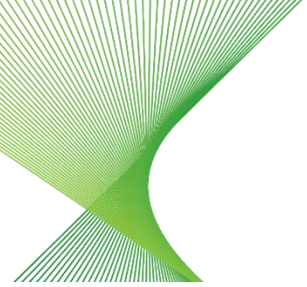


Meeting Minutes

Victoria NSW Interconnector West



Meeting title:	VNI West Community Consultative Group Meeting 2	Date:	13 December 2023
Location:	Deniliquin RSL Club, End St Deniliquin	Time:	10:00am – 12:00pm
Chairperson:	Brendan Blakeley		
Attendees:			
VNI West Project Team			
Colin Mayer	Project Director, VNI West		
Geoff Hudson	Environment Manager		
Joel Annett	Community and Stakeholder Manager		
Nathan Menser	Community and Stakeholder Lead		
Reem Nasr	Community and Stakeholder Advisor		
Jarryd Barton	Principal Environmental Planner, WSP		
Adam Hoare	Asset Standards and Compliance Manager		
VNI West Community Consultative Group			
Donald Bull	Landholder		
Neil Bull	Ricegrowers' Association		
Trevor Clark	Yanco Creek and Tributaries Advisory Council		
Bob Crawford	Yanco Creek and Tributaries Advisory Council		
Gary Stoll	Murrumbidgee Council		
Observer			
Michael Lynch	Public Interest Advocacy Centre		
Apologies			
Leon Atkinson	Cummaragunja Local Aboriginal Land Council		
Jack Bond and Julia Druitt	Murray River Council		
Michael Chalmers	Ricegrowers' Association		
David Crew	Yarkuwa Indigenous Knowledge Centre		
Mark Dalzell	Edward River Council		
Ben Doran	Land and Property Manager, Transgrid		
Rose Dunn	Deniliquin Local Aboriginal Land Council		
Farid Faiz	Engineering Manager, Transgrid		
Alison Glenn	Bunnaloo branch, NSW Farmers		
Nikki Hansell	Place Manager, Transgrid		
Michael Johnson	Program Director, Stakeholder Relations, Major Projects, Transgrid		
John Kerr	Moama Local Aboriginal Land Council		

Mick Lalor	NSW NPWS
Paul McFadyen	Community Engagement Lead, Place Management, Transgrid
Bruce Rollinson	Landholder
Shannon Sampson	Community member
Scott Sheather	Murray Local Land Services

Acknowledgment of Country

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

Meeting proceedings

Agenda item	Summary notes
1. Welcome, introductions and housekeeping and review of previous minutes	<p>Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and attendees introduced themselves.</p> <p>Chair reviewed action items from previous meeting.</p> <p>Request for release of submissions from Draft Corridor Report</p> <p>Joel Annett advised the summary of submissions is available in the Preferred Corridor Report. Unfortunately full submissions can't be provided due to potential breach of privacy as we had not requested permission to publish submission when they were sought.</p> <p>However, all key themes and topics raised are outlined in the report and Transgrid is happy to provide additional analysis on specific themes or topics.</p> <p>Geoff Hudson advised that cultural heritage studies will be made publicly available in line with the EIS process.</p>
2. Route selection methodology	<p>Jarryd Barton outlined the route selection methodology.</p> <p>Jarryd noted that the constraints have been reviewed and updated from the corridor phase.</p> <p>A number of preliminary route options have been identified, taking into account the additional we've gathered since the corridor phase.</p> <p>From this a short list of 3-4 route options will then be taken through the Multi Criteria assessment (MCA) process.</p> <p>Each route will be scored based on the criteria for comparison against one another. The scoring will then be tallied up with the results showing a preferred route.</p> <p>All the information received from the previous consultation has been taken into account and carried forward into the new route level analysis.</p> <p>Additional flood information has come in from the Murray Darling Basin Authority, and the Moulamein Airport has been removed as a constraint based on advice from council.</p> <p>Bob Crawford: Would like to table more information on remnant vegetation that may not be captured on mapping to date.</p> <p>ACTION: Bob to mark-up maps</p> <p>Don Bull: When does the EIS phase come into the process?</p>

Agenda item	Summary notes
	<p>Jarryd Barton discussed the process from Slide 7. Once the 1km route has been identified, we move to EIS phase starting with the initial scoping report application.</p> <p>Don Bull: If you come into issues on the 1km route do you have to go back to the drawing board?</p> <p>Jarryd Barton: We will investigate and adapt the project within that 1km if possible. We would need to understand the specific issue to determine what, if any, changes may need to be made.</p> <p>Joel Annett: provided a high level time line for the route options stage. Publish Draft Route Report late January 2023. Consultation throughout February 2024. Publish Final Route Report at the end of March 2024. There will continue to be dialogue and discussion throughout, and feedback is welcome.</p> <p>Don Bull: commented on the engineering aspect – you don't want too many bends.</p> <p>Colin Mayer: Yes, generally straighter is better.</p> <p>Trevor Clark: Asked about the Victorian side?</p> <p>Colin Mayer: They are working through their EES process. Transgrid meets routinely with Transmission Company Victoria to ensure that cross-border issues are addressed.</p> <p>Joel Annett: At the boarder our draft route options will show 1km corridors that balloons out at the border.</p> <p>Chair: Advised that the earlier feedback is provided to the project the more opportunity the project has to take that feedback into account</p> <p>Trevor Clark: Is undergrounding gone completely?</p> <p>Colin Mayer: Happy to talk to undergrounding at a future meeting. At this stage, we are proceeding with planning an overhead solution, and will continue in this process – unless there is some new position that comes out of the Government Inquiry. Underground examples overseas are using DC technology. VNIW is working on AC technology.</p> <p>Trevor Clark: I was told that because it was 500kV there is no way that renewable projects along the route can hook into the above ground line, as the cost of substations to enable connection is very high.</p> <p>Bob Crawford: What does WSP stand for?</p> <p>Jarryd Barton: Williams Sales Partnership though now the company is just referred to as WSP.</p> <p>Bob Crawford: Advised he was concerned about the value for the community more broadly and impact on future generations. Advised he can't see value in the double J-Curve.</p> <p>ACTION: Joel Annett to arrange meeting with Bob Crawford</p> <p>Colin Mayer: Advised VNI West is identified as part of AEMO's Integrated System Plan. By the time Project Energy Connect, Humelink and VNI West are finished we'll be able to power a third of the state.</p> <p>Trevor Clark: Asked if undergrounding is off the table for VNI West</p> <p>Colin Mayer: Confirmed undergrounding is off the table for VNI West.</p> <p>Adam Hoare: Commented that a lot of the information coming out of the underground inquiry is about lower voltage lines – distribution not transmission.</p>

Agenda item	Summary notes
3. Transmission 101 – Q & A	<p>Joel Annett outlined the National Energy Market and regulatory environment and described where Transgrid fits into that system.</p> <p>Neil Bull: Can you tell me more about Australian Energy Market Commission's role? (AEMC)</p> <p>Joel Annett: They do have a Complaints Commissioner that works with Transgrid on managing escalated complaints. (Correction: AEMC do not manage complaints – The Office of the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner helps community members address their concerns about wind farms, large-scale solar farms, energy storage facilities and new major transmission projects.)</p> <p>Adam Hoare: They also have a role to run consultations with industry and advocates on how electricity process is managed (AEMC).</p> <p>Trevor Clark: As far as economic analysis how broad does it go?</p> <p>Colin Mayer: AER monitors Transgrid to ensure it is providing value for money for consumers, market need & energy transfers.</p> <p>Trevor Clark: What's the economic impact and how is that quantified?</p> <p>Colin Mayer: The ISP has three different models under which the RIT-T is tested. Runs under a complex modelling process, with the outputs brought back into Net Present Value (NPV).</p> <p>Adam Hoare: Also the process costs out reliability issues.</p> <p>Trevor: Renewable Energy transition is a massive undertaking, and how we move forward will impact Australia as a nation and moving on in time (future generations).</p> <p>Reem Nasr: AEMO's mantra is "prudent and efficient" – focusing on the end cost for customers which we pay for as part of our electricity bills</p> <p>Neil Bull: How long will the powerline be in place?</p> <p>Colin Mayer: Assets have a 50-year life span. This can be extended to up to 70 years with maintenance.</p> <p>Joel Annett (Slide 16): CPA1: funding for planning phase; CPA2: funding for construction process. Orange points on chart show times when formal consultation processes take place.</p> <p>Colin Mayer: Theoretically at either CPA stage the AER can say stop and halt the project.</p>
4. The Environmental Assessment process	<p>Geoff Hudson outlined the Environmental Assessment process and noted that initial engagement has already commenced with Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water (DCCEEW) (Federal), Department of Planning and Environment NSW (DPE), Biodiversity and Conservation Directorate (BCD) (NSW).</p> <p>Ecology surveys are already in progress. More work to complete throughout 2024 as we need to undertake seasonal surveys. Work completed to date will be provided in the Draft Route Report.</p> <p>Neil Bull: I'm aware of some instances where the commonwealth takes over or determines next steps? (in reference to EPBC Referrals)</p> <p>Geoff Hudson: EIS studies will be undertaken throughout 2024</p> <p>Don Bull: How does it work when we run into a drought or other seasonal issue?</p> <p>Jarryd Barton: We assume presence for the assessment, and if we get another opportunity, we get out into the field to validate this.</p>

Agenda item	Summary notes
	<p>Trevor Clark: SDLAM doing quite a bit of work of cultural heritage through the area</p> <p>Geoff Hudson/Jarryd Barton: We would appreciate any non-confidential information that can be shared between project teams.</p> <p>ACTION: <i>Transgrid to follow up with SDLAM to seek access to all publicly available information.</i></p> <p>Geoff Hudson: We will be working with our cross-border partner TCV to ensure consistency of information on environmental assessments, as species are not limited by the border.</p> <p>Don Bull: What is the EIS display period?</p> <p>Joel Annett: This is set by Department of Planning. There is a minimum legislated requirement of four weeks, but some projects have seen longer exhibition periods.</p> <p>Don Bull: What is the Biodiversity Stewardship process?</p> <p>Geoff Hudson: There is a formal process to manage biodiversity to establish offsets required for the project where the project is not able to avoid or mitigate its impact.</p> <p>This would be a voluntary process for landowners that would require them to set up stewardship agreements with Govt in perpetuity.</p> <p>Main approach from Transgrid is to work with the ecologists and the farmer to first avoid and to mitigate impacts.</p> <p>Jarryd Barton: In the EIS, there will be a strategy that outlines how biodiversity is intended to be managed.</p> <p>CCG Member: What is the approval process in Victoria?</p> <p>Geoff Hudson: There will be separate assessments on each side of the border.</p> <p>Don Bull: Will the Draft Route report display period be long enough?</p> <p>Joel Annett: Transgrid have developed an engagement program in line with the extended corridor engagement program. We are also providing more notice of the upcoming engagement.</p> <p>Chair: Whilst there will be a defined route we'll be looking at, the EIS will then look at refining and validating the project.</p> <p>Don Bull: When you get through that report, then you have to determine the off sets?</p> <p>Geoff Hudson: The offsets will be determined through the course of the EIS assessment process.</p> <p>Don Bull: When you look at the map, you're coming through a large area of habitat</p> <p>Geoff Hudson: If we offset, we're looking at appropriate arrangements. It's a multistage process. The EIS will identify a strategy to move forward.</p> <p>Don Bull: "Stewardship" is not a popular word. It implies you're going to be told what to do with your land.</p> <p>Trevor Clark: The lines are forced on us, but that habitat can't be shifted</p> <p>Chair: It might be useful to have another session just on biodiversity agreements</p> <p>ACTION: Transgrid to presentation on Biodiversity at future CCG.</p>

Agenda item	Summary notes
<p>5. How Transgrid manages bushfire risk and its assets</p>	<p>Adam Hoare presented on asset management and Transgrid's bushfire management system.</p> <p>The risk approach runs on the basis of ALARP (As Low As Reasonably Practical). Bowtie diagram: inputs test on what could ignite a fire; outputs on risk mitigation. Bushfire Risk Management Plan – puts all of Transgrid on the same path to synchronise activity to mitigate risk; and also the activities Transgrid would take in the event of a fire.</p> <p>Adam Hoare: Explained the difference between transmission and distribution – Transmission has clearly defined corridors, prescribed maintenance; With Distribution network the easements may not be as clearly defined, items such as trees may encroach into a safety envelope.</p> <p>Trevor Clark: Are those transmission easements cleared?</p> <p>Adam Hoare: Not completely. Trees and flora can exist within the easements, but safety clearances are applied as required.</p> <p>Geoff Hudson: We do not want to apply a 'scorched earth' policy along the full alignment due to potential biodiversity impacts.</p> <p>Trevor Clark: Grass fires throughout the region move fast. Does fire rising onto the powerline cause an issue?</p> <p>Adam Hoare: Our infrastructure are steel towers and aluminium lines which have high resilience.</p> <p>Trevor Clark: In most of our area it's pastoral country – we've had massive fires out there - 7000 hectares burnt out in a night</p> <p>Don Bull: Asked about the use of aerial firefighting if line is de-energised?</p> <p>Adam Hoare: During a fire event, transmission lines can be shut down on the direction of RFS. If the line is de-energised, then all restrictions would not apply however some restrictions may remain.</p> <p>Slide 22 - Vegetation management and aerial inspections. Bushfire maintenance is approximately 50% of the annual maintenance budget within Transgrid. This is done as Transgrid is committed to ensuring the easements are maintained.</p> <p>Don Bull: I've got a 132kV line running through our property at the moment. A number of birds nest on these lines. We haven't seen any helicopters or inspections for a couple of years. Also insurance, how are we protected? I have been told the power can be turned off.</p> <p>Adam Hoare: Aerial inspections are undertaken annually. Ground inspections are prioritised based on level of risk. It depends on the type of issue.</p> <p>Question on notice: Is there insurance coverage for host landholders?</p> <p>Trevor Clark: We face ignition risk from lightning strikes. A lot of area you're going through is quite isolated and we don't have a lot of resources. Maybe you should consider having someone on the ground to coordinate with the RFS. It's a massive area.</p> <p>Don Bull: Would a group Captain have the authority to request de-energisation? There are time pressures and remote area management to be considered.</p> <p>Jarryd Barton: This would depend on the delegations provided under Rural Fires Act 1997. If a fire is being managed under S44, there would be an Incident Management team stood up to manage the fire.</p> <p>Adam Hoare: We do have Transgrid staff embedded at local level on Local Emergency Management Committees</p>

Agenda item	Summary notes
	<p>Gary Stoll: We have upgraded our bushfire DA consent</p> <p>Colin Mayer: We will be briefing RFS and firefighting stakeholders on the transmission lines as the project is developed.</p>
6. Community Benefits – Framework and engagement	<p>Joel Annett: A portion of our budget is set aside for community investment. We want to identify opportunities that are meaningful (not just “the loudest voice”), to deliver a long-term outcome for the community.</p> <p>The themes that came out the of RRG were healthcare, telecommunications, education and research. Today we’ll add emergency preparedness/resilience. At our next meeting we would like to discuss these areas of focus. And look at how do we go from these streams to deliverable projects.</p>
7. VNI West Consultation and engagement	<p>Nathan Menser presented the proposed schedule for community engagement activity in February. A placeholder advertisement will be published next week in local newspapers.</p> <p>Trevor Clark: Drop in sessions always concern me. It’s better to say it’s 10am turn up or they don’t turn up. It’s better for everyone to hear the same thing at the same time.</p> <p>Don Bull: You need to add a Town Hall to Jerilderie. What if a landholder wants to have a more confidential meeting?</p> <p>Nathan Menser: They can request it via their land access managers.</p> <p>Joel Annett: What about online meetings?</p> <p>CCG Members: Commented they have not had positive experiences with online meetings in the past.</p>
8. Wrap up and close	<p>Chair: Please pencil in 31 January 2024 for our next meeting, and think about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community benefits: Areas of interest and themes • What you’d like to hear more about <p>Geoff Hudson: noted that there had been a meeting with Aboriginal stakeholders informally and further meetings scheduled for the new year.</p> <p>ACTION: Please come to the next meeting with thoughts for Community benefits</p>

Action items

Agenda item	Description	Person responsible	Status
2. Route selection methodology	Book meeting with Bob Crawford	Joel Annett	TBC
4. The Environmental Assessment process	Presentation on Biodiversity at future CCG.	Secretary	TBC
	Follow up with SDLAM on cultural heritage studies	Secretary	ASAP
	Question on notice: Insurance coverage for host landholders	Secretary	ASAP

Agenda item	Description	Person responsible	Status
5. How Transgrid manages bushfire risk and its assets	Follow up: Inspections on 132 Kv Line on Mr D Bull's property.	Secretary	ASAP
7. VNI West Consultation and engagement	Please come to the next meeting with thoughts for Community benefits	CCG Members	31 Jan 2024
Provide CCG with a copy of the latest ISP	Provide CCG with a copy of the latest ISP https://aemo.com.au/en/energy-systems/major-publications/integrated-system-plan-isp/2024-integrated-system-plan-isp	Secretary	With the minutes

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/vniwest-preferred-corridor-report-october-2023.pdf (PDF 3.66 MB)
Regulatory Investment Test for Transmission Documents	https://www.transgrid.com.au/projects-innovation/vniwest#Regulatory-Investment-Test-for-Transmission--RIT-T
State Significant Infrastructure	https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/assess-andregulate/development-assessment/planning-approvalpathways/state-significant-infrastructure
State Significant Infrastructure Guide	https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-02/declaration-of-ssi-and-cssi-state-significantinfrastructure-guide.pdf (PDF 136KB)

Attachments

Attachment	Format
A1 Corridor maps for mark up	PDF – Sharefile link
Glossary	PDF
Transgrid Slides	PDF

Next meeting

Date:	Wednesday, 31 January 2024	Time:	10am - 12pm
Location:	Deniliquin RSL	Chairperson:	Brendan Blakeley