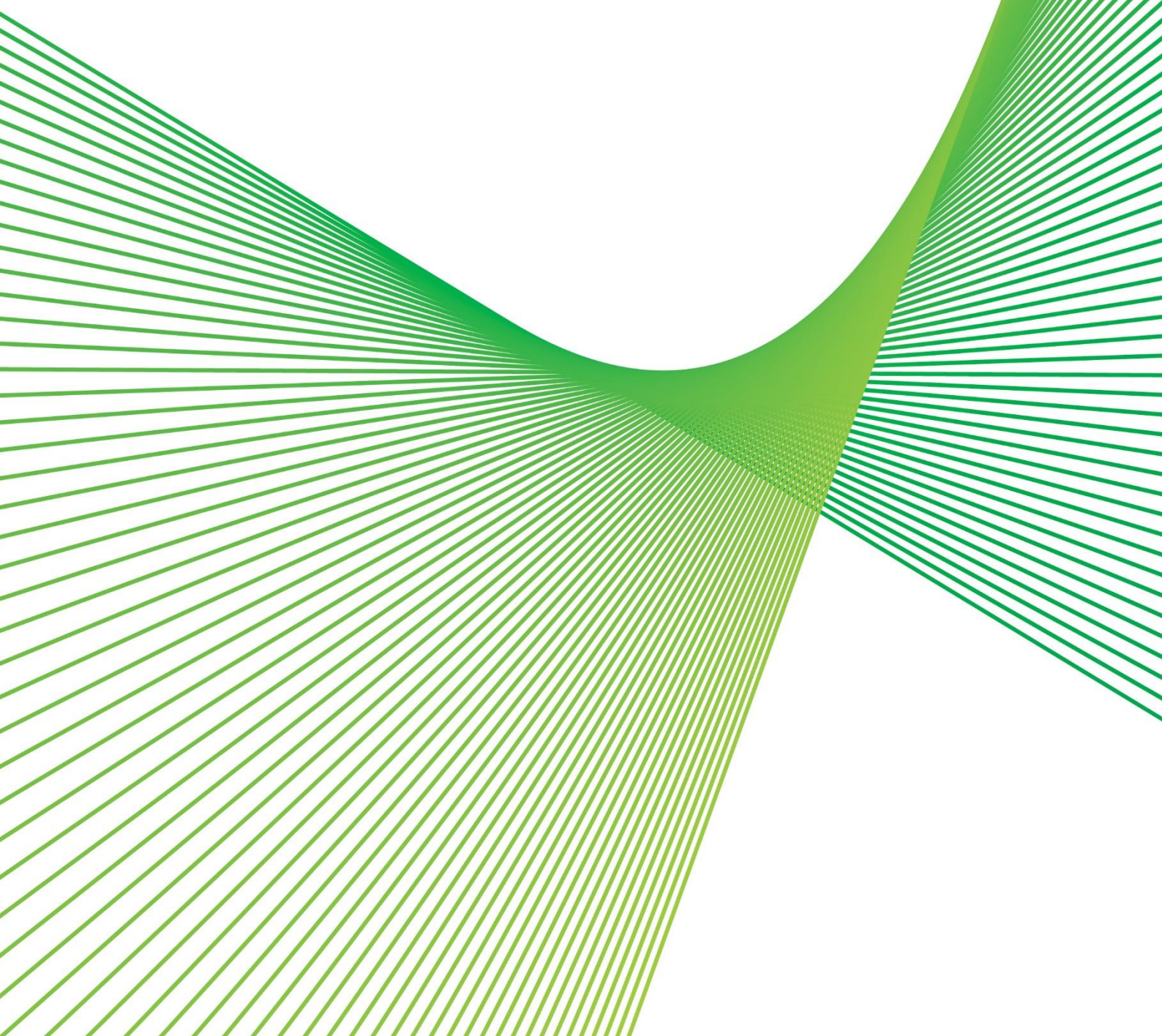


Victoria to New South Wales Interconnector West

Stakeholder Roundtable Report (June 2022)



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1. Summary

An online stakeholder roundtable meeting was held on Wednesday 1 June 2022 regarding the Victoria to New South Wales Interconnector West (VNI West) project. The purpose of this report is to document the roundtable discussions and feedback received.

The 90-minute roundtable included:

- A presentation providing an overview of the VNI West project and an update on its current status within the Regulatory Investment Test for Transmission (RIT-T) process
- An exercise identifying, ranking and discussing important local factors to be considered as part of VNI West
- An online poll for stakeholders to provide feedback on future engagement activities
- An outline of the next steps.

The supporting presentation is provided in Appendix A.

There were 12 attendees including representatives from organisations and industry from within the potential corridor for VNI West. Several members of the VNI West project team also attended to provide information and answer questions.

Key themes emerged from the roundtable discussions and feedback include:

- Early consultation with landowners and the community is important for building trust and transparency
- There is interest in local community consultative groups being established in future to engage with landowners and the community for this project
- There is a preference for future roundtables to be a combination of online and face-to-face meetings, held every three months with a focus on project updates and engagement strategies.

The roundtable concluded with an outline of the proposed future VNI West activities, which includes the release of the Project Assessment Draft Report (PADR) (by no later than 31 August 2022) with a six-week period of public comment and a follow-up roundtable meeting.

Attendees were also provided with contact details to clarify any project details or seek further information.

2. Context and objectives

2.1. Context

VNI West is a proposed new high voltage 500 kilovolt, two-way overhead transmission line to share electricity between Victoria and New South Wales (NSW). The VNI West project is in the regulatory assessment stage, the RIT-T, and is not yet committed or approved, with a transmission route alignment yet to be determined.

As part of the RIT-T process, the project is undergoing a three-step technical and economic assessment required under the National Electricity Rules for significant transmission projects proposed by the National Electricity Market. Transgrid and AEMO are jointly progressing the RIT-T and it is expected to be completed by early 2023.

The project team understands the importance of engaging the community and other stakeholders early on as part of the project's progression. Transgrid is proactively seeking feedback and input during the RIT-T process to deepen understanding of the project area and engagement opportunities moving forward.

2.2. Objectives

The roundtable was an opportunity for Transgrid to share information about VNI West with representatives from organisations, community groups and industry from within the VNI West project region, and seek their feedback on future engagement activities.

The specific objectives of the roundtable were to:

- Increase the awareness of the VNI West project, the RIT-T process and the status of the project within that process
- Identify and discuss local factors to be considered as the project progresses
- Obtain feedback on future engagement activities
- Introduce the key project contacts.

3. Roundtable

The roundtable was held on Wednesday 1 June 2022 from 11 am to 12:30 pm. The 90-minute roundtable was hosted online using Microsoft Teams to provide attendees with the flexibility to join in the discussion from various locations.

The structure of the roundtable included:

- An initial presentation providing an overview of the VNI West project and an update on its status within the RIT-T
- A brainstorming session to identify local factors to be considered as the project progresses, as well as a follow up discussion on some of the key local considerations
- An online poll for stakeholders to provide feedback on future engagement activities
- An outline of the proposed next steps.

3.1. Attendees

Name	Role/Organisation
Barbara El-Gamal	Deputy Landowner and Community Advocate, Transgrid
Edwina Hayes	Director of Regional Development - Murray, Regional Development Australia
Geoff Reardon	Regional Manager – Murray Riverina, ICN NSW
Jarod Dashwood	Forest Occupancy Supervisor, Forestry Corporation of NSW
John Scarce	General Manager, Murrumbidgee Council
Joshua Breuer¹	Office of the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner
Kate Healey	Transmission Advocate, RE-Alliance
Leigh Barker¹	Office of the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner
Llinos Walters	Integration Manager, Transgrid
Louisa McPhee	Stakeholder Engagement Advisor, AEMO
Mark Dalzell	Director of Infrastructure, Edward River Council
Mark McEneaney	Project Director, Transgrid
Matthew Percival	Executive General Manager - Community and Policy, Transgrid
Nathan Menser	Communications and Engagement Advisor, Transgrid
Padraig Clifford	Project Manager, Transgrid
Rod Stowe	Landowner and Community Advocate, Transgrid
Sarah Ryan	Acting Director Community & Economic Development Moama, Murray River Council
Simon Moore	Policy Manager for Infrastructure - Murray-Riverina, Business NSW
Taryn Woods	Communications and Engagement Manager, Transgrid

3.1.1. Invitees

Transgrid also extended invitations to the following organisations, but were unable to attend this Roundtable:

¹ Joshua Breuer and Leigh Barker attended as alternates for Andrew Dyer, Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner

- Murray Irrigation Ltd
- National Farmers' Federation
- NSW Farmers' Association
- Riverina Murray Regional Alliance.

3.2. Roundtable outputs and feedback

3.2.1. Project update

The VNI West project team provided an overview of the project, with the presentation slides included at Appendix A. Questions stemming from the presentation and the subsequent answers provided are detailed below.

Project overview questions and answers

Question	Answer
What is the anticipated crossover between EnergyConnect and the commencement of VNI West?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There will be a gap between the construction of EnergyConnect and VNI West. • Transgrid is working on the development of VNI West in parallel with the construction of Project EnergyConnect. VNI West will be subject to a staged Contingent Project Application process as nominated in AEMO's Integrated System Plan. • VNI West project development is targeted to be finished by 2026, with the project nominated for completion by 2031.
In terms of scalability of the network, what future capacity is being accounted for?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transgrid's Dinawan to Wagga Wagga section of Project EnergyConnect will be constructed at 500kV to allow for increased capacity. • This upgrade in infrastructure will minimise the need for additional transmission lines in the future and reduce the overall impact on the community.
Are there considerations to set aside a portion of construction / fabrication for Australian / local industries rather than outsourcing to offshore?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transgrid has been engaging with the steel industry, particularly as there are a number of factors to consider including the shifting dynamics of the global market. • The current lead time for VNI West might help to facilitate sourcing from local industries.
Could you describe the role of the Landowner and Community Advocate and how it fits with consultation program?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The key role of the Landowner and Community Advocate is to advise on best practice landowner and community engagement across Transgrid's major infrastructure projects. It works to balance the interests of landowners and communities with Transgrid's role in delivering an energy system for the future. • The VNI West project team has commenced engagement with the Landowner and Community Advocate in this early project phase.
Is there an existing landowner network that Transgrid's Landowner and Community Advocates are working with?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At present there is no existing landowner network with VNI West. • One of the strong recommendations from the Landowner and Community Advocate is the early consideration of establishing community consultative groups.

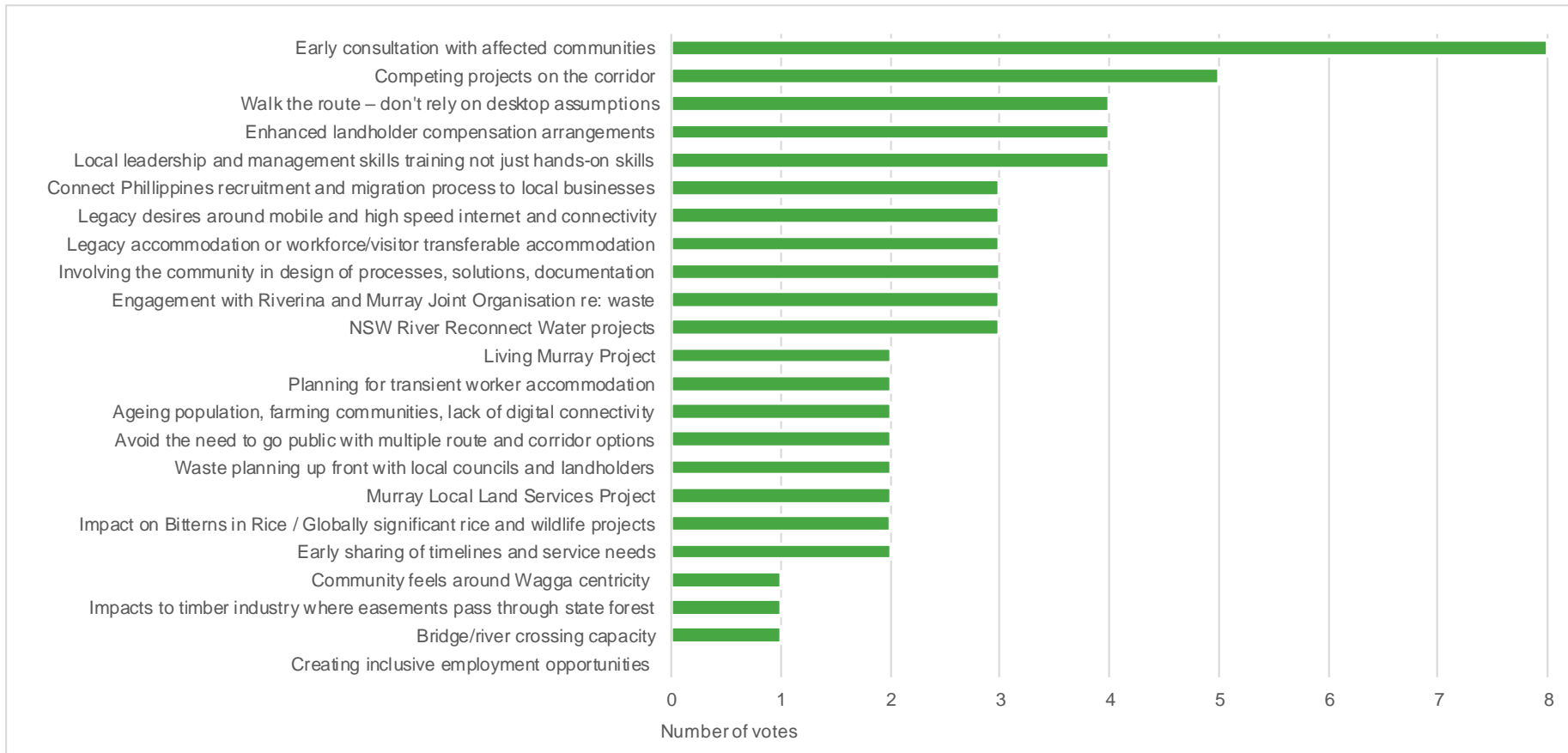
Will there be consultation with the community during the RIT-T process, so landholders don't hear about it for the first time during the environmental approval process?

- During the RIT-T process, Transgrid is working to build awareness of the project and understand local factors within the proposed project area through early engagement with stakeholders and representative groups.
- As part of the RIT-T process, the Project Assessment Draft Report (PADR) will be released publicly, with a six-week period for public submissions.
- If the RIT-T confirms the project should proceed, Transgrid would undertake early consultation with the broader community including landowners.

3.2.2. Understanding the local context

Attendees were asked to identify local factors for consideration by the project and then vote for the most important. Items with more votes were then discussed in further detail. The results are captured below.

What local factors are there in your community or area that we should consider, or be aware of, as this project proceeds?



Following the identification of local factors, some of the key factors were discussed as outlined below.

Discussion on key local factors

Local factors	Discussion points from participants
Early consultation with affected communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In response, Transgrid recognises the need for early and genuine consultation with landholders and communities as an important step in the process. • Multiple corridor and route options can be avoided with early engagement.
Competing projects on the corridor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There does not appear to be any cross-consultation on upcoming projects. • Is there discussion between Federal and State governments in relation to other projects submitted for approval or that may happen along that corridor at the same time? In response, Transgrid advised that the VNI West project team understands the need to be aware of other projects and potential cumulative impacts. While there is already collaboration internally within Transgrid, it was recognised there is a need for this to occur externally. • Business NSW noted an apparent lack of coordination between all projects in the Murray Riverina region, and the impact this is having on the labour market. There might be opportunities to maximise project opportunities and shared benefits moving forward.
Local leadership and management skills training not just hands-on skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When projects arrive in local regions, there is a strong focus on training for skills required to work in the projects. There needs to be a similar focus on developing leadership and management skills of people in the local region.
Engagement with Riverina & Murray Joint Organisation regarding waste and recycling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There needs to be early planning for waste management at a corporate, state and national level, not just local level. In response, Transgrid advised its project team will aim for greater understanding and consider opportunities regarding waste and recycling.
Continue to work with NSW Government on enhanced landholder compensation arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would add to the social licence if there were additional compensation arrangements other than what is available under the <i>Just Terms Compensation Act</i>. • In response to feedback, Transgrid advised it is currently working on compensation arrangements with the NSW Government.
Connect Philippines recruitment and migration process to local businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are some great overseas recruitment programs and migration processes on offer, which could also provide benefit for local businesses. • There needs to be more awareness of the benefits that migrants have on major infrastructure projects and the region more broadly, and an encouragement to be more inclusive and welcoming to encourage them to stay. • In response, Transgrid advised it is aware of the successes of other infrastructure projects when including skilled migrant workers, and there are early conversations happening to ascertain opportunities that could be pursued for VNI West.

3.2.3. Future engagement activities - stakeholders

Attendees were asked to provide feedback on future engagement activities, including the roundtable. The feedback provided is detailed below.

Question: We want to make sure we engage appropriately and thoroughly throughout this process. Given that, are there gaps in the attendees to this roundtable? Who else do you suggest we include?

- Murray Irrigation Limited*
- Committee 4 Echuca Moama
- Local Government Areas**
- Riverina and Murray Joint Organisation
- Regional NSW Landcare and Producer Groups:
 - Murray Regional Landcare Inc
 - Rice Growers Australia
 - Western Murray Land Improvement Group
 - YACTAC
 - Murray Water Strategy Group

*Transgrid invited Murray Irrigation Limited to the roundtable however received no response by the time of the first roundtable.

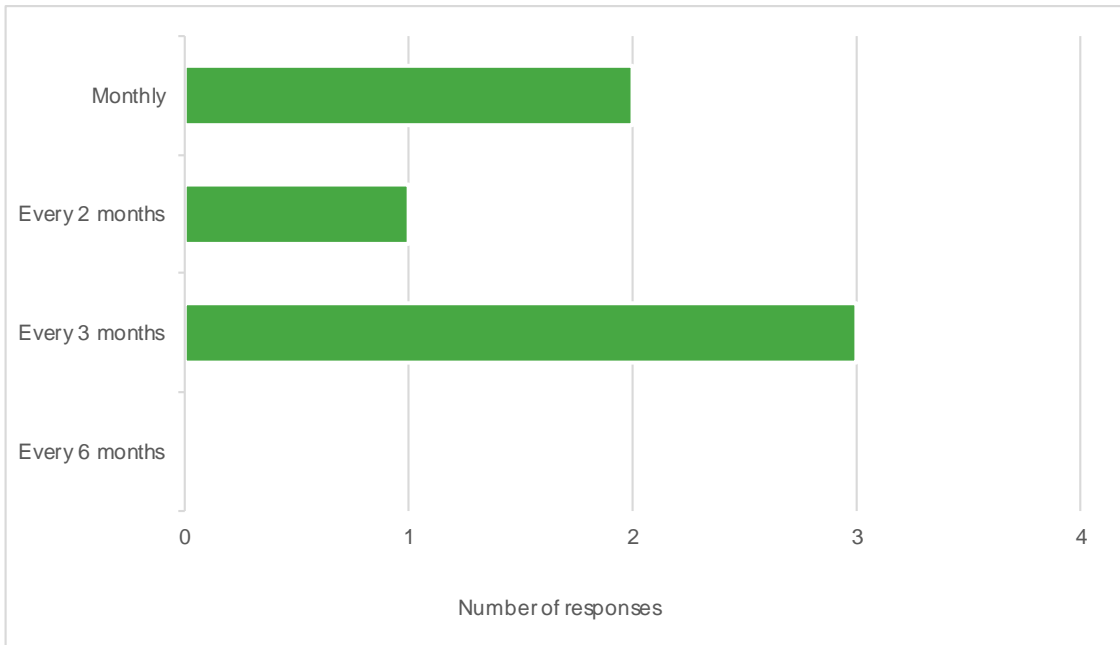
**Transgrid invited Edward River, Murray River and Murrumbidgee Councils to the roundtable, with all three Councils represented.

3.2.4. Future engagement activities – polling

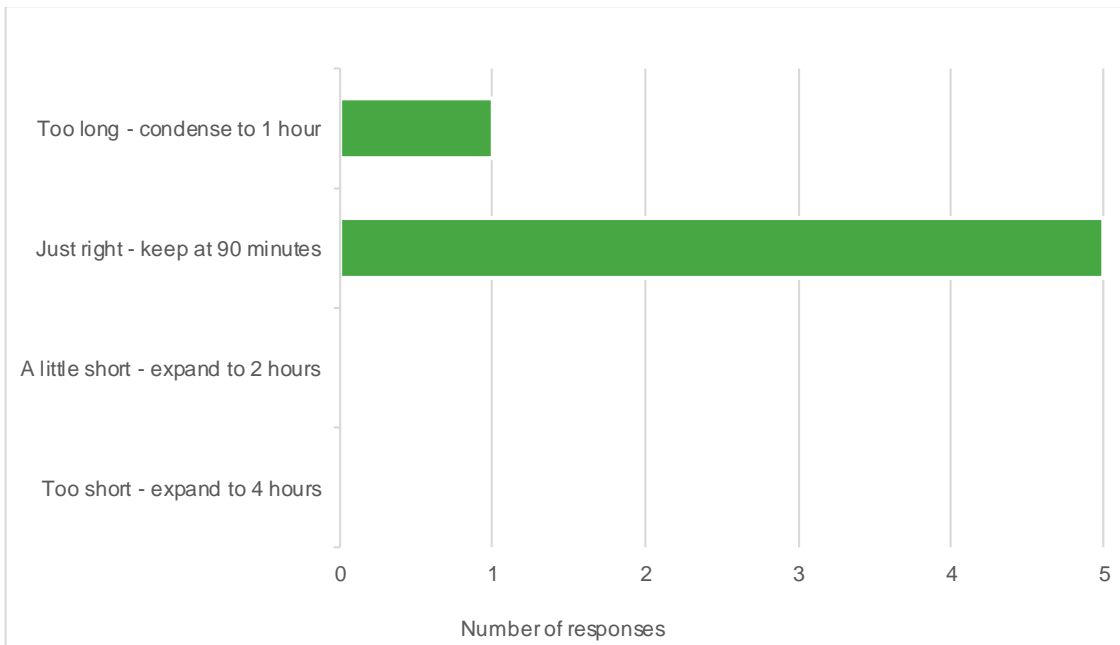
Feedback was sought from attendees on future engagement activities via a polling system.

Note: The tables below show the final audited responses from non-Transgrid Roundtable participants, and therefore may differ slightly from those displayed on screen during the Roundtable.

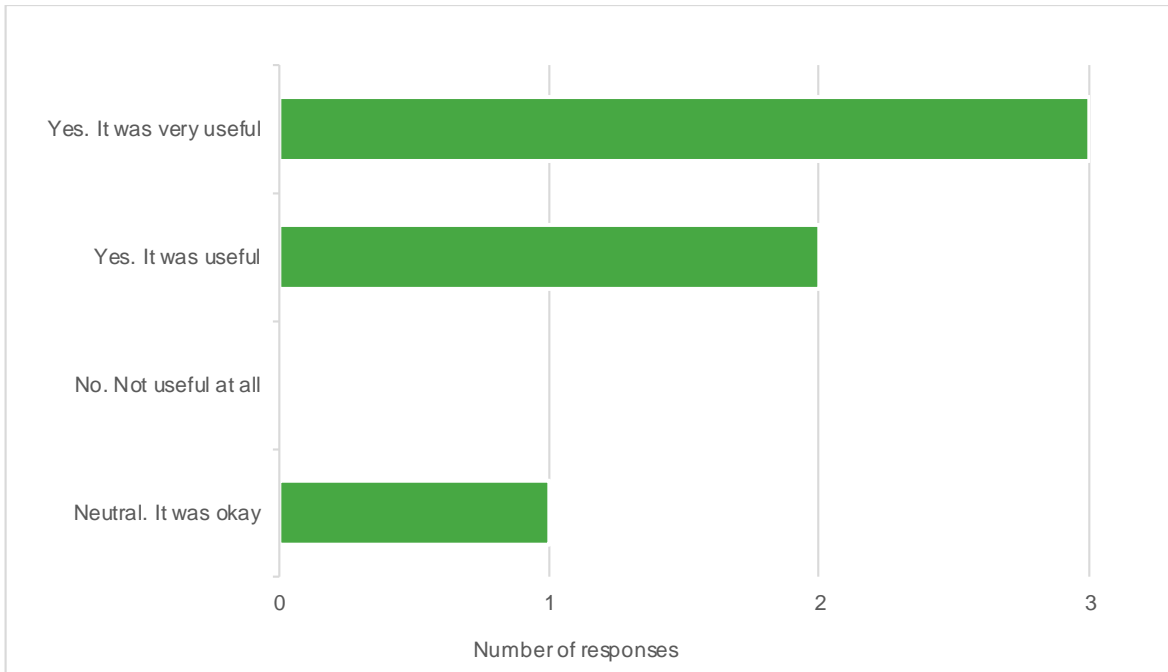
Question: Transgrid would like to continue discussing VNI West with key stakeholders. What is your preference for how often would you like to meet with Transgrid during the RIT-T process?



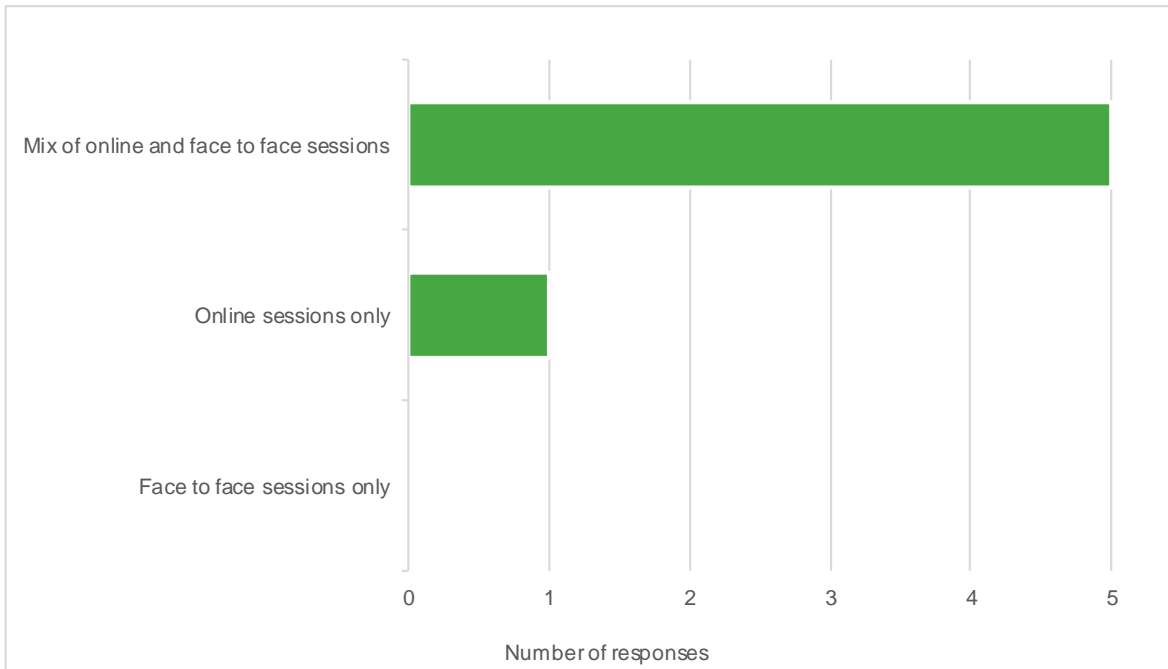
Question: Today's session was 90 minutes. How did you feel about the duration of the roundtable?



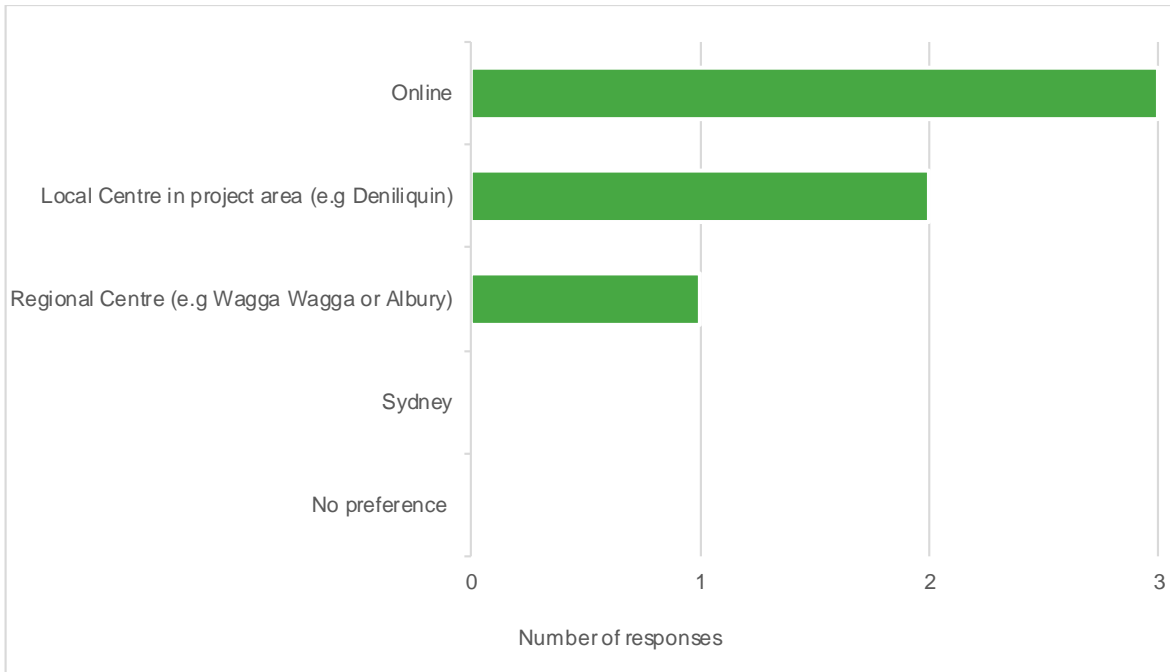
Question: Did you find today's roundtable useful for your understanding of VNI West?



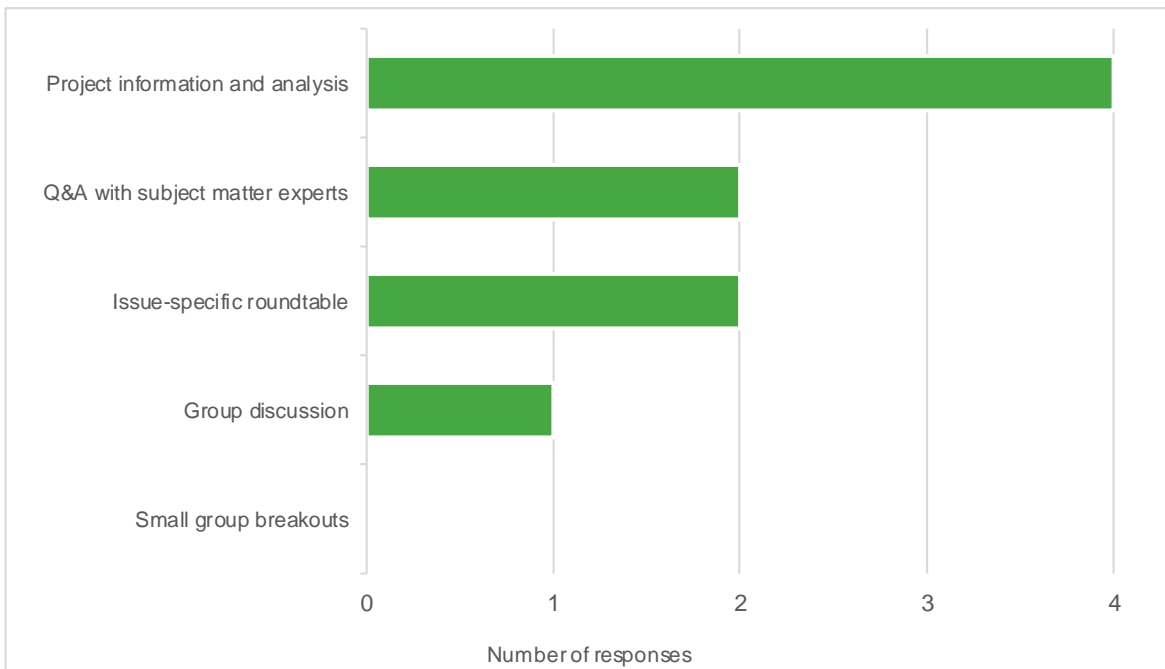
Question: What is your preference for how Transgrid should engage for future roundtables?



Question: Please provide an indication of where Transgrid should consider holding the next roundtable.



Question: What would you like to do more of at future roundtables? Attendees can select more than one.



Question: What topics would you like to see on the agenda for discussion at future roundtables?

- Clarity around legacy and social licence
- Transgrid's plan to engage the community early
- Community and landholder engagement strategies
- Compensation planning
- Establishment of community consultation groups
- Workforce planning including services – accommodation, health, education, schools, training
- Future roundtable attendees

In addition to questions about future roundtable engagements, attendees were asked to provide input into the future activities to engage effectively and appropriately with themselves and the stakeholders they represent. No responses were provided at the time, however attendees were encouraged to contact Transgrid with any suggestions.

4. Next steps

Attendees were provided with an outline of the next steps in the VNI West project which includes the release of the Project Assessment Draft Report (PADR) and Project Assessment Conclusions Report (PACR) and proposed engagement activities for both releases.

Attendees were asked to contact Transgrid with any follow up suggestions for engaging effectively and appropriately with stakeholders as VNI West progresses.

4.1. RIT-T Assessment process

- PADR Release by end of August 2022
- PACR Release in late 2022 / early 2023

4.2. Engagement opportunities

- Period of public comment (six weeks) following release of PADR
- Second Roundtable following PADR release (to be arranged)

5. VNI West contact details

For any enquiries regarding the VNI West project, please use the below contact details.

- Email: VNIW@transgrid.com.au
- Call: 1800 222 537
- Visit: www.transgrid.com.au/VNIW

Appendix A Roundtable presentation slides

Victoria to NSW Interconnector West
(VNI West)



People. Power. Possibilities.

Acknowledgement of Country



In the spirit of reconciliation Transgrid acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the various lands on which we meet on today and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people participating in this meeting.

We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging and celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of New South Wales.

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Agenda

- **Welcome**
- **Project team and roundtable participant introductions**
- **Project and regulatory process overview – Q&A (25 mins)**
- **Discussion: Understanding the local context (40 mins)**
- **Discussion: How to best engage on this project (15 mins)**
- **Next steps**
- **Thank you and close**

3

Objectives

- **Share up to date information on:**
 - the VNI West project
 - the Regulatory Investment Test for Transmission (RIT-T) process
 - the status of the project within the process
- **Identify local contextual factors that may be of interest or impact to the project.**
- **Identify how to best engage with this stakeholder group and those you represent as the project progresses.**

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Transgrid speakers



Matthew Percival
Executive General Manager, Community and Policy



Mark McEneaney
Project Director, VNI West



Padraig Clifford
Project Manager, VNI West



Taryn Woods
Community Engagement Manager, VNI West

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Transgrid welcome

Matthew Percival
Executive General Manager, Community & Policy



The VNI West project and regulatory process overview

Project context and overview



Why do we need VNI West?

- Australia is transitioning to a renewable energy future.
- The pace of the transition is accelerating.
- We need to build the transmission ‘superhighways’ to get renewable energy to the market.
- The market operator’s Integrated System Plan sets out the way.

While there is broad support for the need for this transition, we recognise there are individual farmers and landowners, and local communities, who will be impacted.

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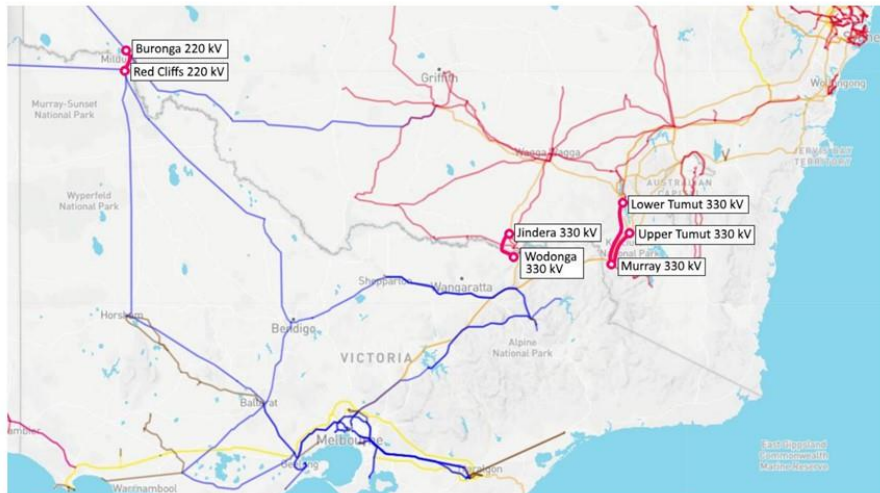
The VNI West project

The VNI West project will:

- Provide an interconnector (a transmission line that allows electricity to flow in both directions between regions) to increase the capacity for sharing electricity between Victoria and New South Wales, improving the reliability and security of electricity supply for both states.
- Unlock clean, lowest-cost electricity from existing and future Renewable Energy Zones (REZ) in Victoria and New South Wales as coal-fired power stations are closed.
- Help achieve net zero emissions targets and facilitate the overall decarbonisation of the National Electricity Market (NEM), while continuing to deliver safe, reliable and affordable electricity to consumers.
- Create regional jobs and local and indigenous supplier opportunities

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Existing Victoria-NSW interconnectors

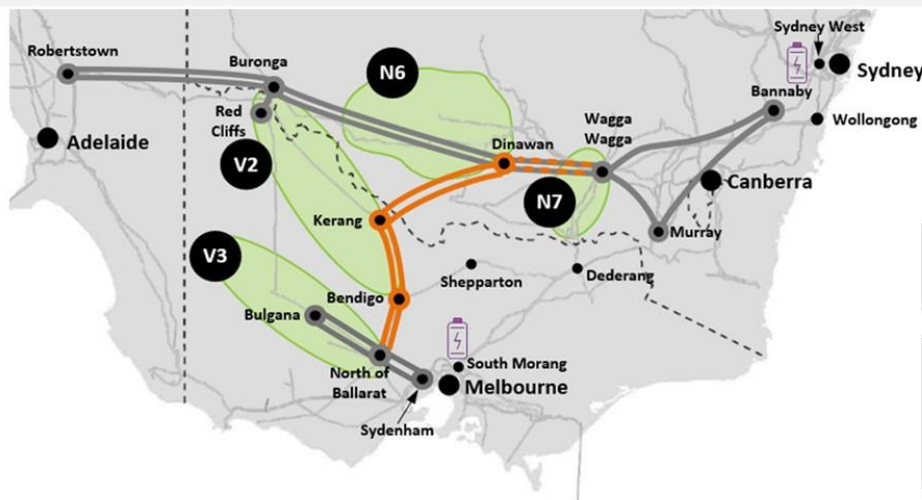


1. **Buronga to Red Cliffs**
(line to be upgraded as part of EnergyConnect project)
2. **Jindera – Wodonga**
3. **Tumut – Murray**

Map of existing interconnectors, as shown on p27 of "Victoria to NSW South Wales Interconnector West (VNI West) PSCR" (2019), AEMO

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VNI West via Kerang



N6 South West NSW
N7 Wagga Wagga
V2 Murray River
V3 Western Victoria

○ Terminal Station
● City
● REZ
○ Option 1: VNI West via Kerang (PEC upgrade dashed)
○ Option 2: Virtual Transmission Line
○ PEC, Humelink and WVTNP
**Paths are indicative only*

Map adapted from Draft 2022 Integrated System Plan (ISP) for illustrative purposes only

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Overview of regulatory process

RIT-T activities

A RIT-T (Regulatory Investment Test for Transmission) is a three-step technical and economic assessment required under the NER for significant transmission projects proposed for the NEM. Transgrid and AEMO are jointly progressing the RIT-T for VNI West.

RIT-T activity	Key date	What it does
Project Specification Consultation Report (PSCR)	Published December 2019	A PSCR seeks feedback and advice on the identified need for new transmission infrastructure.
Project Assessment Draft Report (PADR)	To be published by 31 August 2022	The PADR identifies and seeks feedback on the draft preferred option.
Project Assessment Conclusion Report (PACR)	To be published by early 2023.	The PACR concludes on the final preferred option to deliver the highest net market benefits for consumers.



Draft Integrated System Plan (ISP) 2022 update

VNI-W via Kerang has been declared a staged actionable project:

Stage 1

Carry out early works by 2026 that are needed to ensure the project can be delivered by 2031.

Stage 2

Complete implementation of the project by 2031 (subject to decision rules and feedback loop).

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Regulatory (RIT-T) engagement

Timing	Engagement
February 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transgrid Landowner and Community Advocates meeting Transgrid Advisory Council (TAC) briefing
March 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TAC working group discussion Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner briefing
April 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updates/briefings to Ministers and MPs Project update publication TAC update discussion
May 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MP updates and briefings TAC working group discussion
June / July 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roundtable #1 with stakeholder representative groups One on one stakeholder briefings Meetings with local First Nations groups
Following PADR publication (by no later than 31 August 2022)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project update published 2 newspaper advertisements 6 week consultation period – incl. 2 online industry forums One on one stakeholder briefings Roundtable #2

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If confirmed by the RIT-T... Early Works

- Should the RIT-T process confirm the project proposal, Transgrid would proceed with detailed project planning and seek relevant project and environmental approvals.
- Factors that would be fully considered during project planning include:
 - Route selection
 - Transmission line design
 - Coexistence between project and land use (irrigation, agriculture, etc)
 - Environmental matters
 - Cultural Heritage (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal)
 - Socio-economic
 - Landholder, Community and Stakeholder feedback
- While important environmental and social factors are considered at a desktop (high) level as part of the technical and economic project assessment undertaken in the RIT-T, any issues identified during early engagement will be further developed during project planning and will inform our future engagement activities.

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Questions & Answers

VNI West



Understanding the local context

VNI West brainstorm

To help us better understand the local context...

What are the factors in your community or local area that we should consider, and be aware of as this project proceeds?

Online polling link



Stakeholder engagement

VNI West stakeholder engagement

We want to engage with the right people at the right time...

- Are there any gaps in the attendees at this roundtable? Who else do you suggest we include?
- What can we do to engage effectively and appropriately with you and the stakeholders you represent as the process progresses?

VNI West stakeholder engagement

What would you want to see at future roundtables...

Online polling link

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Transgrid 

Next steps

VNI West next discussion

To think about for the next engagement session :

- At a local level, on the ground level, who do we need to engage with?
- Social legacy programs are an important to Transgrid. What social legacy projects or programs, would be meaningful to your community/stakeholders?

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Next steps - project

RIT-T Assessment process

- PADR Release by end of August 2022
- PACR Release in late 2022 / early 2023

Engagement opportunities

- Period of public comment (six weeks) following release of PADR
- Second Roundtable following PADR release (to be arranged)

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Thank you



Contact details:

Email: VNIW@transgrid.com.au

Call: 1800 222 537

Web: www.transgrid.com.au/VNIW