HumeLink Community Newsletter

October 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 four 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.

Project update

EIS public exhibition has closed

The HumeLink Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was on public exhibition from Wednesday 30 August 2023 to Tuesday 10 October 2023. Thank you to the community members and stakeholders who made a submission.

Next steps

All submissions received by the Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) will be available on the NSW DPE Major Projects Planning Portal website.

Transgrid has commenced reviewing the submissions and preparing a Response to Submissions report which will be lodged with the DPE and published on the DPE Major Projects Planning Portal when completed in early 2024.

Over the coming months Transgrid will also review:

- issues raised during consultation
- proposed amendments made as part of
  - ongoing design refinement
  - response to consultation
  - general project evolution.

Following this review, Transgrid will produce a report called an Amendment Report. The Amendment Report will describe and assess any proposed changes from those initially described and assessed in the EIS. The report will also include the justification for these refinements and present the potential impacts and mitigation measures.

engagement

Scoping Report

What's involved

A preliminary assessment of the potential impacts from the project was outlined in the Scoping Report which was submitted to the NSW Department of Planning and Environment (DPE).

SEARS

What's involved

The DPE issued the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirement (SEARs) outlining the required assessments to be included in the EIS.

Prepare EIS

What's involved

Undertake field surveys and investigations to inform the development of the EIS technical reports, design development and construction planning. Finalise technical reports and prepare EIS for lodgement with the DPE.

Prior to lodgement of the EIS, a Registered Environmental Assessment Practitioner provided a declaration the EIS met the SEARs in accordance with the DPE requirements.

We are here

EIS public exhibition

What's involved

An opportunity for the community and stakeholders to provide feedback on the HumeLink project in a formal submission to the DPE.

Review and respond

What's involved

Submissions considered and responded to by Transgrid in a Response to Submissions Report to be lodged with the DPE.

Prepare Amendment Report and lodge with the DPE. This report considers the proposed design and construction methodology amendments and additional information developed in response to submissions received during the EIS public exhibition.

Assessment and determination

What's involved

Final assessment of the EIS, Submissions Report and Amendment Report by the NSW and Commonwealth Governments under the Assessment Bilateral Agreement.

Minister's Conditions of Approval

What's involved

HumeLink receives the NSW and Commonwealth Ministers' Conditions of Approval which outline the requirements for next project stages.

A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will be developed and submitted to the DPE for approval before construction commences.

Upcoming HumeLink surveys and fieldwork

Why do we do heritage surveys?

Transgrid is committed to deepening reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across our transmission network, and as we expand our network to enable the transition to a decarbonised energy system.

One of the six core areas of focus of our Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan journey is how we lead and demonstrate showing deep respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artefacts and places impacted by our projects.

In assessing the impact of the HumeLink project, Registered Aboriginal Parties have undertaken surveys on foot in order to gather data and identify areas where there are items of heritage that include but are not limited to artefact scatters, isolated artefacts, scarred trees, ceremonial sites and burials.

Our team is currently undertaking additional surveys in selected areas across the HumeLink project footprint.

Aboriginal cultural heritage surveys provide an opportunity for Registered Aboriginal Parties to contribute culturally appropriate information that will enable the assessment of the cultural significance of Aboriginal objects and/or places on a project.

Aboriginal cultural heritage surveys are undertaken in accordance with the NSW OEH Code of Practice for Aboriginal cultural heritage consultation requirements for proponents 2010.

Our vision is for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities we work in to grow and achieve sustainable economic prosperity, and to see their cultural heritage and customs respected by all Australians.

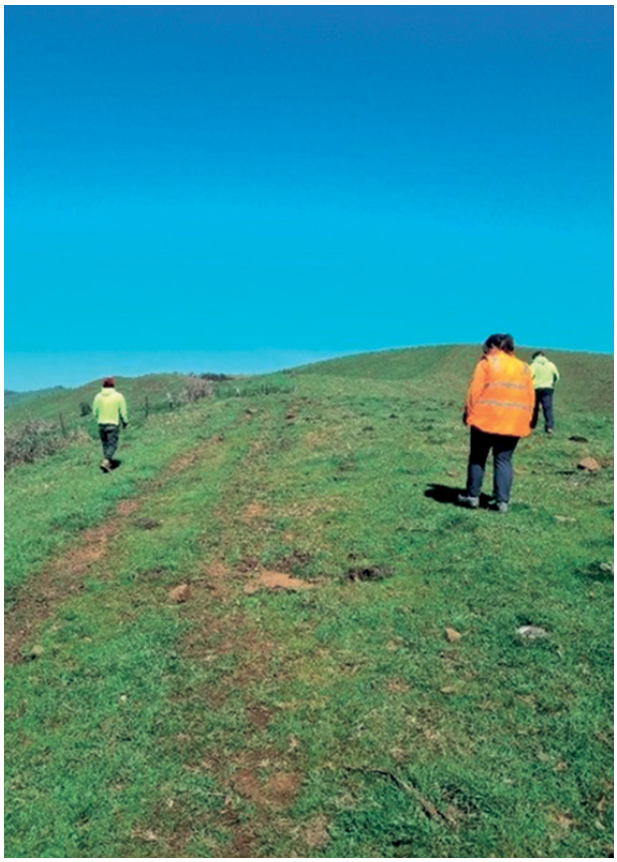

Figure 2: Our team conducting heritage surveys on foot.

What are geotechnical investigations?

Ground conditions along the proposed HumeLink corridor are diverse, ranging from alluvial flood plains to bedrock. To help Transgrid better understand local ground conditions and engineering challenges in the area, additional on-site geotechnical investigations will be undertaken along the alignment.

This is an essential step in the project development process allowing Transgrid to gather critical information to inform the detailed design including route, tower locations and engineering constraints. While final tower locations have been defined, these locations are subject to change based on in-ground conditions that require assessment at their specific sites.

Many factors influence final tower placement including accessibility of the area, especially in extremely steep terrain, property constraints, sensitive flora and fauna, culturally sensitive or heritage areas and engineering constraints.

Investigation work will primarily involve the collection of soil and rock samples using low impact methods such as borehole drilling. Borehole drilling typically uses a trailer mounted drill rig, which are generally no bigger than a single car trailer and involves drilling a single, narrow hole into the ground to extract samples.

Image: Truck mounted drill rig on site.

As water is used in the borehole drilling process, water trucks may be needed to top up the water requirements for the drilling rig. After completion, the area is backfilled, capped and restored to its original condition.

Access to properties will be in line with the agreed landowner requirements and will include strict adherence to agreed biosecurity protocols.

The duration of the work will depend on the method used however most testing can be completed in just one day. Works will be completed in line with normal hours of operation, following the Conditions of Approval (CoA). This means work will typically occur between Mon – Fri 7.00am – 6.00pm and Sat 8.00am – 1.00pm, unless otherwise mutually agreed.

To find out more, please see the Geotechnical investigations factsheet.

What is soil resistivity?

Soil resistivity testing is another important aspect of our investigations. Soil resistivity testing is a way to measure and understand the ground's capacity to conduct electricity which is crucial when designing safe and effective electrical earthing systems that form a critical part of the electricity transmission network.

These tests are unintrusive, and typically take around half a day to conduct involving one or two workers accompanying a light vehicle. The tests usually involve driving four 1.2m metal rods, called electrodes into the ground and sending an electrical current through the soil between the electrodes. Measurements of how much resistance the soil offers are taken and analysed to determine how well the soil conducts electricity.

The results of these tests will allow engineers to make informed decisions about the design of the earthing system which connects specific parts of an electrical set up to the ground, (usually the earth's conductive surface), for safety and functional purposes.

In the community

Current round of CPP Grants has closed

The second round of the Community Partnership Program recently concluded after accepting applications throughout September. We are excited to share that this round received a total of 145 applications via the new SmartyGrants platform, with 60 specifically dedicated to HumeLink.

Applications are currently undergoing evaluation by a panel and will be scored to determine grant recipients.

We eagerly anticipate the announcement of the winners, which is scheduled to take place by the end of October.

The next opportunity to apply for the Community Partnership Program will be in March 2024.

Further information can be found on our website: Grants - Our Community Partnerships Program | Transgrid

Transgrid Community Partnerships - Cycling Without Age Wagga Wagga

We would like to share with you one of the recipients of Transgrid Community Partnership grant, Cycling Without Age in Wagga Wagga.

This grant helped Cycling Without Age buy their second trishaw so they can take more local elderly and disabled residents on rides outside. HumeLink is proud to be a supporter of such a great initiative.

Learn more about Cycling Without Age in this video.

Image: Marry Potter Nursing Home resident Joyce Coffey, who is 101 years-old, is one of 750 passengers they have taken on rides since the Wagga Wagga chapter was established in January this year.

Local business register

If you have a business in the Local Government areas along the HumeLink alignment and are interested in working on the HumeLink project, we would love to hear from you.

Simply register your business and we will share your details with major construction contractors. The local business register will also be the project teams' first port of call when we are looking to procure goods and services at various stages of the project.

If you are a local business interested in working on HumeLink Register your business here

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.

Transgrid

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