

MEETING MINUTES

1.1 HumeLink Wagga Wagga Community Consultative Group: 10th Meeting 15 February 2023

Time	5-7pm
Date	14/02/23
Attendees	Chair: Brendan Blakeley Secretariat: Ella Burgess Transgrid CCG members: Naomi Rowe Transgrid project member attendees: Tammy Sinclair, Cameron Wittington, Somaya Osman Community members: Rod Kendall, Frank Galluzo and Andrew Hamilton Deputy Landowner and Community Advocate (Observer): Barbara El Gamal
Apologies	Nathan Rhodes, Rod Stowe, Peter Lawson and Matthew Dombrowski
Meeting location	Quest, Wagga
Meeting materials	Presentation
Purpose of meeting	Meeting 10

Item	Discussion Summary	To note
Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The meeting commenced at 5:03pm. - The Chair welcomed all and gave an Acknowledgement of Country. - The Chair introduced himself as the incoming Chair for 2023 and noted it was his first meeting as Chair of the HumeLink CCG. - The Chair noted apologies. - The Chair asked the community CCG members and the team from Transgrid to introduce themselves and their role in the HumeLink project. 	
Minutes and Matters Arising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Chair called for comments on the previous minutes. <p><i>Naomi noted that the last CCG meeting held in Wagga occurred in October. Due to lack of attendance, the November and December CCGs were cancelled. In November Naomi provided Peter Lawson with a project briefing. An action Naomi had was to follow up with the Mulloon Institute. Transgrid has met with them and</i></p>	

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	<p><i>received a proposition from them to identify opportunities to work together in the future.</i></p>	
HumeLink Progress Update: key dates	<p>Naomi gave an overview of HumeLink's key dates.</p> <p>See slide 6 of the presentation for an update on HumeLink's progress.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- 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. <p>Naomi gave an update of the regulatory and procurement process.</p> <p>See slide 8 of the presentation for an update on the regulatory and procurement process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- 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.	

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- The Chair asked what Transgrid’s role in community engagement will be once the contractors are engaged.
- Naomi responded that Transgrid is taking the approach that they will have relationships in the community for the life cycle of the project, which will be for 40 to 80 years. Transgrid will maintain the principle relationship in terms of the CCGs and they will still run their own engagements. When it comes to practical, the ground notifications regarding construction etc the contracting partners will be issuing those. Anything occurring on the properties will occur through the Land Access Officers. Operational activities will occur on site and handled by the site supervisor.
- *A CCG member asked if Transgrid really believes that two contractors can deliver the entire route on time.*
- Naomi responded that due to the size of the contractors Transgrid is looking to partner with they are confident in their ability to deliver the project within the timeframe and as safely as possible. The original pool of contractors was very large and through 10 weeks of workshops and the tendering process, the contenders have been narrowed down. The prospective partners Transgrid is looking at have both substation and transmission line experience. Overhead transmission lines of this size are not built every day in Australia and Transgrid need particular equipment expertise and know how to build them safely and with minimal impact. The partners Transgrid is talking to are the best in the business and have local and international experience they can draw upon. Transgrid is also looking at ways to make sure these partners can draw on local business, services and personnel so that there are regional economic dividends from the project. Transgrid looking locally for skills that currently exist but also where there may be gaps and identify what training and support may be needed to ensure local participation.

Planning and Approvals

Planning and Approvals update

Sumaya gave a progress update of the EIS.

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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.
- 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

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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.
- There will be 46 community information sessions between now and the end of June which will be in addition to webinars and specialised project briefings.
- 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.
- 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.

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.

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- *A CCG member asked if other, more innovative styles of towers are being considered.*
- Naomi responded that Transgrid is looking at the traditional lattice towers as the base case for the EIS. Concurrently, Transgrid has also been investigating global examples. Transgrid will need to have the delivery partner on board before they can determine the detailed design and any possible alternate structural designs to the lattice tower.
- *A CCG member asked how the EIS will handle sensitive visual areas and whether the EIS has identified individual tower sites. If it has, is there any leeway to shift tower locations around to mitigate more local visual impacts.*
- Sumaya responded that it's a balance because Transgrid is only at the concept design stage. The tower locations may still move within the 200m corridor. The whole screening assessment determined the 1km corridor for private views. 185 private viewpoints have been identified in the EIS. Approximately, 150 of those 185 people within 500m of the footprint will have moderate to high visual impacts. Transgrid will have to work with those landowners to determine feasible mitigation strategies on a case-by-case basis.
- *A CCG member asked how the EIS captured and recorded the sensitive areas.*
- Sumaya responded that Transgrid has a spatial data set of all the sensitive receivers and has rated them. Transgrid will then pass that data onto the contractors to inform their detailed design. Sumaya added that the team has been receiving questions at every level about how to mitigate the visual impacts.
- *A CCG member commented that sometimes solutions only come when people are innovative, and asked if more aesthetic looking towers been looked at.*
- Naomi responded that the EIS will put forward the most conservative scenario which is the lattice formation tower. From there, potential impacts are worked through on an individual basis with

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landowners. At the same time work is happening on looking at alternative tower designs. Though this needs construction partner input as well.

- It was noted that there are interesting innovations occurring to tower design in Iceland.
- *A CCG member asked if there is a dispute or differing views about impacts and what the process will be.*
- Naomi responded that when the EIS is on public exhibition, people can make submissions to DPE on the EIS. That is the formal statutory period for people to provide feedback. There will be ongoing opportunities to sort through some matters on a site by site basis as the detailed design is being developed.

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 commented that the major concern comes down to people believing more of their land is being taken and their ability to operate being curtailed or at risk.*
- Sumaya noted that agriculture was a very important use piece but it wasn't the only land use that will be addressed in the EIS. A large amount of the line goes through forestry land. Transgrid is working with the timber industry to understand these issues and how they can be addressed.

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 forced compliance regarding biosecurity is imperative.*
- The Chair commented that in earlier CCGs, there were suggestions that there were not enough people on the project team with agricultural experience.
- Sumaya responded that it's the people who operate the land that know it best which is the reason why the team has spent so much time out in the field to learn from them. Transgrid has an

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	<p>agricultural consulting specialist helping us as part of the EIS team.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Naomi added that Transgrid acknowledges the breadth of experience of all the landowners along the route and while the team may have experience in several areas, they cannot cover each issue in depth without the help of landowners.- <i>A CCG member asked if any further work has been done on community benefits such as using the transmission infrastructure for better phone communications and fixing black spots. There are some opportunities to be realised here.</i>- Naomi responded that when Transgrid conducted the social impact workshop, telecommunications and connectivity came up the most.- <i>A CCG member commented that the last few winters have been very wet and asked if the project be stopped during wet weather to stop damage to roads and erosion and damage on properties.</i>- Naomi responded that geo-tech studies that have just been completed stopped operations because it was too wet to continue without causing damage to properties. The project will not be halted all together, but work may pause in one area due to bad conditions and instead may move to a different location along the line.	
Design update	Design update <p>Naomi gave an update on undergrounding. See slide 25 of the presentation for a design update.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- 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	

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	<p>views on undergrounding to the attention of AEMO.</p> <p>Cameron gave an overview on Neara.</p> <p>See slides 26 – 28 of the presentation for an update on Neara.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>The CCG noted the tool would be useful for property owners though the images are fronting.</i> - <i>A CCG member asked if the actual power lines were as thick as they appeared to be in the images.</i> - Cameron responded that they weren't and the software while very powerful has some limitations such as the apparent contrast between the line image and the landscape background are different. He noted that NEARA was a spatial visual aid not a visual assessment tool. - <i>A CCG member asked if the NEARA tool will be on the website for people to go in and use themselves.</i> - Naomi responded that it would be used by Transgrid team members in the field when they are working with property owners. The software is very large and uses a lot of memory and needs someone skilled to operate it. 	
<p>Property</p>	<p>Property</p> <p>Naomi gave an update on property.</p> <p>See slides 30 and 31 of the presentation for an update on property.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>A CCG member commented that it was their understanding that there is now a lifetime long compensation process.</i> - Naomi responded that there are two parts. You can negotiate the easement and disturbance costs with Transgrid. Additionally, there is the strategic benefits payments for 20 years. The strategic benefits payments will not be payable until energisation. 	
<p>Stakeholder Engagement & Community Investment</p>	<p>Stakeholder Engagement & Community Investment</p> <p>Naomi gave an update on community engagement.</p>	

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	See slides 33 and 34 of the presentation for an update on stakeholder engagement and community investment.	
Next meeting	<p>Next meeting</p> <p>Combined CCG meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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. The meeting will be bound by CCG code of conduct. - Potential location: Gundagai - The Chair called for input on the upcoming combined CCG meeting. - Suggestions included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Testing of Transgrid’s EIS collateral - NEARA – maybe demonstrate in operation not just still images - PMP process - The agricultural land assessment - Bushfire risk - Compensation - Biosecurity 	
Other business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>A CCG member asked if there is any concern about the stability of the towers in severe wet weather as he was aware that tower had fallen over recently somewhere out west in NSW.</i> - Sumaya responded that from a design and construct point of view, obtaining a much information as possible about the geology is key. Other elements are associated with extreme weather and wind loading which have all been considered. 	
Meeting close	The meeting closed at 7pm.	

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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.	Completed
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
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