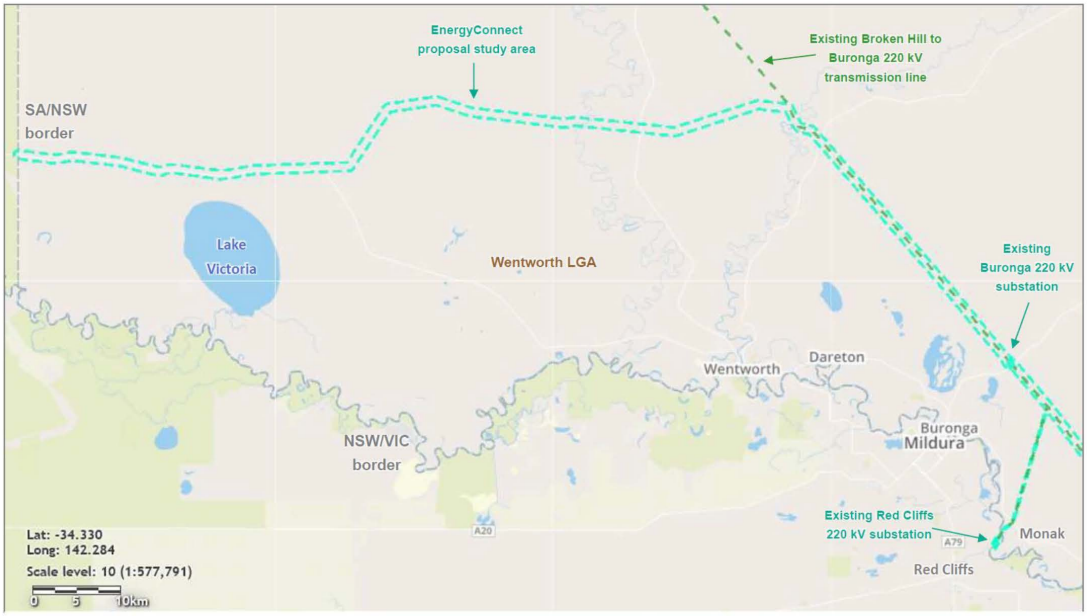


Figure 1 Initial proposal study area for EnergyConnect (NSW – Western section)

www.transgrid.com.au

Attachment I: Site supervision of geotechnical drilling works on Country as part of preliminary design investigation work