

1.1 HumeLink Wagga Wagga, Cootamundra, Gundagai Community Consultative Group: 5th Meeting 6 July 2022

Time	12 – 2pm
Date	06/07/2022
Attendees	<p>Chair: Brendan Blakeley Secretariat: Ella Burgess Transgrid CCG members: Tim Edwards, Naomi Rowe Transgrid speakers: Daniel Burn, Carl Charlier Transgrid project member attendees: Gordon Taylor, Nathan Rhodes, Tammy Sinclair Guest speakers: Brendan Nelson, Independent Peer Review, MacroPlan, Les Brand, technical advisor to the Steering Committee, Amplitude Consultants Community members: Fiona Hamilton as an alternate for Matt Dombrovski, Cheryl Penrith, Melody McMeekin as an alternate for Peter Lawson Deputy Landowner and Community Advocate (Observer): Barbara El Gamal Observers: Matthew Pirie</p>
Apologies	Rod Kendall, Matt Dombrovski, Serena Hardwick, Catriona McCauliffe, Peter Lawson, Adrian Cameron
Meeting location	Quest Apartments Wagga Wagga
Meeting materials	Presentation
Purpose of meeting	Meeting 5

Item	Discussion Summary	To note
Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The meeting commenced at 5:05pm. - The Chair welcomed all and gave an Acknowledgement to Country. - The Chair asked each community CWG member, the Transgrid team and observers to introduce themselves and their relation to the HumeLink project. - The new Transgrid team members in attendance included: - <i>Gordon Taylor, Executive General Manager, Major Projects</i> - <i>Nathan Rhodes, Acting Project Director, HumeLink</i> - Also in attendance was Brendan Nelson from MacroPlan who would be conducting 	

	<p>an independent review of Transgrid's route alignment process.</p>	
Minutes and Matters Arising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No comments made on the previous minutes. <p><i>The minutes of the previous meeting have been endorsed by the Chair and posted to the Transgrid website.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Matters arising were noted as being discussed in the agenda for the meeting. 	
HumeLink Project Update	<p>Naomi gave an update on the HumeLink project.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - See slide 6 of the presentation for a project update on HumeLink's milestones. - A community CCG member commented that there is a lot of infrastructure being brought into the area and it will be important for Transgrid to do plenty of work upskilling the local community, particularly Indigenous businesses and people. It is about how HumeLink can lean into the long term sustainability of investments. - Naomi noted that there are many different elements to the project. Transgrid are looking at the long term opportunities that will come through the procurement piece and investment in local business. The objective is to not simply give local people a job but a career. - A community CCG member commented that Transgrid has to understand that landowners already have businesses and HumeLink is detrimental to that business which is why impacted landowners feel as though they are collateral damage. - Naomi responded that is a key issue, as there is a national energy market that needs renewable energy, however there are impacted landowners who are bearing the brunt of disproportionate impact. - Tim noted due to project delivery timeframes, the current preferred route needs to continue to be progressed while Undergrounding is being explored. This does not prejudice the outcomes of the undergrounding study should it be found in whole or part feasible. The findings of the undergrounding study will be fed into the project development process and future project deliverables. 	-

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Naomi noted that there is a workshop scheduled for 27 July 2022. The workshop will involve bringing key people together, including those putting together the bushfire risk chapter in the Environmental Impact Study, the RFS and experts in the Transgrid team to answer questions from the CCG and local landholders. The workshop will also be an opportunity to determine if the workshop can be replicated in other impacted communities. 	
<p>Update on the undergrounding feasibility report</p>	<p>Dan gave an update on the undergrounding feasibility report timeline.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - See slide 16 of the presentation for an update on the undergrounding feasibility report timeline. - The Chair noted the dedicated work Peter Lawson has contributed to the HumeLink Steering Committee. - In mid-June the Transgrid received the final Undergrounding Report for HumeLink, by independent consultants GHD and Stantec. The report was published on Transgrid's website, without endorsement from the HumeLink Steering Committee. - The Steering Committee raised a number of concerns with the report, mainly around costings. GHD have now provided new figures which the Steering Committee are still questioning. - The Steering Committee met with GHD this week to review the HVDC cable installation component of the cost assessment in The HumeLink Project - Underground report. All parties agreed that additional cost analysis was required, and an independent expert review is underway. - The Steering Committee will meet regularly over the coming weeks and continues to work towards finalising the report. - A note from Peter Lawson around the Steering Committee was read aloud: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>"The Steering committee constantly feels like it is having to fight every inch of the way, as has been the case since Humelink started, just in order to attempt to get a fair hearing. The most recent example was when the draft UGround study came to the steering committee for responses, we responded with questions and queries, 100 all up. GHD (company employed to do the</i> 	<p>-</p>

study) responded again, but in general gave dismissive answers or didn't answer the questions again. The Steer co responded and on the Friday morning GHD sent back some responses, again dismissive in general, and then released the report to the public in the afternoon, insinuating that we endorsed the report. Naturally we responded with our displeasure and disbelief and it took many more emails and calls before the report was taken down, on the Wednesday!!

This action was very ordinary to say the least and is seemingly how TG, which could just be a corporate company attitude, think they can treat the general public they are dealing with. It is a constant challenge to keep up with the false, misleading, lazy or possibly even genuine answers we get, and energy sapping to say the least.

As you can probably guess I/we feel like the attitude still comes across as if "it is all a done deal so let's wrap this up so we can get on with it!"

The InDeGo score used by GHD in the study seems to be very dismissive of, or biased against, the human and social impact of the project. This has been explained by TG but not to the point of making it sound fair and reasonable."

- Gordon responded that GHD must respond to all the comments and questions that have been posed by the HumeLink Steering Committee.
- Brendan commented that InDeGo scoring is subjective and that some of the views formed around the scoring are not consistent with how the community may view the scoring. However, Brendan noted that this would not have changed the end outcome of the undergrounding study.
- Les agreed with Brendan's statement that the final outcome of the undergrounding study would not have changed, however there are still concerns surrounding the inadequacies with InDeGo.
- Gordon noted that he had only seen the draft of the undergrounding study. He noted that economically, the regulator has

stipulated they have approximately \$3.3 billion to deliver overhead transmission lines, which does not take into consideration whole of life costs, operations and maintenance. One of the flaws is that the report is not comparing like things. AEMO needs a project that can be delivered within budget

- Brendan noted that the undergrounding study presents an opportunity to be used as an advocacy piece to both Government and the regulators. If the Government can take pressure off the finances and if the timing issue can be addressed, undergrounding could become a consideration.
- Tim noted that it is about balancing the opportunity of the undergrounding study, without creating false hope.
- A CCG member commented that it was known from the start that the undergrounding study was not going to change anything, however it was wanted to set a precedent so it could undergrounding used in the future as it is all over the world.

Dan provided an overview of the next steps for the undergrounding feasibility report.

See slide 9 of the presentation for an overview of next steps.

- Dan noted that agreement with between the Steering Committee and GHD about next steps is necessary.

Les Brand, technical advisor to the Steering Committee from Amplitude dialled in to share his reflections.

- Les confirmed that the Steering Committee's major concern with GHD's Undergrounding Report was around cost, however quite a number of other comments were made that must be addressed by GHD/Stantec/Transgrid. The ultimate goal is that the undergrounding options are reflected accurately so a fair comparison can be made between undergrounding and overhead.
- Les noted he was happy with the technical side of the work, it's the pricing that needs considerable focus.
- Les noted he has worked with the person appointed to independently assess the costings quoted in GHD's undergrounding

	<p>report, particularly around long-distance cables which is where he feels the report has gone off track.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gordon noted that a lot of conversation has occurred around cost, and even if the costs can be aligned the undergrounding option will still be around 5 times more expensive than installing above ground cables. The time it will take to build and install underground cables is also a key consideration. - Les noted that they did not agree with the 11-year time frame GHD stated an underground HVDC would take to construct in the report. Similar to the Marinus Link, it could be possible to complete the undergrounding in phases. - Gordon commented that there is value in the undergrounding report. It was also noted that Transgrid has been advocating with the NSW Government regarding compensation for landowners and in the coming months changes will be announced. - Dan outlined the process for the undergrounding study moving forward. There are a number of items to be addressed. If an agreement cannot be made, Transgrid will work with the Steering Committee before the report is released and Transgrid will take that into account during any decision making. - The Chair thanks Les for his contribution to the Steering Committee and the CCG meetings. 	
Route refinement	<p>Naomi gave an update on the route refinement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Since March Transgrid has been progressively refining the route in response to a number of alternate options put forward by local communities, particularly around Bannaby and Tumut North. - Transgrid has a preference for a route and recognise the sensitivity. For those reasons, it is important an alternate body evaluates how the decisions were made and give an independent opinion. - Transgrid asked Brendan from MacroPlan to consider and analyse the community submissions, letter, photos and items received. Transgrid intends to identify if 	

there is a situation where valid and fair criticism may exist on the route.

Brendan gave an overview of his role, experience and experience so far on the project. He can make recommendations from his observations that can be fed into the route decision and Environmental Impact Study (EIS).

Brendan's initial observations included:

- Transgrid has evolved in terms of maturity, considering early on in the project it is clear there was not enough resourcing for a project of this scale. The resourcing was not there to ensure an adequate level of comprehensiveness in the reviews and criteria being applied to the route selection. Community input at this level is critical.
- There are two Government regulators who operate this space, the Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) and the Australian Energy Regulator (AER). Both regulators focus on different aspects, DPE on people, place, the community and environment and AER on cost, efficiency and the end price for the consumer. Big energy projects such as HumeLink have to find the balance to address standards set by both regulators.
- Community involvement is critical as HumeLink is a State Significant Development, however there is no "magic bullet" solution as there are various components that must be taken into consideration before the final cost such as environmental, community and technical factors.
- In more recent times, there has been a lot of work done by Transgrid in contested locations and there are some refinements that could be done in relation to community. For future projects the community must be actively involved from the beginning to give everyone more comfort in the decisions being made.
- The use public versus private land is a clear issue and where possible should be something advocated for, however in other locations putting the route through public land will increase impacts on other communities, there is a need to look at this route refinement holistically.

- A CWG commented that Matthew Kean told every land owner that the transmission lines would be put through public land where possible, and that has not been the case.
- Brendan noted that the reality is that there are options that need to be considered, such as what does it mean for those people who have not been included in the narrative for the last two years and are all of a sudden put into a situation of complete unknowns. The AER will be looking at the economic reasoning behind the chosen route, however the route needs to be holistically considered regarding where it may be possible to go through public land. There will always be an impact of some description, but it must be minimised where possible and there is a great willingness from Transgrid to ensure this.
- Gordon noted that AEMO determines a 30 year view of what infrastructure will be required to meet the needs of Australians that is updated every 2 years. They determine timings, such as Humelink needing to be energised by 2026. The AER determines the cost of the project to protect the cost of energy for the consumers. It would be a near impossible task to convince both regulators to allow a project to progress that costs 3 to 5 times more and will take longer.
- A CCG member commented that you cannot only take dollars into account. There are also great costs to the impacted communities, the environment, agriculture, small businesses etc that are not being taken into consideration.
- Tim noted that when you apply a lens from each of the three relevant regulatory bodies, you end up moving toward a particular direction. Transgrid wants the overlap of the maximum benefit of all three regulators.
- The quality of the data available has increased since the inception of the project. Early engagement on the project was not favourable and the data was not available to provide evidence-based recommendations. The project is in a

different space now and there is quality data available to give evidence-based reasoning. There is a strong need for further community engagement.

- The GHD route refinement report did not meet community expectations. The spirit in which Transgrid made the information available does display the level of maturity as the project has evolved. There is a lot of effort going behind the scenes that is not visible to the community that needs to be communicated more broadly. Transgrid has a strong willingness to take on board all comments received.
- The value of agricultural land and whether it is as valuable as other land in the corridor needs to be given greater consideration. Continued and transparent engagement with the community will provide everyone involved with a level of comfort.
- The definition around what productive agricultural land is needs to be reconsidered, there have been some misguided views formed as a result of that. Some of the assessment that has been done on what productive land and associated benchmarking should have been changed.
- Brendan noted that his next steps will be to have a series of conversations with Transgrid and make a series of recommendations from there.
- Brendan noted that Transgrid has presented a number of different route options. Two years ago they didn't have the data they have now. When considering the route refinements, it is crucial to understand the flow on effects on local towns and landowners.
- Gordon commented that Transgrid are not opening up the whole route refinement, rather looking at the areas that are very controversial. They have to finalise the route under a timeline and want to be as respectful and meaningful in their analysis before a decision is made.
- Brendan noted that there has been a presumption that some agricultural land is

	<p>not regarded in the same manner however, often contribute a similar value to Australian agriculture. Brendan's observation was that some areas such as state forest have been avoided, however they are now being considered.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All the information provided by landowners has been investigated by Transgrid and relevant parties, although the due diligence may not have been completely communicated with the wider public. <p>Naomi noted that Transgrid has received many questions via multiple channels regarding GHD's weighting criteria, InDeGo. The response required to those question is very technical, so they will be addressed with in a written response.</p> <p>Next steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Naomi noted that Transgrid are receiving recommendations from Brendan and will be working through them. - Brendan commented that the EIS is under development, there are many areas where the route is not being contested and work is progressing well. Brendan noted his hope for the progression of the route refinement is that when the route does have to traverse through a community they are aware of where it is going before the EIS goes out. 	
<p>Compensation</p>	<p>Carl Charlier introduced himself as the Commercial Manager for Humelink and gave an update on compensation process and calculation.</p> <p>Special Benefit Payment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The NSW Government has been investigating strategic landholder payments to recognise landholders who host transformational transmission projects. Transgrid has been working with government to explore these options. <p>Annualised Easement Payments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Annual easement compensation payments have been investigated. There are challenges, including financier requirements. As a result Transgrid are focusing efforts on working with government on the strategic benefit payment. 	

	<p>From late July Transgrid will hold up to 12 webinars with landowners to discuss the compensation process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - See slides 14 - 16 for an overview of the easement acquisition and negotiation process. - Carl noted Transgrid are working with EnergyCo and the Department of Planning and Environment around additional payments over and above the value of impact. There is soon to be announcement made, however Transgrid cannot make the announcement. - Naomi noted that not everyone has received their letters. The webinars are an additional mechanism alongside the ability for landowners to engage their own reasonable legal counsel and financial advice etc. that Transgrid will cover the fees for. The webinars are being rolled out in phases as the letter are sent out. - Carl noted that the option agreement gives landowners an option fee, so if the project does not proceed they will have an additional benefit. The \$20,000 is available when you sign the option agreement. 	
<p>Planning and approvals</p>	<p>Naomi gave an update on the EIS Planning Pathway</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Technical specialists have been out on the field as well as completing desktop assessment modelling. <p>Naomi gave an update on EIS engagement activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - See slide 21 for an overview of upcoming pre-EIS engagement activities. 	
<p>Update on community engagement</p>	<p>Naomi gave a summary of the results from the social impacts and opportunities workshops that occurred after the last CCG meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - See slide 23 for a summary of the needs/impacts and opportunities. - See slide 24 for an overview of upcoming community engagement activities. 	
<p>Agenda setting for subsequent meetings</p>	<p>Next meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A meeting in early September has been tabled. The date will be confirmed. <p>October</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wednesday 12 	

	December - Wednesday 7	
Meeting close	The meeting closed at 12pm.	

Action	Status or comment
Secretariat is to follow up with members on administrative details including signed Code of Conduct Agreements and sharing of contact details.	Ongoing
Transgrid to institute the \$50 reimbursement for eligible members	Ongoing
Transgrid to provide CCG members with a diagram presenting how planning and regulatory processes relate	Underway
Transgrid to provide a timeline/diagram of HumeLink progress as it currently stands and a timeline of HumeLink progress if undergrounding or Option 2F are deemed feasible	Underway
HumeLink EIS and SEARs to be circulated to CCG members	Underway
Transgrid to follow up with GHD for more insight into their value scoring methodology and reasoning, including the difference in value between agricultural land compared to State Forest.	Underway
Transgrid to follow up with GHD for more insight into the social and environmental matters included in its model InDeGo (Infrastructure Development Geospatial Options), how they are weighted and the scoring methodology.	Underway
Transgrid to request the value of the multiplier from used in their report.	Underway
Transgrid to provide the CCG with technical information explaining how the structural integrity of the transmission lines is maintained in windy conditions.	Underway
Transgrid to confirm with the CCG if any of the transmission 500kv lines between Bannaby and Bayswater have come down.	Underway
Transgrid to confirm with the CCG if any of the transmission 500kv lines between Bannaby and Bayswater have come down.	Underway