TransGrid

HUMELINK UPDATE

Delivering affordable, safe and reliable electricity

Work is progressing to refine the proposed route for a new 500kV transmission line connecting Wagga Wagga, Bannaby and Maragle to the existing power network.

Commitment to improved landowner engagement

TransGrid is committed to more robust, transparent and effective community engagement on the HumeLink project. We have heard that landowners and community members have not been satisfied with the engagement for the project to date and we take these concerns seriously.

Late last year we engaged independent Landowner Advocate Rod Stowe to assess our community engagement practices. This review has identified a number of areas for improvement, including:

- providing the community with regular project updates
- reviewing the mid-year timeframe for narrowing the corridor
- improving timeliness and quality of responses to community queries
- establishing reference groups to provide input into consultation processes
- providing more resourcing and training to engagement team members.

We will continue to keep you updated as we progress these recommendations.

Revised timeline for narrowing the corridor

We had planned to reduce the corridor down to a 200-metre width in mid-2021. This is now due to happen in late 2021.

We understand that landowners want certainty about where HumeLink will be built and apologise for this delay. The revised timing will allow further technical assessment and improved landowner consultation on the alignment. It also ensures all landowners have a chance to have their say on the route options before the narrowed corridor is confirmed.

Once the corridor has been refined, we will begin consulting with landholders on the positioning of the towers and the final alignment of the 80m-wide easement. We expect these conversations to start early next year.

Connect with us

Share your views on the interactive map:
humelink.mycommunityengine.com

Find out more at:
transgrid.com.au/humelink

TransGrid

400+
face-to-face landowner meetings

1550+
comments added to the interactive map

200+
calls to the HumeLink infoline

We want to continue hearing from landowners as the project develops

Your feedback is influencing design

Thank you to everyone who has taken the time to share their feedback and input as the project develops. Since mid-2020 we have met with landowners and heard your views on potential route options, environmental and cultural considerations, local farming operations, logistics and land use.

By meeting with landowners, we can gather local insights and more accurate and detailed information. Refining the route is an iterative process that continually assesses new information about constraints, including the location of houses and buildings, local ecology and engineering considerations. Your feedback helps us progress towards the final alignment.

As part of our engagement reset we will be reaching out more regularly to seek your views, and to keep you updated as the project progresses.

To share your local knowledge, you can put your comments on the interactive project map at **humelink.mycommunityengine.com** or contact the team on 1800 317 367.

Community Consultative Groups

As one of the first steps towards implementing the Landowner Advocate's recommendations, we will be setting up independent Community Consultative Groups.

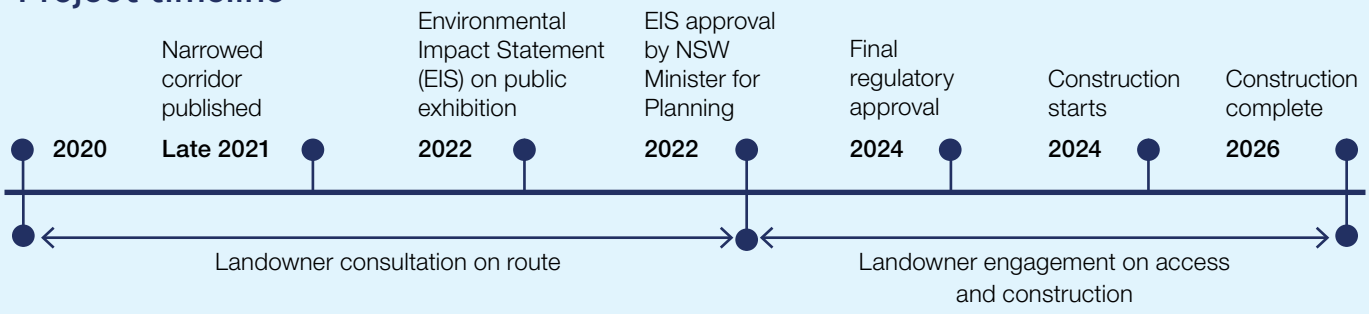
These groups will act as a sounding board as the project develops, building on the feedback and local insights we have already gathered from local landowners to help us refine the project's alignment. They will initially help us to narrow the study corridor by the end of 2021. They will then continue to provide feedback through the environmental and planning approvals process, and as the project's route alignment is defined.

We encourage landowners and community members to register their interest if they would like to be part of this process.

Interested in joining a community consultative group?

Email **humelink@transgrid.com.au** or call 1800 317 367 to register your interest and we will let you know when the nomination process is underway.

Project timeline



More than 300 soil and rock samples will be analysed

Summer and autumn ecology surveys are now complete

Surveys are underway

Surveys are being conducted to help inform design, with investigations on both public and private land. Thank you to all the landowners who have provided their terms and conditions to allow our project team to access their properties.

- **Ecology surveys** – These surveys are used to confirm existing vegetation types and animal and plant species. The surveys are completed each season and coincide with when certain species are more active or more easily identified, for example when flowering occurs or during breeding season. We have finished our summer and autumn surveys. Winter surveys will be complete by the end of August and the spring survey is due to start in September.
- **Geotechnical investigations** – We need to understand local ground conditions. Soil and rock samples will be collected from around 300 separate locations using low impact methods such as borehole drilling and cone penetration tests. We will contact landowners later this month to seek consent to take samples on their property and discuss access arrangements. Works are expected to start in late 2021 and will take around six months.
- **Cultural heritage studies** – These surveys help identify or confirm sites or items which have heritage significance. This may include built structures, gravesites or sacred sites relevant to Aboriginal people or those who have since settled in the area. Surveys are typically done on foot and are expected to start in late 2021.

Next steps towards project approval

Energy regulator approval

To be given regulatory approval, HumeLink must undergo a 'market benefits test' to show that it will benefit energy consumers. As the final part of this test, in July 2021 we submitted the Project Assessment Conclusions Report (PACR) to the Australian Energy Regulator.

The PACR considers various network configurations, known as electrical circuits, to determine the best way to deliver network reliability, capacity and value-for-money.

The PACR doesn't set out where the transmission lines should go. That's because a circuit option (getting electricity from point A to point B) can be delivered via various routes.

We will continue to assess and consult on the study corridor, guided by the preferred network configuration set out in the PACR, as we work to refine the route.

The PACR is available to view on the project website. Visit **www.transgrid.com.au/HumeLink**.

Planning and environmental approval

HumeLink will also go through a separate NSW Government environmental and planning approvals process. The first step in preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the project is to submit a Scoping Report to the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE).

The EIS will describe the potential impacts from the project and ways to manage them. This acknowledges that state significant infrastructure projects are large and complex, and can have major economic, environmental and social impacts. It also ensures the community has the opportunity to have their say on HumeLink before any final decision is made.

Frequently asked questions

> Can you locate HumeLink within National Parks?

We aim to avoid building transmission lines in National Parks because they serve multiple important purposes for the community. This includes preserving biodiversity, heritage sites and Aboriginal culture, as well as being recreational spaces. DPIE requires projects to avoid, minimise or offset environmental impacts. As part of the environmental planning approvals for the project, TransGrid would need to demonstrate that no other feasible options were available.

> What about using Forestry land?

Building a transmission line through Forestry Corporation land has the benefits of using public land and existing access tracks. On the other hand, State Forests are commercial operations and play a significant part in the regional economy. Taking an easement means the land can no longer be used for forestry. Also, there may be more challenging terrain, from a construction and operational perspective, within Forestry land.

> Can you put HumeLink underground?

Undergrounding HumeLink is not practical for a number of reasons, including environmental impact, technical limitations and cost.

Underground transmission lines can cost as much as ten times more than overhead lines. They are built using an open-trenching technique, whereby earth is excavated from the trench and replaced with a weak thermal-resistant cement. The composition of this cement sterilises the ground, meaning it cannot be cropped over. In comparison cropping and grazing can continue to occur under overhead lines, causing less impact on many farming operations.

Underground cables are also at a high-risk of deterioration over time due to moisture seepage. This damage reduces the network's reliability and increases ongoing maintenance costs.

> Do you share our conversations with other landholders?

No. Conversations with landholders are considered confidential and are not shared outside the project team. The information landowners provide is used to inform and refine the project's design. We understand this information can often be sensitive or commercial in nature, and do not disclose it publicly.

> Can farming take place under a transmission line?

Farming activities such as grazing and cropping can continue under transmission lines and within the easement area subject to height restrictions. Planting or cultivation of trees and shrubs can also continue provided the mature plant is less than four metres in height. Machinery and heavy equipment up to 4.3m high can be used within the easement area. There are however some limitations to activities such as irrigation, aerial spraying and fuel storage.

> Can landowners be compensated for any impact on day-to-day operations?

Landowners may be entitled to compensation if they incur a financial loss as a direct result of a new transmission line affecting normal farm operations in some way. The landowner's valuer can provide advice on this during the valuation process. We will contact all affected landowners to discuss the compensation process, including how to get independent expert advice, once we have refined the corridor and identified a proposed final route later this year.

Cropping can continue under transmission lines, subject to height restrictions

HumeLink is a project of national significance which will:

- > create local jobs and economic activity in regional NSW
- > connect renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar, to the network
- > unlock the full capacity of the expanded Snowy Hydro Scheme
- > help support Australia's emissions reduction targets
- > provide reliable and affordable electricity to customers.

Connect with us

Toll-free phone number: **1800 317 367**

Email: **humelink@transgrid.com.au**

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