

Meeting Minutes

VNI West



Meeting title:	VNI West Community Consultative Group (CCG) meeting	Date:	1 November 2023
Location:	Deniliquin RSL	Time:	13:00 – 15:00
Chairperson:	Brendan Blakeley		
Attendees			
VNI West Project Team			
Colin Mayer	Project Director, VNI West		
Michael Johnson	Program Director, Stakeholder Relations, Major Projects		
Joel Annett	Communication and Engagement Manager		
Nathan Menser	Community and Stakeholder Lead		
Wardia Kessal	Environmental Approvals Lead		
Paul McFadyen	Engagement Lead – Major Projects		
Aaron Atkinson	Indigenous engagement and Access Officer		
Reem Nasr	Community & Stakeholder Engagement Advisor		
Jarryd Barton	Principal Environmental Planner, WSP		
Community Consultative Group			
Alison Glenn	NSW Farmers Association - Bunnaloo Branch		
Bob Crawford	Yanco Creek and Tributaries Advisory Council		
Bruce Rollinson	Landholder		
David Crew	Yarkuwa Indigenous Knowledge Centre		
Rose Dunn	Deniliquin Local Aboriginal Land Council		
Donald Bull	Landholder		
Gary Stoll	Murrumbidgee Council		
Jack Bond	Murray River Council		
Mark Dalzell	Edward River Council		
Michael Chalmers	Ricegrowers' Association of Australia		
Scott Sheather	NSW Local Land Services – Murray Region		
Shannon Sampson	Community member		
Warren Parsons	Deniliquin Local Aboriginal Land Council		
Apologies			
Ben Doran	Transgrid		
Mick Lalor	NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service		
John Kerr	Moama Local Aboriginal Land Council		
Roland Atkinson	Cummaragunja Local Aboriginal Land Council		

Acknowledgement of Country

On behalf of the group, Brendan Blakeley acknowledged the Wamba Wamba and Barappa Barappa/Perepa Perepa, Traditional Owners of Deniliquin and its surrounding areas.

Meeting Proceedings

Item	Summary notes
1. Welcome, introductions and housekeeping	The Chair welcomed everyone and provided safety details for the venue and asked everyone to introduce themselves.
2. CCG Terms of Reference and Code of Conduct	<p>The opening discussion centred around the question of what the CCG members want to get out of the forum.</p> <p>Members noted the following values, considerations and priorities as being of importance in any discussions going forward:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Protecting travelling stock routes for both farmers, public recreation and movement - The concept of country and environment and caring for the land - Health impacts of transmission lines - Bushfire impact and constraints - Councils are a major trustee of public land and have a responsibility to make sure public land is taken into consideration. - As little impact to farming and the environment from overhead lines - Minimise impact to rice production and any land and assets linked to rice farming. - Conduit to the community - To make sure we get an outcome that is the best it can possibly be for all concerned. <p>Q. Can submissions to the Draft Corridor Report be made public and placed on website?</p> <p>A. Question taken on notice – Transgrid to confirm if any privacy concerns with releasing submissions.</p> <p>Addendum</p> <p>The preferred corridor report provides a summary of all of the submissions received. Unfortunately, we didn't advise people during the submissions process that submissions may be made public. As such we are not able to share submissions in their entirety as we risk breaching the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998. If you would like more detailed metrics we are happy to provide them.</p> <p>A number of questions were raised regarding the Terms of Reference and Code of Conduct:</p> <p>Q. How do we handle Conflict of interest?</p> <p>A. An interest in the project doesn't automatically constitute a conflict of interest. It is important that if you feel there is an interest that constrains your</p>

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	<p>ability to contribute to the group or perception around independence that you bring it up with the chair or the group.</p> <p>The chair also noted that the CCG wasn't a forum for discussing individual cases or individual landholdings but a place for discussion of common issues and broader district / regional impacts and opportunities. An example of a conflict that might exclude a member from a discussion may include commercial engagement with Transgrid or some other interested party as a technical consultant.</p> <p>Q. What about conflict of interest re: Registered Aboriginal Parties</p> <p>A. That is a clear interest but not necessarily a conflict of interest. The CCG is one of many processes for engagement. There are clear requirements for engaging Aboriginal parties in doing cultural heritage work and these will be followed in the planning process. Some of the matters covered in doing cultural heritage may not be suitable for discussion beyond the parties who are directly involved.</p> <p>Q. Can we discuss meeting dates so we don't clash with existing council meetings?</p> <p>A. This topic is on the agenda for later in the meeting.</p> <p>Q. What is the purpose of the confidentiality clause?</p> <p>A. There may be occasions where Transgrid, or other members of the CCG, wish to table potentially sensitive matters for discussion and input from the CCG.</p> <p>The Chair gave an undertaking to clearly signal if an item is confidential and why confidentiality is being sought. In this event the Chairperson will apply confidentiality to a portion of the agenda to enable full and genuine consultation on a matter. It is not expected this will be required very often, if at all.</p> <p>Q. What is the purpose of the Media clause?</p> <p>A. The reference to media is about representing the CCG. Any representation on behalf of the CCG will be done by the Chair.</p> <p>CCG members are not to speak to the media on behalf of or in their capacity as a CCG member.</p> <p>The CCG does not place any constraints on members from speaking to the media, including speaking out against the project, in their capacity as a representative of their organisation or as private citizens.</p> <p>Q. How will the meeting minutes be developed?</p> <p>A. Minutes and the presentation will be published online. Minutes will be reviewed by the chair and circulated within one week of the meeting. Members will then have one week to provide any comments back before finalisation and publication. Any responses to questions on notice will be provided in due course when available (that is, we won't necessarily wait until the next meeting to respond).</p> <p>Members were asked how they would like to be referred to in minutes: by name or "member:" Members did not express a preference on this matter.</p>

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	<p>The Chair declared he is paid by Transgrid to facilitate the CCG and outlined his involvement with Transgrid in meeting preparation. He added that he is also available to members should they have any questions about the CCG. He also asked for the group's expectations of him as Chair.</p> <p>A group member commented "Fair and reasonable". If there are any other comments regarding the expectations of the chair or terms of reference or code of conduct, please feel free to pass them either directly through the Chair or via Reem Nasr, CCG Secretary.</p>
<p>3. Project Overview and update</p>	<p>Colin Mayer presented a project overview:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • coal fired generation is being retired and replaced by renewable energy • renewable energy is generated in different locations to the coal fired generation • This requires rebuilding the backbone of the energy network based on renewable energy zones. • introduce interconnectivity requirements across the eastern states (including SA) under an integrated system plan. • discussed Regulatory Test for Investment (RIT-T) - technical and economic assessment). • confirmed corridor as Dinawan to Bulgana via Kerang as double circuit 500kV overhead transmission line option under the RIT-T <p>The Chair noted that the focus of the CCG is on the 500kV overhead transmission line. Alternative options, undergrounding, can be pursued outside this forum through other channels, such as with the second inquiry or the regulator.</p> <p>The Chair requested that Transgrid provide the CCG with a presentation on undergrounding at a future meeting but noted that the primary focus of the CCG would be the preferred solution as identified in the RIT-T. Any commentary provided by CCG members on the detail of overhead transmission line that could improve the eventual overhead route is not taken as an endorsement of that option. It is about what can be done to make the Option outlined in the RIT-T as good as it can be and to better understand the range of issues in the area of the corridor to help refine the best route.</p> <p>Colin Mayer noted that undergrounding was addressed in the Project Assessment Conclusions Report (PACR) Appendix 4 (page 104).</p>
<p>4. Preferred Corridor report: Key Themes</p>	<p>Michael Johnson presented on the key themes heard during the consultation on the Draft Corridor Report including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VNIW corridors determined using publicly available desktop information. • Consultation was a ground truthing exercise, intended to identify what information was missing and taken into account when deciding the final corridor. • Extension of consultation • 70 submissions received. <p>Comment: There was a lack of consultation early in the process.</p>

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	<p>Michael Johnson: We had to get to the point of defining a broad corridor that would allow sensible discussion. The extension of the consultation period allowed for greater engagement earlier in the process.</p> <p>Chair: If there is a need for engagement, please pass on the details to me or Reem so that Transgrid can address.</p> <p>Comment: The preferred corridors should have been approached with fairness and openness to the community. It feels like the Moulamein community have lost trust and they've been "given crumbs" and not considered enough. It's been upsetting to the community and a bad start to the Transgrid process, and we are not sure how it's going to be fixed?</p> <p>Chair: Transgrid is unable to answer questions regarding the Victorian side of the project. Need to refer to the Regulator or Transmission Company Victoria (TCV)</p> <p>Jarryd Barton talked through how Transgrid arrived at the preferred corridor based on the study area, which is set by the regulator.</p> <p>Q: Are you saying the Corridor was selected by the regulator?</p> <p>A: Jarryd explained the constraint analysis process which led to the preferred corridor. Regulator only determined point A and B (i.e. border crossing area and Dinawan substation).</p> <p>Comment: Regarding the planning approval pathway of Critical State Significant Infrastructure (CSSI) this sets the bar at a different level. There is a commitment to work towards not having much say on the project. CSSI sets the bar at a different level. We're seeking to protect cultural values, so regardless of whether project is CSSI or not the project should work to protect cultural values.</p> <p>Response: CSSI will require sign off at state and federal level. There is still a rigorous EIS process to be followed for CSSI. As the proponent we are committed to following that process and engaging with communities.</p> <p>ACTION: Provide group with Departmental description of CSSI</p> <p>Addendum</p> <p>Under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EP&A Act), some infrastructure projects can be declared as State significant infrastructure (SSI) if they are important to the State for economic, environmental or social reasons.</p> <p>Projects are considered State significant if above a certain size or capital investment value or is in a sensitive environmental location.</p> <p>The process for CSSI assessment is found in the State Significant Development Guidelines (See link to Resources section below)</p> <p>Q. Regarding the 500kV tower size, can there be limit for the number of towers in sensitive areas?</p> <p>A. Not at this stage while we are still looking at corridor level and then refining a route. However, there is an opportunity to look at this in the subsequent stages of planning for the project.</p>
5. Preferred Corridor report: Changes	Paul McFadyen presented on the changes to the corridor as a result of community and landholder feedback.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • extending the corridor further north • avoiding Moulamein • the change in status of Moulamein airport – not registered with CASA • narrowing at river <p>Our focus now is on landholder engagement & ecology surveys which serve as inputs to the route selection process.</p> <p>Colin Mayer provided a brief overview of engineering factors considered in the development of a transmission line.</p> <p>Best option for transmission is always long and straight. We then look at the ground conditions, critical constraints and property boundaries. Then there are a number of different tower types that are used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tension tower – A tower which has pull on the transmission line conductors is called a tension tower. These towers require more steel than suspension towers. • Suspension tower - Used where the transmission line conductors are suspended from the tower cross arm and mechanical tension are the same on both sides of the tower. <p>Line length is an important consideration in design as an influence on energy transfer.</p> <p>Q. What is the depth of tower foundations? A. Tower foundation depth will depend on ground conditions and soil type. But can be between 5m-20m</p> <p>Comment: This is a challenging environment with regards to archaeological deposits and challenging ground conditions.</p>
6. Route Selection	<p>Jarryd Barton, presented the route selection process and the assessment criteria intended to be used.</p> <p>A description of the categories was provided and the differences between the corridor and route criteria described.</p> <p>The following criteria were removed from the assessment as they are not present at the corridor level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mine subsidence zones • Steep slopes / topography • Valleys/rivers requiring large spans • Commonwealth and Defence land • World and Commonwealth heritage <p>The following criteria have been added:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interaction with renewable development and agricultural infrastructure

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constructability (access) and design constraints • Aboriginal heritage predictive modelling • Proximity to residential dwellings / homesteads • Groundwater bores <p>Action: Transgrid asked CCG members for feedback on the assessment criteria within a week of minutes being circulated.</p> <p>Q. Bushfire prone land – how do you determine that? A. Only Category 1 bushfire areas have been considered.</p> <p>Q. Will Transgrid be buying property for use as a biodiversity offset like they did for EnergyConnect? A: It is likely that Transgrid will consider purchase of land for biodiversity offsets however impacts to biodiversity are not yet known.</p> <p>Jarryd Barton: The first step is to avoid impacts, and when impacts cannot be avoided, a plan will be put in place with Department of Planning: Biodiversity and Conservation Directorate</p> <p>Q. Cultural heritage studies, particularly the predictive modelling, will these be made available to the CCG prior to public release? Addendum</p> <p>Where appropriate cultural heritage studies may be made available to the CCG through the course of the environmental assessment process.</p> <p>The group was invited to mark-up corridor maps with any constraints or opportunities.</p> <p>Chairs note: The maps will be marked up and used for ongoing input from the CCG at future meetings. It is important to note that place-based information will be sought from varied stakeholders throughout the project not just from the CCG.</p>
7. Agenda Setting	<p>The Chair asked the group what particular topics of interest members would like to cover in future meetings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bushfire risk – including measures of support. • Social legacy • Restrictions on property • Planning process - CSSI and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) • How we got to the options • Process of EIS rollout • Overall process of community engagement <p>The Chair invited the group to present back to Transgrid on the communities they represent and how the various types of farms operate.</p> <p>Jarryd Barton requested information on smaller airstrips and any corridor level constraints.</p>

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	A group member reiterated the request for submissions from the exhibition of the Draft Corridor Report be made available.
8. Meeting schedule	December meeting was mooted for 7 or 8 December. A group member asked about opportunities for Zoom meetings. ACTION: Reem to email members with dates and formats and seek feedback
Further discussion	Can future maps be produced with reference points (e.g. grid reference/coordinates/additional reference locations) Q. Can observers attend, from an agency perspective if they are subject matter experts? A. Requests to be made to the Chair, based on agenda and rationale. You can also request out of session meetings on specific issues. Nominated alternates will need to sign CCG Code of Conduct before attending meeting.

Action items

Agenda item	Description	Person responsible	Status
4. Preferred Corridor report: Key Themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summary on how Transgrid arrived at the preferred corridor for VNIW Send Draft Corridor report to group Provide group with Departmental description of CSSI 	Secretary	Completed
6. Route selection	CCG members asked for feedback on the route selection assessment criteria	CCG	No feedback received
8. Meeting schedule	Proposed dates and formats to be sent to CCG for upcoming meetings	Secretary	Completed
Questions on notice	Can Preferred Corridor Report submissions be made available to the group? Cultural heritage studies, particularly the predictive modelling, will these be made available to the CCG?	Secretary	Completed

Resources

Item	Link
Draft Corridor Report	https://www.transgrid.com.au/media/af5d3pry/ps135761-env-rep-001-reva_corridor_rpt_v2-2.pdf (PDF 39.34 MB)
Preferred Corridor Report	https://www.transgrid.com.au/media/0wue2k4h/vni-west-preferred-corridor-report-october-2023.pdf (PDF 3.66 MB)
Regulatory Investment Test for Transmission Documents	https://www.transgrid.com.au/projects-innovation/vni-west#Regulatory-Investment-Test-for-Transmission--RIT-T-

Item	Link
State Significant Infrastructure	https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/assess-and-regulate/development-assessment/planning-approval-pathways/state-significant-infrastructure
State Significant Infrastructure Guide	https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-02/declaration-of-ssi-and-cssi-state-significant-infrastructure-guide.pdf (PDF 136KB)

Attachments

Attachment	Format
A1 Corridor maps for mark up	PDF – Sharefile link
Criteria sheet	PDF
Transgrid slides	PDF

Next meeting

Date:	Wednesday, 13 December 2023	Time:	10:00am – 12:00pm
Location:	Deniliquin RSL	Chairperson:	Brendan Blakeley