# 1.1 HumeLink Yass Valley Community Consultative Group: 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting 15 February 2023

Time	11:30 – 1:30 pm
Date	15/02/23
Attendees	Chair: Brendan Blakeley
	Secretariat: Ella Burgess
	Transgrid CCG members: Naomi Rowe, Michael Johnson
	Transgrid project member attendees: Tammy Sinclair, Cameron Walters
	Community members: Andrea Strong, Rene Lunardello, Pam Kensit, Nathan McDonald, Catriona McCauliffe
	Landowner and Community Advocate (Observer): Barbara El Gamal (Deputy)
Apologies	Nathan Rhodes, Rod Stowe, Adrian Cameron, Russ Erwin
Meeting location	Yass Valley Council Chambers
Meeting materials	Presentation
Purpose of meeting	Meeting 10

Item	Discussion Summary	To note
Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country	- The meeting commenced at 11:38am.	
	<ul> <li>The Chair welcomed all and gave an Acknowledgement of Country.</li> </ul>	
	<ul> <li>The Chair introduced himself as the incoming Chair for 2023 and noted it was his first meeting as Chair of the HumeLink CCG.</li> </ul>	
	- The Chair noted apologies.	
	<ul> <li>The Chair asked the community CCG members and the team from Transgrid to introduce themselves and their role in the HumeLink project.</li> </ul>	
Minutes and Matters Arising	<ul> <li>The Chair called for comments on the previous minutes.</li> </ul>	
	A comment was made that instead of 52 outstanding issues regarding GHD's undergrounding report, there were now over 52 outstanding issues with the new revised version of the report.	

- The Chair called for matters arising from the previous CCG meeting.
- A CCG member noted that one outstanding item was that Transgrid was to provide information as to why the route through Yass is not being reviewed.
- Naomi responded that action was being undertaken by Nathan. As explained at the last CCG meeting there would be no further refinements to the Yass route.
- A CCG member stated that they want to see all the considerations and analysis that informed the decision to not perform a route review in Yass.
- Naomi apologised that information on the Yass route decision had not been sent through.
- ACTION: Transgrid to find the route refinement consideration information and provide a timeframe for when it will be shared.
- A CCG member requested for the update to be sent through by the end of next week as it was originally brought up at the October CCG meeting.
- Naomi confirmed that she will follow up and determine what can be sent through by the end of next week.
- Naomi noted that it is not the intention of Transgrid to bombard people with emails, more so they wanted the material to be reviewed by the CCG before the meeting.
- A CCG member stated that the minutes were taking too long to be circulated for community members' comments. The CCG member requested for the minutes to be circulated prior to Transgrid's review.
- A CCG member stated that there needs to be much more accountability about following up on actions from CCG meetings. During the October CCG meeting the member asked for the publicly available document explaining the acceleration of HumeLink.
- ACTION: Transgrid to send through the publicly available document explaining the acceleration of HumeLink.

- A CCG member stated there needs to be a numbering system to allow the community members to keep track of actions.
- The Chair noted that he would consider how to keep that information in a more current and accessible format.

#### HumeLink Progress Update: key dates

Naomi gave an overview of HumeLink's key dates.

See slide 6 of the presentation for an update on HumeLink's progress.

- The most crucial update is that at the end of 2022, many technical studies neared completion as the EIS (Environmental Impact Statement) progressed and early works funding was approved by the AER.
- In the coming weeks of 2023, the preferred delivery partners for HumeLink will be announced. In mid-2023, the EIS is planned to go on Public Exhibition.
- The approval of the EIS is expected to occur in 2024. The EIS has to be approved at both the State and Federal level.
- Construction is expected to begin in late 2024.

Naomi gave an update of the regulatory and procurement process.

See slide 8 of the presentation for an update on the regulatory and procurement process.

- The total project cost to date as at the end of January 2023 was \$99.5 million.
- The project has spent 27% of the CPA 1 funding.
- The project team is currently developing the CPA 2 submission to the AER for second release of project funding.
- Early Contractor Involvement (ECI) the tendering process has been completed. the project team anticipates to announce the delivery partners in the next few weeks. The route has been divided in half, East and West.
- The Eastern division (from Tumut to Bannaby) and the Western division (from Wagga to Maragle) will be awarded to different contractors. The value of each division is approximately \$1.1 billion.

  Once the winning contractors have been

- announced, they will develop their construction methodology.
- The potential contractors went through 10 weeks of workshops to determine their suitability to the project.
- A CCG member asked if the concept design is the route design.
- Cameron responded that the concept design looks at whether the team can engineer the line as it stands so the contractors can undertake the detailed design.
- A CCG member asked what else has been achieved apart from the route within the 27% of the total spend.
- Naomi added that ECI (Early Contractor Involvement) has also neared completion.
- A CCG member asked if the costs of the overhead project are being refined as part of Stage 1, when those costings will be available and how they have been calculated. TAKEN ON NOTICE.

## Planning and Approvals

### **Planning and Approvals update**

Sumaya gave a progress update of the EIS.

See slides 10 to 23 of the presentation for an update on the EIS.

- The EIS is the culmination of many technical studies that have been ongoing since 2019. Several of the studies are now nearing completion to inform the EIS.
- The EIS will go on public exhibition in September this year.
- Transgrid appointed Aurecon as the specialist consultant to carry out the studies of the EIS.
- In mid-2022, the Department of Planning and Environment (DPE), implemented a requirement for all major projects to appoint a Registered Environmental Assessment Practitioner (REAP) to review the EIS and determine its adequacy before it is submitted to the Department.
- The REAP for the HumeLink EIS is also a specialist from Aurecon.
- The Chair reiterated that the REAP scheme does not stand in place of a full independent assessment that the

Department undertakes. It is a quality assurance step before lodgement where the EIS is signed off by an accredited practitioner. The process includes making sure all the information necessary for the Department to assess each project is within the EIS and this information is to a certain standard. It is an additional step to ensure that as much detail as possible is covered and the EIS addresses all aspects outlined in the SEARS before the Department places it on public exhibition and begins the assessment process.

- A CCG Member questioned whether this could present a conflict of interest.
- The Chair noted that in his understanding the REAP scheme is a proponent lead quality assurance and adequacy check. It does not entail any assessment function. Assessment is the role of the Department. He encouraged members to go to the department's website for more information on the scheme. https://pp.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/dev elopment-assessment/registeredenvironmental-assessment-practitionerscheme
- The technical reports to inform the EIS
  are in their final stages of drafting. The
  EIS will be made of up of 2 parts the 27
  chapters in the body of the report and the
  appendices with the actual study results.
- Once the entire document has been compiled and has gone through an adequacy check, it will be submitted and go on public exhibition. Transgrid will be obliged to respond to each submission made during the public exhibition.

#### Planning for engagement activities

- The EIS will go on public exhibition for a minimum of 4 weeks after it has been submitted to the Department. While the EIS is on public exhibition, the community can make submissions to the Department about the project.
- The documents in the EIS can be very technical, so the project team is working through ways to make the information more available and easily accessible for the wider community. A number of community information sessions are scheduled throughout the first half of

- 2023 to provide the community with access to technical members of the project team before the EIS goes on public exhibition.
- The CCG members have received draft fact sheets for their feedback. The draft factsheets will be updated as the EIS progresses. The aim of the fact sheets is to provide an easily accessible form of information on each of the study areas within the EIS.
- The project team has begun work developing a digital version of the EIS, which is now a requirement for all significant projects in NSW.
- The digital EIS is more user friendly. It provides summaries of each chapter and provides the option to access the actual chapter in the EIS and associated studies in the appendices.
- A CCG member commented that the studies for the EIS have been going on since 2019, however the community only has 4 weeks to comment on it. The project has major impacts on the community, and it is not their fulltime job to be writing planning submissions. They noted the exhibition timeframe should be more than the minimum.
- Sumaya responded that this is one of the reasons Transgrid's approach is to make as much of the information available as possible. The EIS will be a lengthy document, but there will be an Executive Summary and the digital EIS which will link you to certain chapters of the EIS that you want to learn more about. The team will also be putting out more fact sheets than what the CCG has already received. The team is putting in place several engagement opportunities to increase awareness and understanding of the EIS. Transgrid understands the document is very large, however they do not determine the timeframes.
- A CCG member asked when the information will start flowing through and if it will be available to the CCG prior to being made public.
- Naomi responded that there will be a hierarchy of information available as people will have varying degrees of

interest. Transgrid wants to share that as soon as possible over the coming months and get the CCG's input on the way. The factsheets etc will be in addition to community information sessions and webinars. Transgrid might also look at topic-based forums so if people want to learn more about noise and supporting studies they can do this. Transgrid is trying to make as many opportunities as possible to enable people to learn more about the project and the EIS.

- The Chair asked the CCG if there is any preference as to how the information is distributed.
- A CCG member noted they had not had time to review the fact sheets before the meeting and this material needs to be distributed much earlier than the evening before the meeting.
- Naomi responded that Transgrid does not expect feedback on the fact sheets right now.
- A CCG member noted that the fact sheets were very high level and didn't provide much detail about what was being proposed or how impacts would be dealt with.
- Michael added that the purpose of sharing the fact sheets with the CCG is to ensure that the messaging and amount of information presented works for the broader community.
- Sumaya resumed that the project team has regular meetings with a number of government agencies to keep them abreast of the EIS' progress. Key meetings are with the Department of Planning and Environment and subsequently, the Biodiversity Conservation Division and Heritage NSW. Through agency engagement, there can be additional study requests beyond the scope of the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs). Heritage NSW has requested Transgrid to carry out a cultural survey along the route which the project team has commenced. The results of the survey may not be ready in time for the public exhibition of the EIS, but the results will be made available when they are complete.

- A CCG member asked to be provided with the grounds for objection from a State and Federal perspective.
- Naomi responded that Transgrid can provide links to publicly available information to outline EIS the process.
- A CCG member asked if Transgrid can provide their own understanding of the issues that are relevant for objection and provide links to any relevant government departments.
- The Chair responded that it would not be appropriate for the proponent to provide this information as it could be perceived as Transgrid telling the community what they should say in their submissions. The Department of Planning may have some information on how to write a quality submission. He noted he would make some enquiries about this type of material.
- The Chair added there has to be a strong division between the proponent's role in preparing and lodging the EIS and the Department's role in assessing the EIS.
- ACTION: The Chair to follow up on information about how to make a quality submission.

EIS chapter update - Landscape Character and Visual Impact Assessment

See slides 13 – 17 of the presentation for an overview and purpose of the landscape character and visual impact assessment.

- A CCG member asked what the reference to night lighting means.
- Sumaya responded that there are many construction compounds that have lights on at night which may cause disturbance.
- A CCG member asked if there are indications in the concept design of where the construction compounds will be.
- Sumaya responded that the EIS identified 14 possible locations for where the construction compounds may be, however they will be finalised when the contractors come on board.
- A CCG member asked if the towers will be constructed at night.

- Sumaya confirmed that towers would not be constructed at night, however additional activities to deliver supplies etc may have to occur over night.
- Michael added that if night activities do proceed, Transgrid and the contractor will consult with landowners.
- A CCG member asked if the visual assessments are being carried out along the entire 360km of the route.
- Sumaya confirmed the team would be assessing the entire route. A digital design is established and looks at where the tops of the towers are visible, that process frames the assessment.
- A CCG member asked in a hypothetical situation of a 20km length of corridor through the Bannister area, how many geographic points would be identified?
- Sumaya responded that it would be how many points you would be able to see over that 20km length.
- A CCG member commented that there are international principles and guidelines regarding landscape character assessments.
- Sumaya responded that there are three main guidelines in Australia, but nothing specific for transmission lines.
- A CCG member stated that they want to know the detail and how closely Transgrid has looked at the landscape. The CCG member added that the assessment had been done on the concept design which will have changed by the time construction occurs. It was suggested that some of the impacts will be different to what has been studied in the EIS.
- Sumaya responded that the landscape assessment will not change, however the viewpoint analysis may change. The assessment has been caveated based on the concept design, but as the design develops it may have to be re-evaluated.
- A CCG member asked if the EIS is based on a worst-case scenario.
- Sumaya confirmed that is based on worst case scenarios and if there are significant changes prior to submission there will need to be an amendment or if there is a

- change after submission, there can be a modification.
- A CCG member asked if they are doing the study in house or have consultants.
- Sumaya repeated that they have specialist consultants from Aurecon completing the EIS.
- A CCG member commented that it is not a good look that the REAP is from the same company as those carrying out the EIS.
- Sumaya responded that the REAP is not involved in the day-to-day work but has access to review the document. The team did discuss the pros and cons of the REAP being from Aurecon, but it is about access to the information to really drive the efficient change needed.
- The Chair reiterated that the REAP is a more a quality control mechanism.
- Sumaya added for each technical study, they are shaped by legal and policy parameters. Visual assessments have well documented guidelines and policy as well as a well-constructed methodology and expectation.

EIS chapter update – land use and property assessment

See slides 18 - 20 of the presentation for an update on the land use and property chapter of the EIS.

- A CCG member asked if the towers will have lights.
- Sumaya responded only towers near airspace such as near Wagga airport.
- A CCG member commented that when the wind turbines were constructed, there were lights at the top of turbines during construction and for two months after.
- Sumaya responded that there may be some cranes with some lights but there is no intention for lighting up the towers.
- A CCG member commented that in terms of visual impact, the residence is not the only place that the owner resides in. The impact of the infrastructure around the peri-urban landscape will be significant.
- Sumaya responded that the private viewpoint analysis looks at impacts to

- residences and the public view point analysis looks at public spaces such as parks and schools.
- A CCG member commented that as you drive into the Upper Lachlan at Pejar Dam, the whole shire is going to seem like an industry precinct.
- A CCG member asked if the Transgrid team look at where farmers work on site and visual impacts to those areas.

#### **TAKEN ON NOTICE**

- A CCG member asked if there is an EIS chapter on radio frequency.
- Sumaya responded that it is not a technical report, but is part of the concept design and informs the hazard and risk chapter.

EIS chapter update – agricultural land assessment

See slides 21 – 23 of the presentation for an update on the agricultural assessment update.

- A CCG member commented that there are lot more disturbances to livestock that stress them than disturbance by noise.

  Many impacts from the project will impact wool quality and stress sheep.
- Naomi noted that mitigation measures for individual farms is not relevant to the EIS which has to be applied to the whole route. For project impacts to specific farms those details are recorded and determined in the PMP, the right expertise comes from landowners.
- A CCG member reminded Naomi that 85% of the footprint of the Transgrid project was on agricultural land.
- The Chair noted that the EIS cannot cover every single agricultural or environmental eventuality but it will be worthwhile expanding noise disturbances further than noise.
- ACTION: create a high level diagram of how the PMP process will occur.

## **Design update**

## **Design update**

Naomi gave an update on undergrounding.

See slide 25 of the presentation for a design update.

 Transgrid has provided their formal response to the Undergrounding Report.

Under the current regulatory framework, Transgrid needs to prove the economic viability of the project and based on the costs of undergrounding, Transgrid will not be progressing undergrounding for HumeLink. Transgrid will be working with AEMO at a national level to progress undergrounding for future projects. They will also work to bring the communities views on undergrounding to the attention of AEMO.

- Andrea Strong, community member on the Undergrounding Steering Committee expressed strong disappointment with Transgrid. There was a meeting on 20 December 2022 with the Steering Committee to discuss the response and there was an agreed process, that the response would be revised and would first go to the Steering Committee for review, before being made public. Instead, the next day it was sent to elected officials and it was put on the Transgrid website.
- Naomi responded that Transgrid acknowledges what has been said and the community members dissatisfaction with the process. The response was sent to government representatives by mistake when it was still in draft form. As part of Transgrid's process, the government relations team share updates with government representatives, so they are aware of goings on if constituents approach them. Transgrid apologises for the mistaken final on that copy, it should have read draft. The plan was to always consult with the Steering Committee The second mistake was uploading Transgrid's response to the website only an hour after sharing it with the Steering Committee. This was a technical mistake, and Transgrid also apologises for this.
- Andrea responded that the community members do not accept the apology, and that the community members on the steering committee were outraged at lack of process and respect for their contribution. Transgrid released the draft response as the final response on December 21. Transgrid was made aware this was not the agreed process. To again, in February 2023, fail to adhere to the agreed process a second time, by not providing the revised response to Steering

- Committee, before it was made public, is totally unacceptable. We believe it shows Transgrid's utter disregard for the agreed process. She stated that a formal complaint would be submitted to Transgrid.
- Andrea added that the community can no longer work with several named Transgrid employees who cannot adhere to an accepted process. Brian Elton said that the response was an opportunity for Transgrid to distance themselves from the GHD undergrounding report. Brian said there was a corporate risk for Transgrid because those numbers were considered wildly exaggerated compared to what Andrea understands industry thinks the numbers should be. The community does not endorse the report, it came up with a multiple of 2.9-3.5 of the cost of overhead, the community members think it more like 2 times the cost. Instead of building on the positives of the report, Transgrid has said undergrounding is 4-25 times the cost of overhead. Andrea noted again that Transgrid has not respected what has come out of the steering committee process and staff have not acted with integrity. The community don't accept Transgrid's response. In closing Andrea said that Transgrid made the same mistake releasing GHD's undergrounding report in June 2022, when the report was in dispute with the Steering Committee. The community members on the Steering Committee have not received a phone call or an apology prior to the CCG meeting.
- A CCG member stated that Transgrid's late communications, not following up on actions and the lack of responses to emails is frustrating.
- A CCG member commented that the CCG was put in place due to historical issues with community consultation but the original issues with trust and transparency are becoming apparent again.
- A CCG member commented that they had an expectation the CCG would have seen the communications from Transgrid after the Steering Committee had seen it before it was made public. There has been a lack of following process, and the

- role of the CCG is becoming increasingly unclear.
- Barbara noted that herself and Rod Stowe have completed a review of the engagement since the original Stowe Report and they are working with Transgrid to look at ways to improve the CCGs.
- A CCG member commented that
  Transgrid has stated that they want to
  minimise impacts on communities so they
  need to advocate for undergrounding with
  government and take the community with
  them. The community has concerns that
  Transgrid is misleading government about
  the real cost of the two options.
- Michael stated that Transgrid will consider ways to make the sharing of information clearer with the CCG, understanding that many of the action items requested during CCG meetings take a lot of time and in-depth work.
- A CCG member commented that Transgrid should also provide clarity on the conversations that are being had with AEMO so the community can support them.
- ACTION: Transgrid to investigate the process with AEMO and determine what can be shared with the CCG.
- A CCG member noted the last Steering Committee meeting was recorded and they wanted access to that recording.
- ACTION: Chair to follow up regarding options to share the recording.
- A CCG member expressed frustration at Transgrid's refusal to provide access to the recording of the Steering Committee meeting, and attempted to highlight Transgrid's constant lack of providing information and not responding to CCG requests in a timely manner, named a Place Manager. The CCG member wished to raise a complaint about an interaction with a place manager.
- The Chair stated that this was not the purpose of the CCG and to raise a complaint about an individual worker in a public forum lacked procedural fairness.
   He suggested the CCG member lodge a

complaint as per Transgrid's complaints policy.

https://www.transgrid.com.au/media/3tclr 3cz/complaints-handling-policy-004.pdf

It is not fair to individuals who were not at the table or able to speak in the CCG to be named in this forum .

Cameron gave an overview on Neara.

See slides 26 - 28 of the presentation for an update on Neara.

- The CCG noted the tool would be useful, although the images were confronting.
- A CCG member stated that if there was ever a case for undergrounding the HumeLink then the images of these horrific towers was one.
- A CCG member noted that with the move to regional tourism the presence of large power lines along roads that are gateways to Upper Lachlan Shire is not really consistent with the image the area is trying to convey.
- A CCG member asked if designs have been created including the existing 330kv lines.
- Cameron responded that these are indicative designs.
- A CCG member requested a screenshot of Neara with 500kv lines next to 330kv lines.
- ACTION: Transgrid to send through a screenshot of Neara with 500kv lines next to 330kv lines.
- Naomi added that because of the technical elements associated with the tool, only the land access officers will have full use of the tool and will be able to use it with landowners.

Property	Property
	Cameron gave an update on property.
	See slides 30 and 31 of the presentation for an update on property.
Stakeholder Engagement &	Stakeholder Engagement & Community Investment
Community Investment	Naomi gave an update on community engagement.

Next meeting	See slides 33 and 34 of the presentation for an update on stakeholder engagement and community investment.  A CCG member said it was very important that all the images of 500kV transmission lines be presented to the wider community in the community EIS information sessions as the images are critical in informing the community about the impact of the project on landscape character and community visual amenity.  Transgrid agreed the images would be displayed at the EIS community information meetings.  Next meeting  Combined CCG meeting
	<ul> <li>The Chair made it very clear that the combined CCG would follow the same format as the typical CCG meeting and not a large-scale public meeting and the meeting will be bound by CCG code of conduct.</li> <li>Potential location: Gundagai</li> <li>The CCG members asked that the combined CCG be early to mid March</li> <li>The Chair called for input on the upcoming combined CCG meeting.</li> <li>Suggestions included:</li> <li>Undergrounding HumeLink</li> <li>Testing of Transgrid's EIS collateral</li> <li>NEARA images</li> <li>PMP process</li> <li>Bushfire risk</li> <li>Compensation</li> <li>Biosecurity</li> </ul>
Other business	<ul> <li>A CCG member asked if the fact sheets can be circulated more broadly.</li> <li>Naomi responded that the intention was for them to just be circulated with the CCG. If they are shared, they need to clearly be marked with draft and the context shared.</li> </ul>
Meeting close	The meeting closed at 1:53pm.

Note: the function of the action tracker is being updated to more accurately record actions from CCG meetings

Action	Status or comment
HumeLink EIS and SEARs to be circulated to CCG members	Completed
Transgrid to provide the CCG with technical information explaining how the structural integrity of the transmission lines is maintained in windy conditions.	
Transgrid to respond to the Steering Committee's letter and the 52 outstanding issues within 4 weeks of the meeting.	Complete
Transgrid to supply the exact number the 2022 undergrounding figures were based on	Completed
Transgrid to check the parameters for covering ecology studies for landowners	Underway
Transgrid to supply their proposed biosecurity processes for the geotech investigations.	Completed
Transgrid to supply revised Option Deed	Completed
Transgrid to supply the revised Property Management Plan	Completed
Transgrid to outline how the procurement process will minimise impact on local communities	Completed
Transgrid to follow up with GHD for more insight into their value scoring methodology and reasoning, including the difference in value between agricultural land compared to State Forest.	Underway
Transgrid to follow up with GHD for more insight into the social and environmental matters included in its model InDeGo (Infrastructure Development Geospatial Options), how they are weighted and the scoring methodology.	Underway
Transgrid to determine if there are barriers to technological advancements with undergrounding cables	Underway
Secretariat is to follow up with members on administrative details including signed Code of Conduct Agreements and sharing of contact details.	Underway
Transgrid to institute the \$50 reimbursement for eligible members	Underway
Transgrid to request the value of the multiplier from GHD used in their report.	Underway
Transgrid to supply the difference in route length between the original Bannaby to Tumut option and the alternate option that was considered	Underway

Transgrid to email confirmation that Transgrid will not be doing an official review of the route in Yass.	Underway
November meeting minutes to include further detail regarding the biodiversity offset process.	Completed – more information will be supplied at the next CCG
Length of the additional route considered between Bannaby and Tumut to be outlined	Underway
Transgrid requested to provide summary slides for each topic of the EIS	Underway
Transgrid to provide the CCG with an example of a noise and vibration catchment	Underway
Transgrid to provide an explanation of the noise monitoring process and how the noise machines work	Underway
Transgrid to answer if the noise monitors will remain post construction of the route	Underway
Transgrid to dedicate an agenda item during a CCG in 2023 to noise and bring an acoustic expert in	Underway
Transgrid to determine if the Neara modelling will be ready in time for when the EIS is on public exhibition	Underway
Transgrid to provide a chart of all the different companies involved in HumeLink and what they do.	Underway
Transgrid to provide more information on the tower details	Underway
Transgrid to send through the map outlining the 65 outages the occurred during the Dunns Rd fire	Underway
First Nations HumeLink stakeholder list to be shared with the CCG	Underway