

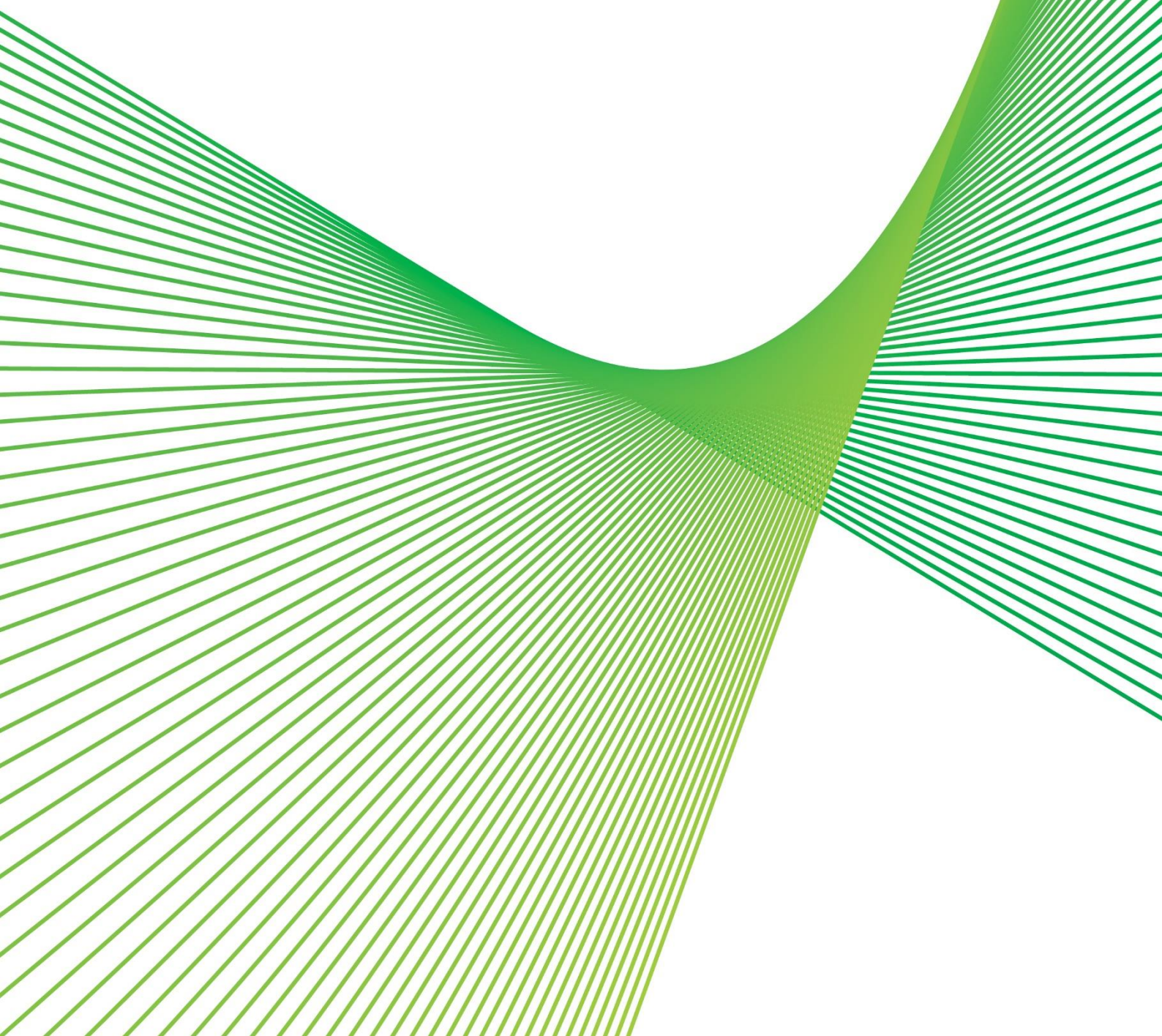


People. Power. Possibilities.

What We Heard Report

HumeLink Community Information Sessions

February and March 2023



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Purpose

The purpose of the 'What We Heard Report' is to capture and share information and issues discussed at key engagement events. The reports are published on the project website for those not able to attend an engagement event, as a record of engagement and to ensure transparency. They are also passed onto the project team for consideration during project development.

Summary

The HumeLink Community Information Sessions (CIS) were designed to engage the general public, communities and businesses along the proposed HumeLink Alignment.

These sessions were planned in consideration of previous feedback the project team have received from Community Consultative Group (CCG) meetings and key stakeholders regarding direct and frequent engagement with the local communities. The CIS offered a two-way communication opportunity allowing stakeholders to meet and discuss the project with key personnel.

The first round of sessions took place in September and October 2022 with 89 people attending across 17 sessions and provided an overview of the project and approvals process. A second round commenced in February and March 2023 with 16 sessions and a total of 67 people attending and focused on potential visual impacts from the project as well as impacts on land use. A third round has been planned for May and June 2023 focused on noise and vibration impacts and will be included in a separate report.

This document outlines the feedback gathered by the project team throughout each of the February and March 2023 sessions as well as the key themes and common issues raised by community attendees.

Undergrounding, route refinement, visual impacts and compensation were the most frequently raised topics during the February and March 2023 sessions. The information below summarises the key themes across all information sessions and also provides analysis for each individual session.

Questions and actions taken on notice during the sessions were all responded to directly following the sessions. Further, the location, style and promotion of future sessions has been adapted based on feedback received during the sessions.

Engagement Approach

The February and March 2023 CIS were drop-in style sessions where members of the project team make themselves available over a two-hour period to speak directly with community members. The sessions were held during daytime and evening to attract the largest number of people possible.

The CIS were held in central locations which were set up with information displayed around the room (corflute display boards) to allow for group movement and flow with large maps of the project footprint displayed in the centre of the room to facilitate collaborative discussions. Project representatives were available to explain the project and answer questions in small groups or with individuals.

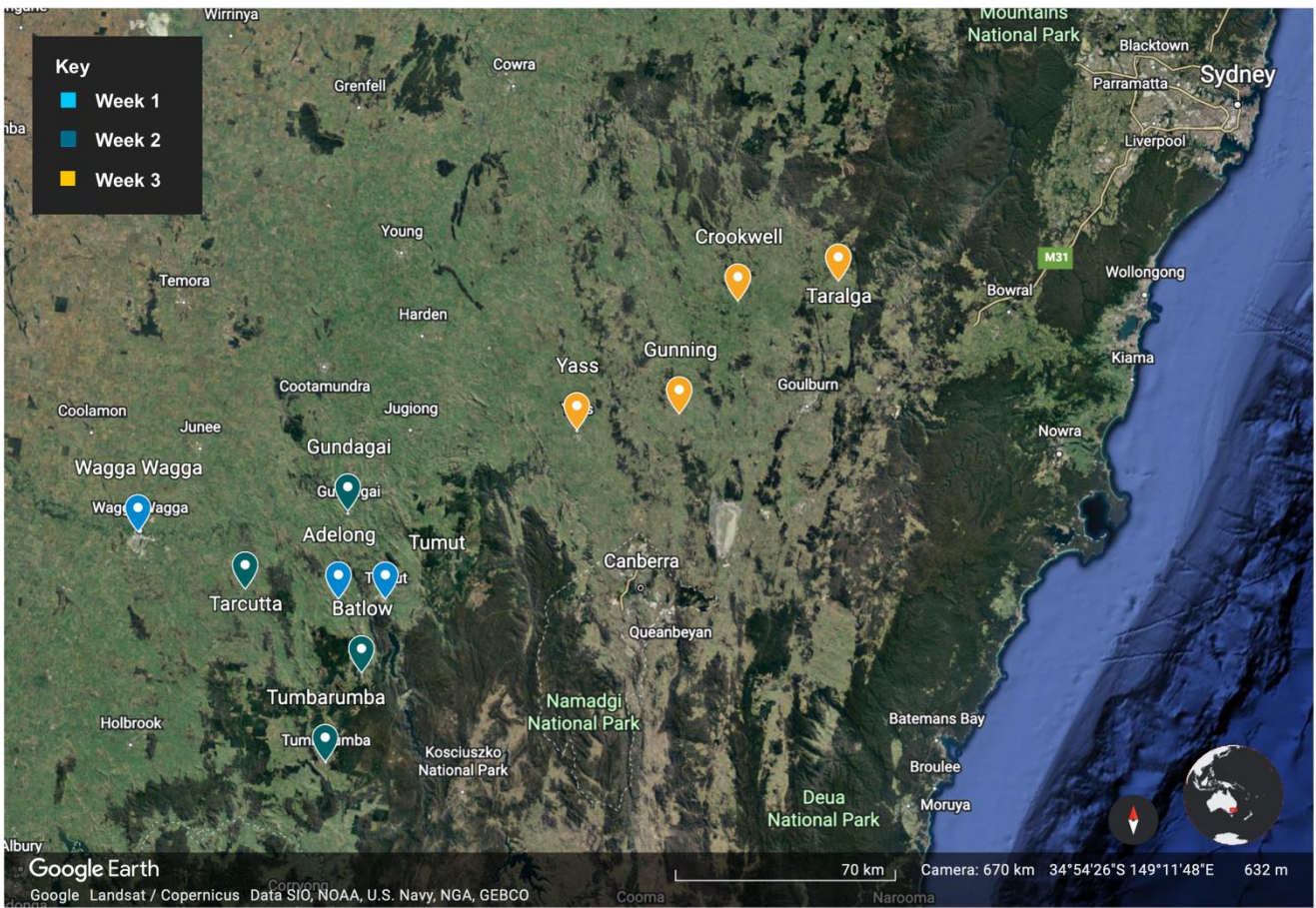
These sessions were advertised in the 'HumeLink Project Update – February 2023' newsletter, which was distributed via letterbox drop to more than 16,000 locations, as well as via email to more than 600 project

subscribers, impacted landowners, and CCG members, on the radio and via social media. This advertising approach was designed to maximise the reach and awareness.

The table below outlines the dates, locations, and attendee numbers where the project team held the CIS:

Week	Location	Date	Time	Venue
Week 1 (w/c 20 Feb 2023)	Tumut	Tuesday 21 Feb 23	11 am – 1 pm	Valmar Support Services
	Tumut	Tuesday 21 Feb 23	4 pm – 6 pm	Valmar Support Services
	Adelong	Wednesday 22 Feb 23	11 am – 1 pm	Adelong Services, Citizens & Bowling Club
	Wagga Wagga	Thursday 23 Feb 23	11 am – 1 pm	Kooringai Girl Guides Hall
	Wagga Wagga	Thursday 23 Feb 23	4 pm – 6 pm	Kooringai Girl Guides Hall
Total attendees in week 1: 22				
Week 2 (w/c 27 Feb 2023)	Tarcutta	Monday 27 Feb 23	4 pm – 6 pm	Tarcutta Memorial Hall
	Tumbarumba	Tuesday 28 Feb 23	11 am – 1 pm	Tumbarumba Motel
	Tumbarumba	Tuesday 28 Feb 23	4 pm – 6 pm	Tumbarumba Motel
	Batlow	Wednesday 1 Mar 23	11 am – 1 pm	Literary Institute, Batlow
	Gundagai	Thursday 2 Mar 23	11 am – 1 pm	Gundagai District Services Club
Total attendees in week 2: 15				
Week 3 (w/c 6 Mar 2023)	Crookwell	Tuesday 7 Mar 23	11 am – 1 pm	Crookwell Memorial Hall
	Gunning	Tuesday 7 Mar 23	4 pm – 6 pm	Gunning Shire Hall
	Yass	Wednesday 8 Mar 23	11 am – 1 pm	Yass Soldiers Memorial Hall
	Yass	Wednesday 8 Mar 23	4 pm – 6 pm	Yass Soldiers Memorial Hall
	Taralga/Bannaby	Thursday 9 Mar 23	11 am – 1 pm	Taralga War Memorial Hall
	Taralga/Bannaby	Thursday 9 Mar 23	4 pm – 6 pm	Taralga War Memorial Hall
Total attendees in week 3: 30				
Feb-Mar total attendees: 67				

The map below provides a visual display of the locations where the project team held the CIS:



Key Themes

Key topics raised throughout the sessions include:

- **Visual impacts** for both directly impacted and adjacent landowners. **Transmission tower height** was frequently raised in areas such as Tumut, Adelong, Tumbarumba, Gunning, and Yass. Requests were made for additional **photomontages** to better visualise proposed towers and transmission lines.
- **Route alignment** decisions and consideration of landowner properties and the national parks. Plus, how the project will connect with surrounding projects such as VNI West and ‘Snowy 2.0.’ In Batlow, the alternate Green Hills route was a key topic.
- Impacts to **mental and physical health** (e.g. from EMF) was raised at various CIS locations including Tumut, Adelong, Wagga Wagga, Batlow, Yass, and Taralga.
- Feedback on **effectiveness of engagement** including letterbox drops and required notice ahead of future consultation sessions.
- **Undergrounding Study Report** with targeted questions around why HumeLink is not being undergrounded and questions on the positives and negatives of undergrounding. Undergrounding was raised in multiple locations including Tumut, Adelong, Wagga Wagga, Tumbarumba, Batlow, Yass, Taralga.
- Project **funding**.
- Concerns regarding **impacts on flora and fauna**. Key concerns were raised about trees, and endangered species such as sugar gliders, black cockatoos, and Bogon moths.
- Impact of transmission lines on **bushfire risk**. Key concerns included impacts on aerial response, road access, and how the project team is consulting with the RFS. This was a key issue for the community in Adelong, Tumbarumba, Batlow, and Crookwell.
- Project impacts on **farming activities**, specifically aerial spraying for directly impacted landowners.
- **Compensation and valuation process**, with landowners concerned they are not being compensated fairly, in addition to negative sentiment towards ‘desktop’ valuations and concerns on how compensation will be taxed.
- **Environmental Impact Statement** content and approval process.
- **Local business or community opportunities**. There was a general positive sentiment for workers joining the communities during construction, and an optimism for the project to leave a positive legacy in the local towns. Regarding business, individuals enquired about procurement opportunities and opportunities to lease office-spaces for the project. Representatives from neighbouring renewable energy generators also attended the Gundagai session.
- Enquiries into **construction sites, workforce accommodation and ancillary facility locations**.
- Concerns around impacts of **increased traffic** on local roads and mitigation strategies being considered.
- Potential **agricultural impacts** were raised including weeds, asbestos, soil remediation, and fertilisation practices.

- Impact on **aviation**, with enquiry into aerial guidelines.

Detailed Session Overviews

The following section includes an overview of each session and common, high-level themes which were discussed. Please note, if you feel that high-level points you raised were not highlighted in this report, please reach out to the HumeLink team on

Phone: 1800 317 367

Email: humelink@transgrid.com.au

Week 1| Tumut – Session 1

Date: Tuesday 21 February 2023, 11am – 1pm

Key topics raised:

- Impacts of **powerlines on aviation**. Particularly fire emergency operations. There was an enquiry into how the HumeLink project team is engaging with the RFS and CASA (Civil Aviation Safety Authority). This topic was raised given the context that funding had recently been invested by the NSW Government for the construction of new Emergency Operations Centres (EOC's) and Fire Control Centres (FCC's) in Tumut. There was an interest to learn how flight paths and runways used for fire emergencies would be affected
- Interest in the **visual impact assessment**
- **Route alignment**, particularly why the alignment is not paralleling existing powerlines through the Kosciuszko National Park
- Concerns about potential effects of **Electromagnetic Frequency (EMF)** from the powerlines on human health
- Comment the access to information could be improved, e.g. suggestion for improved website map, letterbox drops and engagement in more central locations in the town such as on the main road.

Week 1| Tumut – Session 2

Date: Tuesday 21 February 2023, 4pm – 6pm

Key topics raised:

- Concerns regarding impact on community members' **mental health** (e.g. causing stress and aggression)
- **Undergrounding**, specifically questions around why HumeLink is not being undergrounded and questions on the positives and negatives of undergrounding
- Questions regarding how the project is being **funded**
- Enquiries into **impacts on fauna** (e.g. gliders), and more broadly on the national parks and state forests.

Week 1| Adelong

Date: Wednesday 22 February 2023, 11am – 1pm

Key topics raised:

- Concerns regarding **mental health**. It was expressed that the project is wearing people down
- Position expressed the powerline should be **undergrounded**. Particular questions were raised in regard to the cost of undergrounding, and whether the cost could be amortised
- Concerns regarding **impact on national parks and state forests**, particularly mentioning of Green Hills. There was an expression of opposition to the alternate, Green Hills route. There was also an opposing expression of sentiment for the route to parallel the existing line through national parks
- Request for **visual representations** of the infrastructure – specifically the T- and Y- junctions were mentioned
- Safety concerns regarding **EMF**
- Expression there should be a **bushfire** compensation for landowners, if landowners are unable to protect their land due to the powerlines, or in the case fires are caused by the powerlines
- **Access to information** and Comments in regard to the maps provided online and in print-out form within the sessions. There was a request to display features such as main roads and existing powerlines more clearly on these maps.

Week 1| Wagga Wagga – Session 1

Date: Thursday 23 February 2023, 11am – 1pm

Key topics raised:

- Questions regarding the feasibility of **undergrounding**
- Conversation around how HumeLink will **interface** and connect with surrounding projects, with VNI West specifically mentioned
- Questions around **compensation** – particularly how it is calculated in the concept design phase, and how it is taxed
- Comment on community concerns/beliefs surrounding **EMF**, and how this could impact property prices.

Week 1| Wagga Wagga – Session 2

Date: Thursday 23 February 2023, 4pm – 6pm

Key topics raised:

- Feedback on the **letterbox drop**. These included comments the information could be made more relevant to landowners, maps could depict more helpful information (e.g. with key/affected towns marked), and sent much further in advance of the Community Information Sessions
- Questions about what the distribution area is for the **letterbox drop**
- A suggestion for the **EIS** that properties listed or dotted should have a letter sent to them in advance of the EIS being published, notifying the landowners their property is mentioned
- Questions on how **compensation** is calculated, and what is taken into consideration (e.g. tower height was specifically mentioned)
- Questions around why HumeLink is not being **undergrounded** and discussion on the reasoning for this in the context undergrounding is being implemented in some projects mentioned overseas
- Positive feedback regarding the **large maps** provided for viewing in the sessions.

Week 2| Tarcutta

Date: Monday 27 February 2023, 4pm – 6pm

No community members attended the session.

Week 2| Tumbarumba – Session 1

Date: Tuesday 28 February 2023, 11am – 1pm

No community members attended the session.

Week 2| Tumbarumba – Session 2

Date: Tuesday 28 February 2023, 4pm – 6pm

Key topics raised:

- Interest in **local business opportunities** in the HumeLink project for Tumbarumba
- Interest in **route alignment**, particularly in connecting with Snowy Hydro and renewable energy projects in Victoria
- Concern about **bushfire risk** and how Transgrid is communicating with the RFS on the project. Also questions regarding impact on road access during emergency situations
- **Visual amenity**, specifically the size of the towers
- Questions about **compensation** and the Strategic Benefits Payment Scheme (SBP)
- Discussion around **worker accommodation** and supporting services (e.g. medical facilities)
- Question around if there is an option to **decommission the 330 kV** powerline where the new HumeLink powerline will be paralleling it
- Enquiry into **undergrounding** and discussion around the positives and negatives of undergrounding.

Week 2| Batlow

Date: Wednesday 1 March 2023, 11am – 1pm

Key topics raised:

- Request the **letterbox drop** containing Community Information Session dates and times should be distributed earlier
- Request to have the Community Information Sessions in this region later in the day such as after 6 pm, particularly during picking season
- Questions around **undergrounding** and discussion of technical comparisons between having a powerline above ground or underground
- Concerns about potential impacts of **EMF** and static on human health, cattle, and orchards
- Interest in more detail on the proposed **route alignment**
- Expression of preference for the **alternate route**
- Concerns whether there will be a resultant increase in **weeds** on agricultural land
- Concern around **bushfire** management, and access to locations with limited road access

- Concern about the impacts on **visual amenity**
- Discussion whether the powerline could be **undergrounded** in a particular section of the route, with mentioning of Snubba Road.

Week 2| Gundagai

Date: Thursday 2 March 2023, 11am – 1pm

Key topics raised:

- Interest in **route alignment**. Questions were raised as to how close the 'Stop HumeLink Towers' signs along roads are to the proposed route alignment
- Interest in the **EIS**
- Feedback about the **newsletter**, with main points of discussion being suggestions around the map, notice of spelling-error, and timing of letterbox drop
- Concern around impact on **mental health**
- Concerns regarding the **clearing of trees** on properties
- Concerns regarding **impact on current agricultural practices**, particularly the impact on aerial operations such as aerial fertilisation, and questions regarding weeds
- Concerns regarding **compensation** and potential impacts on interest in property and property price
- Concern there is an **imbalance** of where the impacts are being experienced, to where the benefits of the project would be realised
- Concerns around whether **weeds** could be introduced or out-compete crops on property
- Concerns regarding if the land, specifically soils, could be successfully **remediated**.

Week 3| Crookwell

Date: Tuesday 7 March 2023, 11am – 1pm

Key topics raised:

- A frustration was raised in being missed from the **newsletter** letterbox drop when their neighbour had received one
- Dissatisfaction expressed in regard to **property valuation** provided
- Concerns around **bushfire** danger risk, particularly commenting on limited road access in the case of such an emergency
- Concern around **environmental impacts**, specifically clearing of trees
- Uncertainty whether there will be **more powerlines** passing through landowner property after HumeLink
- Concern around impact on **mental health**
- Interest in **route alignment** in respect to property
- Discussion around impact on **visual amenity**.

Week 3| Gunning

Date: Tuesday 7 March 2023, 4pm – 6pm

Key topics raised:

- Interest in where **construction sites** will be located, and what impacts these will have on the community such as on **roads and traffic**
- Discussion surrounding how best to prepare for the **impacts on landowners**
- Concern around impact on landowner **biosecurity** controls
- Suggestion to put a timeline in future **newsletters** for property owners
- Questions around the **Community Partnerships Program** & funding opportunities
- Enquiry into when the **EIS** will be on display
- Questions regarding the **route alignment** in relation to the local church – Greendale Uniting Church – and sharing of concerns heard by community members surrounding proximity of tower placement to the graveyard. Suggestion made to leave some maps at the church for visitors to see that could reduce this concern about the route alignment
- HumeLink Alliance Group member made an explicit request further **photomontage** images to be provided at the next Community Consultative Group (CCG) meeting
- Expression of challenges in attending the timeslot of the session from 4 – 6pm. A suggestion was made for the **session time** in Gunning to be between 11 – 1 pm for future sessions.

Week 3| Yass – Session 1

Date: Wednesday 8 March 2023, 11am – 1pm

Key topics raised:

- Interest in **route alignment**, particularly proximity to Yass
- Interest in the **property program**
- Questions around what the **impacts are on farming** after construction
- Enquiries into **general technical details** about the powerlines such what the voltage is and whether the current will be AC or DC
- Questions regarding **funding for the project**
- Discussion around whether the project could help contribute to the **growth of regional towns** such as Yass and Wagga Wagga
- Impact on **roads and traffic** in the region
- Interest in **potential business opportunities**.

Week 3| Yass – Session 2

Date: Wednesday 8 March 2023, 4pm – 6pm

Key topics raised:

- Interest in **funding opportunities for community**
- Questions around the positives and negatives of **undergrounding**
- Concern around potential **impacts on endangered species** such as the Glossy Black Cockatoo and Bogong moth
- Enquiry into potential **aerial impacts** and aerial guidelines
- Concern around impact on **roads and traffic**
- Question as to what **regulations** are in place for this project
- Interest into what **compensation** is provided to landowners
- Interest in specific sections of the **EIS**, particularly biodiversity and heritage requirements

- Concern around **sacred sites** and bushland
- Concern around **route alignment**, particularly in regards to property, and national parks.

Week 3| Taralga/Bannaby – Session 1

Date: Thursday 9 March 2023, 11am – 1pm

Key topics raised:

- Interest in **roue alignment**
- Concern around **access to towers** from property
- Interest in **opportunities for the community** to benefit from the project; not only in regards to funding, but how the workers/infrastructure could contribute positively to the community.

Week 3| Taralga/Bannaby – Session 2

Date: Thursday 9 March 2023, 4pm – 6pm

Key topics raised:

- Concerns around any potential impacts to health, specifically mentioning **EMF**
- Questions about how **undergrounding** is being considered
- Concern around **impact on species**, with specific mentioning of koalas, sugar gliders and black cockatoos
- Concern around potential damage to **local roads** from trucks during construction
- Interest in **community funding opportunities**
- When and where the next **CCG** would be held
- Interest to learn more about the **EIS**
- Interest in what the latest **project updates** are
- Interest in seeing the **route alignment** on maps provided.