HumeLink Community Newsletter

March 2023

What is HumeLink?

HumeLink is a once in a generation investment in Australia's energy capability, increasing the amount of renewable energy that can be delivered to consumers, and helping Australia to move towards a net zero future.

It will be one of the nation's largest energy infrastructure projects, with about 360 km of 500 kV overhead transmission lines connecting Wagga Wagga, Bannaby and Maragle and new or upgraded infrastructure at four substations.

HumeLink is critical to bringing more affordable, reliable and renewable energy to the grid and is a priority project for the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) and the Commonwealth and NSW Governments.

In this issue:

To view HumeLink's interactive route map go to **transgrid.com.au/humelink**

HumeLink proposed route

*Please note the map included in the February 2023 community newsletter showed an incorrect corridor alignment near the Burrinjuck Dam. We apologise for this error.

People. Power. Possibilities.

Landscape character and visual amenity

As part of the HumeLink Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), Transgrid is undertaking a Landscape Character and Visual Impact Assessment (LCVIA) to evaluate potential changes to visual amenity during the project construction and operation. Visual amenity refers to the views and surroundings that make up the character and appearance of a location.

Our LCVIA evaluates the potential visual impacts from the perspective of both public land and from private properties. The assessment considers factors such as impacts to scenic or significant views, lighting, air traffic and road corridors. The assessment also includes proposed mitigation measures that may reduce potential impacts.

The LCVIA study area is the project footprint plus a 10 km buffer around the project footprint and assesses both the landscape character and visual impacts. The area is divided into different landscape types or 'landscape character zones' which are defined primarily by geology, topography, vegetation, waterways, built form patterns and land use.

This assessment uses desktop analysis to assess the potential visibility of the project from different viewpoints, as well as site inspections to confirm our findings.

We recognise that the visual amenity of the local area is important to residents and that at some locations HumeLink infrastructure will have an impact on visual amenity.

Assessment of landscape impacts

Landscape character impacts are the overall impact of the project on a particular landscape character type.

To accurately assess the landscape impacts, and due to the large scale of the project, the LCVIA study area has been divided into landscape character and sub-character zones. Landscape character zones are defined by the existing built, natural and cultural environment and sub-character zones are defined to reflect local landscape features.

Eight landscape character zones were defined for the purposes of the HumeLink LCVIA these include rural fringe landscape, Great Dividing Range foothills landscape, rural valley landscape, forested hills and landscape, undulating rural hills and ridges landscape, upland forest landscape, rural tablelands landscape, rural highland and deep valley landscape. A sub-character zone example of the rural fringe landscape is the rural areas to the south of Wagga Wagga.

This method ensures that both the man-made and natural elements that make up a landscape character are considered.

Assessment of visual impacts

Visual impacts are the impacts of the project from viewpoints on private or public land. We assess how much change will be created by the project, and how much impact the change would have on a viewer.

As part of the LCVIA, Transgrid undertook a viewpoint assessment, which analyses potential visual impacts on private residential properties. This is done in two stages:

Stage 1:

- identification of all residential dwellings within 2 km of the project footprint
- desktop analysis of terrain and vegetation cover
- dwellings that have moderate to high potential visibility of the project were identified for detailed assessment.

Stage 2:

- identification of views to be affected (including distance, orientation, key features)
- visits to a representative sample of private residences and photographs of the primary views
- assessment of the extent of the impact, which considered indicators such as proximity of proposed transmission line structure, existing vegetation, landform and topography and visibility of the infrastructure.

What are the potential impacts and how are these proposed to be managed?

During construction, activities including temporary mobilisation of plant and equipment and establishment of ancillary infrastructure such as construction compounds and access tracks will be the key impacts to visual amenity. In some instances, construction impacts will involve removal of vegetation.

When HumeLink is operating, over 180 residences will be potentially impacted from a visual amenity perspective to varying degrees. Of these, 80 dwellings have been identified as having the potential for a moderate to high visual impact. We are working with the owners of these properties and in some cases have visited them for a private viewpoint assessment.

Next steps

As the project progresses through the development of the EIS and detailed design, more information about the identified impacts to visual amenity and landscape character as well as the proposed management measures will become available.

You can read the full LCVIA as part of the EIS exhibition in the second half of 2023. During this time, you will have the opportunity to make a submission.

In the community

Transgrid's response to undergrounding HumeLink

Transgrid will be proceeding with HumeLink's overhead transmission lines. We recognise the preference of the community is to underground these lines and understand the reasons for this preference. However, the results of the independent undergrounding feasibility show that undergrounding the project is not a feasible option due to the cost and pressures on the project timeline.

The cost of undergrounding the HumeLink transmission lines is estimated to be $ 11.5 billion at least three times more than the entire project's current cost of $3.3 billion.

Transgrid is subject to the approval of the Australian Energy Regulator (AER). Transgrid must demonstrate the project will not place an unreasonable burden on electricity consumers. The additional cost of undergrounding HumeLink will be passed to households and businesses at a time of widespread concern about escalating electricity prices.

In assessing every transmission project, the AER must be satisfied that the total investment is both prudent and efficient in terms of the cost to deliver the project, which means it must be the most cost-effective delivery of the transmission line.

For HumeLink, the difference in cost between overhead and underground development is considered substantial and as such was not in the best interests of consumers as it does not meet the prudent and efficient cost test.

Given the cost-of-living pressures being experienced by consumers, this is particularly pertinent and Transgrid is committed to doing everything it can to put downward pressure on customer bills.

The additional time required to deliver undergrounding, would delay the transition to renewables resulting in a significant impact to consumers and network security, which is contingent on Transgrid meeting the regulator approved timeframe of 2026.

Undergrounding cables for major projects like HumeLink will not be consistent with the rules that require Transgrid to propose the most efficient option for consumers based on the capital cost of the solution, the ongoing operational costs, the market benefits, the expected reliability, and the costs associated with the impact on landowners, the community, and the environment.

We recognise the visual impact of overhead transmission lines and will continue to work closely with landowners impacted by the project to support them.

You can read the Undergrounding Report and Transgrid's response to the report on our webpage.

Guidelines for Payment of Professional Fees in connection with land or easement acquisitions

Transgrid is continuing to progress compensation negotiations with landowners within the preferred 200 m corridor to acquire rights for the 70 m easement required for HumeLink. These negotiations around compensation are being carried out in accordance with the *NSW Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act 1991*.

As part of this process, landowners can engage their own independent qualified valuer to carry out an assessment of the impact of HumeLink's infrastructure on the value of their property.

We encourage landowners to seek independent professional advice for their specific circumstances. Transgrid will reimburse a landowner's reasonable costs to obtain this advice on easement compensation.

Reasonable costs are those directly connected with the acquisition and registration of the easement and/or freehold land (including option deeds), and accurately reflect the time spent and the complexity of the matter. Typically, these costs include valuation fees, legal costs and in some cases, accountant costs.

For more information, you can find Transgrid's guidelines for payment of professional fees in connection with land or easement acquisitions on the HumeLink website.

HumeLink photomontage: Example of future view south-east from Westbrook Road

Landowner support

We recognise that our transmission projects may have increased the level of stress and anxiety experienced by landowners. Transgrid has engaged an external service provider – Assure Programs – to provide impacted landowners with short-term support and counselling.

If you are a landowner, and would like confidential support and counselling, we encourage you to access the services Assure Programs provides.

For more information please talk to your dedicated place manager or see Transgrid's landowner support and advocacy webpage.

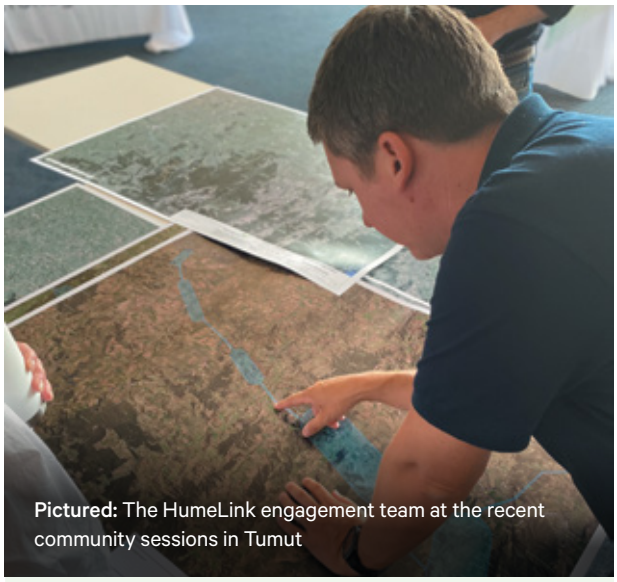
Project Director, Jeremy Roberts

As the HumeLink project enters a new phase the project leadership will be expanded to include Jeremy Roberts as Project Director, allowing the Acting Project Director Nathan Rhodes to continue in his original role as General Manager of our Major Projects portfolio Powering Tomorrow Together.

Nathan will provide support to Jeremy in 2023 while also managing our portfolio – which includes HumeLink, EnergyConnect, VNI West and other major projects currently in Transgrid's pipeline.

Jeremy is hugely experienced in transmission, having more than 20 years in project delivery and program management. He has worked across many business divisions including network planning, design, project development and Lumea. Most recently he was Transgrid's General Manager, Infrastructure Delivery in the Delivery team.

Pictured: Jeremy Roberts



Pictured: The HumeLink engagement team at the recent community sessions in Tumut

HumeLink Community Information Sessions

Our most recent community information sessions took place over three weeks between Monday 20 February and Thursday 9 March 2023.

Members of our team visited 11 locations, holding 15 drop-in sessions that provided an opportunity for you to hear from key members of the project, ask questions, provide feedback and learn about technical studies which make up the HumeLink EIS.

We will continue to host sessions online and in-person in the lead up to the EIS exhibition period, which is planned for the second half of 2023.

Scan the QR Code to find out more about upcoming events or go to **transgrid.com.au/humelink**

Acknowledgement of Country

Transgrid acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of this great land. We recognise and acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the first explorers, scientists, farmers, astronomers and storytellers.

We pay respects to the people, the Elders both past and present and celebrate the diversity and successes of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing connections to the lands and waters where we work and live.

Connect with us

Transgrid is committed to working with landowners and communities through the development of HumeLink. Please connect with us for more information.

Transgrid

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