

HumeLink Community Newsletter

July 2023

What is HumeLink?

HumeLink is one of Australia’s largest energy infrastructure projects connecting renewable energy sources to the grid, increasing availability and market competition and helping to put downward pressure on energy prices in Australia.

The project consists of 360 kilometres of 500 kV overhead transmission lines connecting Wagga Wagga, Bannaby and Maragle, and new or upgraded infrastructure at three 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. HumeLink is subject to the approval of the Australian Energy Regulator.

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

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HumeLink preferred route



Figure 1: HumeLink preferred route



Major planning milestone

Work on the design and approvals for HumeLink has been underway for several years, and as a result of the valuable input from the community and landowners, the preferred route for the project has now been refined from an initial five kilometre wide study corridor to a proposed easement in most areas.

This process included the investigation of alternative routes in the Bannaby, Pejar Dam, Tumut, Blowering and Green Hills areas.

We are continuing to refine the tower structure design and supporting infrastructure, and conduct further field and technical studies. We're also continuing to work closely with easement affected landowners through compensation discussions as well as working with them to establish tailored Property Management Plans (PMP's). PMP's consider access, biosecurity and the specific needs of each property and farming operation during HumeLink's construction.

This work in the field and in progressing design, teamed with important conversations with the community and landowners, means the project's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will soon be lodged for public exhibition and assessment as part of the State and Commonwealth

planning processes. The lodgement of the EIS and its public exhibition will mark a major milestone in the HumeLink project and provides another opportunity for the community to have a say. This edition of the project newsletter focuses on the EIS and outlines how you can make a submission.

After the community has made submissions on the EIS the project will be assessed, with a decision on the project expected next year. Subject to approval, construction of the transmission line is expected to start in late 2024. While this may seem some time off, work is already well underway to determine our construction delivery partners, and we will have more to share on this in the near future.



Figure 2: HumeLink key project dates.



Pictured: 500 kV transmission towers in Muswellbrook, similar to those that will be built on HumeLink.

The environmental regulatory and approval process

As a Critical State Significant Infrastructure (CSSI) project, the HumeLink project must go through a comprehensive Commonwealth and State environmental assessment process. This acknowledges that CSSI 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.

The first step in the process required the project team to conduct a preliminary assessment of the potential environmental impacts from the project. This ‘Scoping Report’ was then reviewed by the NSW Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) and the project’s Secretary’s Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) and Supplementary SEARs were issued in April 2022.

The SEARs set out the matters that must be investigated as part of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and provided the basis of the specialist studies prepared by the HumeLink project team.

In summary, the EIS will:

- detail the specialist studies carried out to determine the potential impacts of the project including environmental, economic and social considerations
- set out proposed management measures to avoid, minimise, mitigate or offset those impacts
- summarise the stakeholder and community engagement undertaken and the engagement results
- help government agencies, relevant authorities, community and stakeholders make an informed submission on the merits of the project.

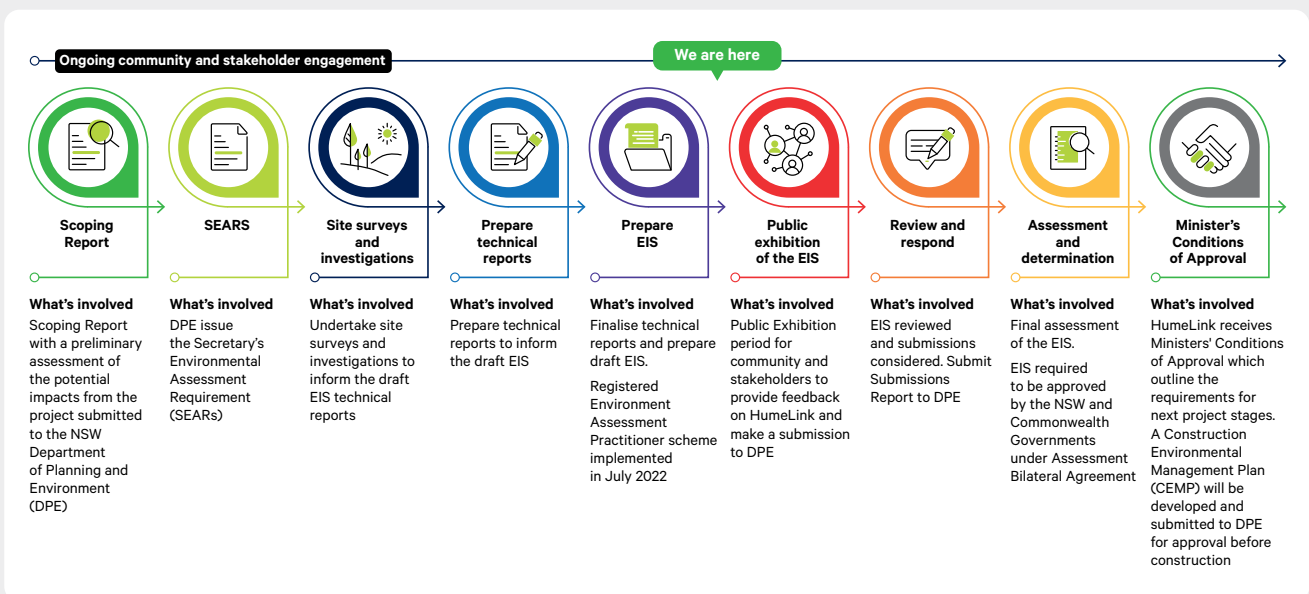


Figure 3: HumeLink EIS Planning Pathway.

What specialist studies are required?

A total of 19 specialist studies were identified as being required for HumeLink (refer Figure 4). The aim of each specialist study is to identify and assess the potential impacts to the environment and communities and propose measures to avoid, minimise, mitigate or offset those impacts.

The required studies for HumeLink have now been completed. Many of these studies provide further detail on topics we know the community is interested in hearing more detail on.

Eighteen fact sheets summarising the findings of key study areas are available on the HumeLink project website, with the full reports available to view via the [NSW DPE Major Projects Planning Portal](#) once the EIS is on public exhibition.

Find out more about individual EIS specialist studies on the [HumeLink website](#)

HumeLink Environmental Impact Statement Specialist Studies

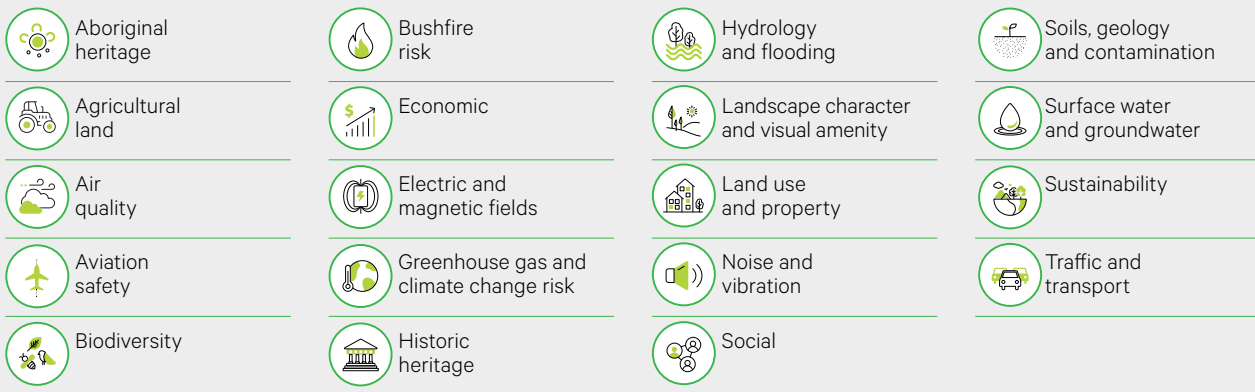


Figure 4: HumeLink EIS Specialist Studies.

What is happening now?

The HumeLink EIS is nearing completion and will be submitted to DPE in August. This milestone means the EIS will soon be placed on public exhibition.

During the exhibition period, the community will be invited to review the EIS and associated specialist studies and provide feedback on the merits of the project via formal submissions.

The EIS exhibition process is run by the DPE. The DPE will place the EIS on exhibition and call for public submissions on the merits of the project. The submissions received are used to guide the final determination, as well as any approval conditions for the project.

How do I get involved?

Local community members, landowners, councils, stakeholders, community groups and organisations are encouraged to view the EIS during the public exhibition period and have their say via formal submission.

During the exhibition period online and in-person events will be held at key locations along the alignment. A range of project resources, including the full EIS and associated specialist studies, will be available to view at these sessions. These resources will also soon be available online for the community to access and review. More detail about where you can access the EIS, as well as opportunities to meet and discuss with the project team, are provided below.

Once you have reviewed the EIS materials you will be able to provide feedback on the EIS directly to DPE. These submissions can be made individually or as a group. Figure 5 outlines how to make a submission and how feedback is used.

Attend an event

Join us online or in-person to hear from the project team about the EIS and specialist studies and to access the EIS resources.

We will publish the dates and times of our in-person and online events on our website.

To register your interest in attending one of our upcoming events, register via <https://swipengage.com/#/HumeLinkCIS> or scan the QR code. Once more details about our events are confirmed, you will receive an email with the relevant information.



Can't attend any of the events? View the digital EIS

We understand that not everyone will be able to attend the planned events. You can also access the project's digital EIS via the HumeLink website at a time that best suits you.

The digital EIS is a user-friendly and interactive platform to present the key outcomes of the EIS and support a better understanding of the project. The digital EIS delivers interactive mapping, multimedia displays and links to the full EIS on the NSW DPE Major Projects Planning Portal.

Make a submission

There are a range of ways you can have your say, including options to provide submission both online or in hard copy. However, it is important to note the EIS exhibition process is run by the DPE and submissions must be sent directly to the Department during the exhibition period.

Submissions can be made online via the [NSW DPE Major Projects Planning Portal](#) or provided directly to DPE via Australia Post. Figure 5 outlines the EIS submission process.

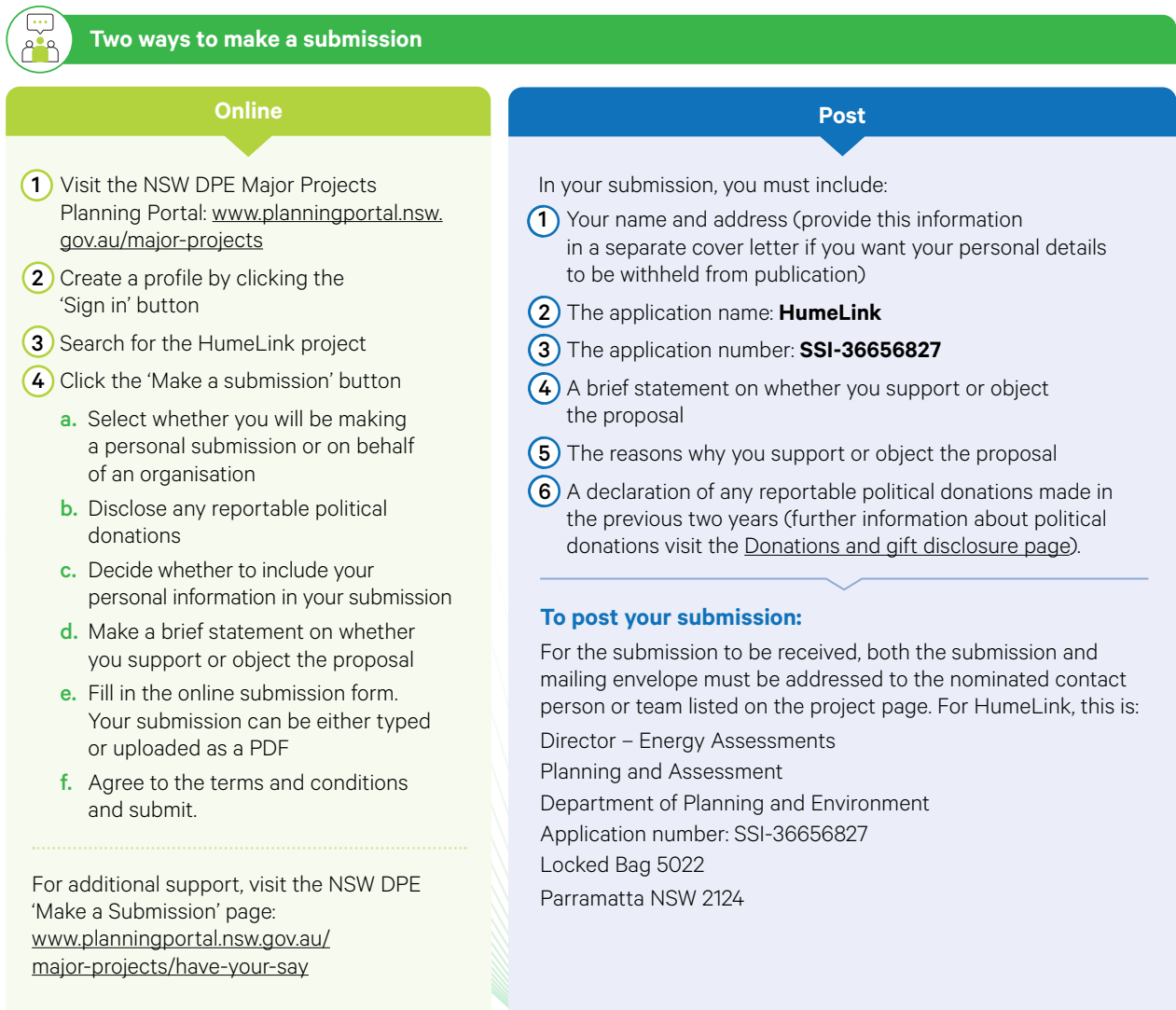


Figure 5: EIS Submission Process.

Considerations when making a submission


As the EIS exhibition process is managed by the DPE, the HumeLink project team is unable to provide assistance with developing, writing or lodging submissions. To assist you to make a valid and informed submission on the project during the exhibition period please refer to our Submission Guide (Figure 6), which contains writing tips, submission criteria and guidelines for lodgement.

Submissions must be received by the DPE before the close of the exhibition period.


If you need any support on how to make a submission, visit the NSW DPE 'Make a Submission' website www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/have-your-say or call DPE on 02 8217 2022.

Should you have any questions regarding information included in the HumeLink EIS, please reach out to the project team by phone on 1800 317 367 or email hmelink@transgrid.com.au or alternatively speak with us at an event during the exhibition period.

Writing tips

-  A submission can be written in bullet points or full sentences
-  A submission can be written in plain-English and does not require technical expertise

Submission criteria

-  A submission on the HumeLink project must include the Application number SSI-36656827
-  A submission must include your full name and address. You can request to have your name withheld
-  A submission must be signed
-  A submission must include a statement on whether you support, object, or are providing comments on the issues raised in the EIS
-  Submissions can be made by an individual or a group
-  A group submission signed by one person is considered a single submission
-  Where relevant, provide reasons and/or supporting information for any conclusions made in the submission
-  If there is new information that should be considered, provide supporting documents
-  An effective submission considers the purpose of the environmental impact assessment and refers to a relevant issue or key matter in the EIS

-  Submissions must be sent directly to DPE. Transgrid cannot receive or send submissions to DPE on behalf of submitters
-  An online submission requires an account to be created on the NSW Major Project Planning Portal
-  Submissions must be received before midnight on the last day of the exhibition period
-  Online submissions must be made via the NSW Major Projects Planning Portal. Follow the step by step instructions on their website: www.planning.nsw.gov.au/have-your-say

Figure 6: EIS Submission Guide.



Pictured: The Remote Access Community Information Hub (RACH) housing project information resources and laptops with satellite connectivity to reach landowners and the community.



How will my feedback be used?



Following the EIS public exhibition, DPE will place all submissions on its website and provide Transgrid with the submissions received. All submissions will be summarised in a Submissions Report, which will collate and categorise the submissions received and provide a response. The Submissions Report will be made publicly available.



The DPE will review the Submissions Report as part of the project assessment. DPE will then make a recommendation to either approve the project along with any conditions, or provide reasons for refusal. Additional information may be requested.



This recommendation is then referred to the NSW Minister for Planning and Public Spaces for determination (decision).



Then, the NSW Minister for Planning and Public Spaces will make a decision about whether to approve the project along with any conditions of approval.



Next steps (pending NSW Government approval)

- HumeLink will need approval from both the NSW and Commonwealth governments. Once the NSW Minister for Planning and Public Spaces has made a decision the Australian Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) reviews the determination and makes a decision about whether to approve the proposal along with any conditions of approval
- Subject to the NSW Government and Commonwealth planning approvals, construction of HumeLink would commence in late 2024 and be completed by mid 2026.



EIS Frequently Asked Questions

How have stakeholders and communities been involved to date?

We have been engaging with stakeholders, landowners, local communities and businesses since 2020, and have ensured their input has informed the preparation of the HumeLink EIS.

Engagement has included:

- One-on-one meetings and ongoing discussions with directly impacted landowners
- Meetings and ongoing discussions with Traditional Owner groups
- Meetings with local, State and Commonwealth governments and agencies
- Community and special interest group meetings and briefings
- Community information sessions and webinars, in-person and online
- Mobile community engagement through Remote Area Community Hub (RACH)
- Online interactive tools and mapping for stakeholders to provide feedback.

Will the feedback I have already provided (since 2020) contribute to the determination?

Feedback provided to the project team since engagement began in 2020 has been used to refine the project alignment and design, as well as identify social and environmental impacts and possible mitigation

measures. This feedback has been summarised in the Scoping Report, EIS and relevant specialist studies, however it has not been provided to the DPE verbatim. If you wish to provide specific feedback on the project's approval, this should be done via submission to the DPE during the EIS exhibition period.

Can I view other submissions?

Yes, the DPE will publish all submissions on the [NSW DPE Major Projects Planning Portal](#) after the public exhibition has concluded.

Can my name be withheld from my submission?

Yes, when making a submission online you can determine if you would like your personal information hidden.

Will the Submissions Report be publicly available?

Yes, the Submissions Report will be made available on the [NSW DPE Major Projects Planning Portal](#).

How will I find out if/when a decision is made?

The DPE will publish the decision online on the [NSW DPE Major Projects Planning Portal](#). It is anticipated that this will be in mid 2024.

Transgrid will also communicate this decision on the [HumeLink project website](#).

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.



1800 317 367 (free call)
humelink@transgrid.com.au
transgrid.com.au/humelink

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