

# Meeting Minutes

Victoria NSW Interconnector West

<b>Meeting title:</b>	VNI West Community Consultative Group Meeting	<b>Date:</b>	13 February 2025
<b>Location:</b>	Moulamein Bowling Club	<b>Time:</b>	10:00am – 1:00pm
<b>Chairperson:</b>	Brendan Blakeley		
<b>Secretariat</b>	Reem Nasr		
<b>Attendees:</b>			
<b>VNI West Project Team - Transgrid</b>			
Dean Guelpa	Project Delivery Manager		
Michael Lloyd	Community and Stakeholder Manager		
Nathan Menser	Community and Stakeholder Lead		
Paul McFadyen	Engagement Lead		
Ben Doran	Land and Property Manager		
Aaron Atkinson	Indigenous Engagement and Access Officer		
Geoff Hudson	Environment Manager		
<b>CCG Members</b>			
Bob Crawford	Yanco Creek and Tributaries Advisory Council		
Colin Bull	Landholder		
Trevor Clark	Yanco Creek and Tributaries Advisory Council		
Daniel Hughes	Murray River Council		
Mark Dalzell	Edward River Council		
David Crew	Yarkuwa Indigenous Knowledge Centre		
Roger Knight	Western Murray Land Improvement Group		
Alison Glenn	NSW Farmers, Bunnaloo Branch		
<b>Apologies</b>			
Sarah Ryan	Murray River Council		
Michael Chalmers	Ricegrowers Association – Wakool Branch		
Mick Lalor	NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service		
Donald Bull	Landholder		
Bruce Rollinson	Landholder		
Haydon Love	Cummeragunja Local Aboriginal Land Council		
Rose Dunn	Deniliquin Local Aboriginal Land Council		
John Kerr	Moama Local Aboriginal Land Council		
Peter O'Shannassy	NSW Local Land Services - Murray		
Shannon Sampson	Community member		
Gary Stoll	Murrumbidgee Council		
Maisie Moore	Wamba Wamba Local Aboriginal Land Council		

Guest presenters	
Damian Williams	EIS Project Manager, WSP
Jarryd Barton	EIS Environmental Planner, WSP
Suzie Rawlinson	Visual Impact Specialist, WSP (Iris Visual)

## Acknowledgment of Country

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

## Meeting proceedings

Agenda item	Summary notes
1. Welcome, introductions and housekeeping and review of previous minutes	<p><b>Chair</b> welcomed everyone to the meeting and attendees introduced themselves. <b>Chair</b> reviewed action items and minutes from previous meeting were accepted. (<b>refer to slide 5</b>).</p> <p>Mark Dalzell (MD) queried discussions re: transport authorities and local roads</p> <p>Damian Williams (DW) advised of regular consultation with Transport for NSW (TfNSW). TfNSW has clarified its interest in the state road network, and that conversations on local and regional roads are directed to Councils.</p> <p>Michael Lloyd (ML) noted Transgrid are continuing to seek detail on development of a Port to REZ strategy for the SW REZ.</p> <p>Geoff Hudson (GH) adding that Transgrid is planning to have similar discussions with Council, particularly on road conditions.</p> <p>Alison Glenn (AG) commented on ensuring the separation of funding streams for road upgrades and repairs. These should be project costs, and not from Council nor the community investment and benefits scheme. Transgrid confirmed any funds required for road upgrades as part of the project remain a project cost.</p> <p>Bob Crawford (BC) noted, regarding landscape features, Boree Grasslands are mentioned however the Old Man Plains is not mentioned as a landscape feature. BC asked for the previous minutes to reflect this feedback.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> Update Minutes of Meeting #7 to reflect Old Man Plains and republish. <i>Closed out and updated Minutes attached.</i></p> <p>GH: Noted Old Man Plains will be referenced in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) studies. While it is not listed as a specific Heritage area, we are aware of its folklore in the region.</p>
2. Items for discussion	N/A
3. Project update – Dean Guelpa	<p><b>Project update</b></p> <p>Update from Project Delivery Manager, Dean Guelpa (<b>refer to slides 7 - 8</b>).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Later in February, Transgrid expects to launch an Expression of Interest process with Delivery Contractors for work at Dinawan Substation and a network upgrade of Transmission Line 51 (near Wagga), which will see Transgrid remove 10km of single circuit transmission line and replace with a double circuit transmission line.</li> </ul> <p>AG: What will you do with the materials once you take the transmission line down?</p> <p>GH: The metal components will be recycled.</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At end of February, Transgrid will issue its Letter of Offer and Option Deed to directly affected landowners. This will signal the start of negotiations for transmission line easements.</li> <li>• South West REZ access scheme – Transgrid understands EnergyCo will soon announce the renewable developers that will be successful in gaining access to the SWREZ Access Scheme. Anticipated towards the end of February 2025.</li> <li>• Noted planned submission of the VNI West EIS by mid this year.</li> </ul> <p><b>Community Investments and Benefits</b></p> <p>Paul McFadyen (PM) provided a summary of the feedback and next steps for the development of the community benefits and investment scheme. (<b>refer to slides 9-10</b>).</p> <p>Outlined engagement on community investment &amp; benefits, via focus groups and online/paper survey from August to December 2024.</p> <p>An Interim report is available on the VNI West webpage, and notes feedback received from community on key priority themes of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• improving telecommunications</li> <li>• improving and maintaining infrastructure</li> <li>• access to health and wellbeing</li> <li>• environment and bushfire management</li> <li>• local projects supporting townships</li> <li>• education, training and workforce development</li> <li>• community investment models</li> </ul> <p>Transgrid is seeking information on existing community investment models that can be built on, and looking at initiatives that help communities get ready for local employment and procurement opportunities that the project would provide.</p> <p>Engaging with a range of stakeholders that could be future partners with Transgrid in delivering initiatives, including EnergyCo; Telstra (on telecommunications); Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR); Community Foundations Australia (expertise and support for community foundations) and Rural Fire Service (potential initiative relating to fire detection cameras).</p> <p>Any initiatives developed will require costing and governance details, to be submitted as part of Contingent Project Application 2 in late 2025.</p> <p>Transgrid has set a goal for community benefit spend to be about 1.5 - 1.8% of the total project budget for the NSW portion of VNI West.</p> <p>BC described a postcard initiative for local nursing homes/Aged care to encourage residents to connect to the world.</p> <p>AG: Requested details of the size and range (financial) of proposed initiatives and where they fall along the route</p> <p>ML: We will be able to provide information on the process to nominate initiatives at our next meeting.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> Transgrid will provide CCG with update on Community investment and benefits initiatives scoping process.</p>

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	<p><b>Feedback on Community investment and benefits</b></p> <p>MD: Queried boundaries for Transgrid’s community benefits in reference to EnergyCo community benefits and investments which is specific to Renewable Energy Zones and specified under legislation.</p> <p>Transgrid noted that its program will apply across the project region.</p> <p>Trevor Clark (TC) When you talk to Telstra we need to let them know that 4G is a disaster, calls are constantly dropping out. Please remind them that the connectivity is pretty ordinary and bushfire management (volunteer recruitment) as major issues.</p> <p>Colin Bull (CB) supported and encouraged to have any initiatives in place prior to construction. Roger Knight (RK) sought to ensure that fire risks are addressed in project risk, and that addressing the risk is not done as part of any community benefits funding.</p> <p>DG noted that funding associated with these initiatives will be a part of Contingent Project Application 2, which is anticipated to be approved in 2026. Project Management plans will be in place prior to construction that will address project issues and will be separate to community investment and benefit initiatives.</p> <p>David Crew (DC): spoke to capacity building (employment and procurement) for local communities. He noted that other workforce development projects are being funded in the area so suggested a local framework where everyone can participate so all investment works as a coordinated approach.</p> <p>AG: How does Transgrid ensure that contractors and others working on the project adhere to the frameworks and guidelines that have been agreed?</p> <p>DG: Transgrid’s requirements are made part of the contract. Transgrid is also required to prepare an Australian Industry Participation Plan, which will outline Transgrid’s commitments for contractors and local procurement and requires routine reporting.</p> <p>DC: All the studies are connected e.g. indigenous knowledge needs to be taken into each study.</p> <p>DW: Aboriginal cultural heritage values are not incorporated broadly into each individual technical assessment. As an example, we note Indigenous input into biodiversity is beyond the guidelines.</p> <p>DC: How about we try to improve and do better than the guidelines?</p> <p>Roger Knight (RK) I’d like to reiterate that. Can we make sure that fire is noted as a project risk and not funded from community benefits.</p> <p>AG: We want to come back next quarter and hear that you’ve gone back to Telstra and told them that 4G is rubbish.</p>
4. EIS Update	<p>Nathan Menser (NM) outlined the Regulatory approvals and Planning approvals processes that run concurrently. (<b>refer to slide 12</b>).</p> <p>Jarryd Barton (JB) of WSP (EIS consultant) reviewed the Secretary’s Environmental Approvals Requirements (SEARs) and outlined engagement requirements. (<b>refer to slide 14</b>).</p> <p>The team are currently preparing the EIS which consists of site surveys and investigations, and we are on track to have the EIS on exhibition by mid this year</p> <p>NM: We engaged community and stakeholders on the development of the EIS back in November and during this week. Quality conversations and feedback being received. [Key topic areas where feedback has been received during engagement noted on <b>Slide 17</b> of presentation pack].</p> <p>JB: There are 17 technical studies are being undertaken</p> <p>DW: Outlined the Social impact assessment process and outcomes and potential mitigation measures (<b>refer to slides 21-22</b>).</p>

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	<p>DC: Suggested using the term “Aboriginal people advisory group” rather than “Aboriginal people liaison group”. David noted “liaison” is a passive word making it easier not to implement and encouraged the use of more active language.</p> <p>BC: What percentage of landholders were consulted? It is important to have a comparison as to how many people were contacted or how many groups exist.</p> <p>ACTION: Provide context on the SIA engagement numbers</p> <p>Michael Lloyd (ML) What is missing is people we reached out to who did not respond or did not want to participate.</p> <p>RK: A heat map could be useful, across specific areas so we can identify where and what actions can be done to follow up with those landholders</p> <p><b>Visual Impact Assessment</b></p> <p>Suzie Rawlinson updated the group on the visual assessment work undertaken since the last meeting and provided preliminary photo montages as examples of outputs. <b>(Refer to slides 23-37)</b></p> <p>ACTION: Provide definition of categories from Guidelines</p> <p>TC: What’s the spacing of the towers?</p> <p>JB: 450m-500m</p> <p>SR: Black Swamp rest stop – not in the study area, but requested so will be included</p> <p>SR: Described the different viewpoints from private residences (primary and secondary)</p> <p>BC: When you take the photo for the photomontages, are you always taking them from the north or south? Can we include that in the photos as a reference.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> Suzie to include direction photomontages are taken in as a reference.</p> <p>BC: When WSP are looking at landscape (visual), is Aboriginal cultural heritage included as part of that assessment?</p> <p>DC: supported indigenous knowledge to be taken into account for each study.</p> <p>DW: Noted the challenges of balancing the inputs and time available for studies that go into each assessment, versus the requirements set within each guideline for a specific assessment.</p> <p>DC: noted an improvement opportunity, particularly for Aboriginal Cultural Heritage, where a project developer should look to do better than what is set in the guidelines.</p> <p>AG: Did you say you make a 100% consideration for not interfering with primary view?</p> <p>SR: For the sake of preliminary assessment, we assume the view of the transmission line is your primary view which makes it a moderate impact.</p> <p>AG: What happens when you go to a dwelling and then realise the view of the tower impacts their primary view?</p> <p>SR: The worst case is always assumed for the assessment, so we always assume the primary view is impacted, and then this is verified later in the field. We would verify that it is a primary view, confirm the scenic quality, and the intervening vegetation, then verify against the performance objectives in the guidelines. Assessments classified ‘moderate’ should be mitigated with screening vegetation or micro-siting.</p> <p>TC: Because these developments are across the Hay Plains, you can see transmission lines forever. The social impacts could be enormous even if it’s a significant distance from the house.</p> <p>JB: For the comments about the visual guidelines (the involvement of Aboriginal Heritage and the significance of the Hay Plains), it is important for the</p>

Agenda item	Summary notes
	<p>community to put these comments or feedback about the limitations of the guidelines in their submission to the Department.</p> <p><b>Traffic and transport</b></p> <p>DW: Gave an overview of the assessment methodology for the construction phase, over size over mass (OSOM) routes, heavy vehicles, and operational assessment. Transgrid is starting discussions with councils on local roads. <b>(Refer to slides 38-42).</b></p> <p>BC: Pointed out that ramps are mostly put in by private landholders and they will be responsible for their maintenance and repair. He also noted that many are on bends and may have to be shifted for construction.</p> <p>MD: Edward River Council noted their disappointment with the way these issues have been handled throughout Project EnergyConnect. We have to ensure that Transgrid are proactive rather than reactive with damage to roads.</p> <p>JB and DW: Noted that discussions with councils are ongoing and that the team is working to rationalise the use of roads for the project.</p> <p>CB: There will be road construction along the line connecting the towers, is there an expectation local councils maintain these or contractors come in? Edward River and the others will have to get extra equipment to upgrade or maintain roads. It has to be done before construction starts. How will the roads along the lines be constructed?</p> <p>JB: We access sites from public roads, then an access track along construction corridor. Councils are not required to maintain the access tracks.</p> <p><b>Agriculture</b></p> <p>DW: Outlined methodology and approach, and that mitigations will be negotiated and recorded in individual Property Management Plans (PMP's) <b>(Refer to slides 43-47)</b></p> <p>BC: Is that 1.5km buffer zone, is that new? Are people going to be running around? The fire risk is enormous.</p> <p>JB: The 1.5km buffer zone on either side of the transmission line is for the purposes of establishing a study area for the environmental assessment.</p> <p>CB: May – June is lambing. This will be an issue each year. There will be issues with construction crews not shutting gates.</p> <p>DG: Issues specific to each landholding and requirements for contractors will be stipulated in individual Property Management Plans.</p> <p>AG: There are considerable biosecurity risks with sheep, it is also the time taken to muster the sheep.</p> <p>GH: Construction environmental plans include biosecurity requirements that apply to all, including contractors.</p> <p><b>Aviation</b></p> <p>JB outlined Aviation assessment methodology. <b>(Refer to slides 48-52)</b></p> <p>CB: There will probably be at least 1km between the airstrip and the transmission line in the example shown, is there minimum guidelines around the distance between the end of an airstrip and transmission lines?</p> <p>Transgrid: License aerodromes have Obstacle Limitation Surface (OLS) exclusion zones around runways to avoid encroachment of development. There are no guidelines for unlicensed airstrips. In these situations consultation with owners of affected airstrips is required to assess impacts to operations and identify management measures.</p> <p>CB: What about dust?</p> <p>JB: This is considered as part of the separate air quality technical report.</p>

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	<p><b>Hydrology, flooding and water</b></p> <p>JB outlined hydrology, flooding and water assessment (<b>Refer to slides 56 – 64</b>)</p> <p>BC: There are localised floods that are shallow and widespread. The study doesn't consider localised floods. Flooding and hydrology need to be considered more at a local level.</p> <p>AG: I've been getting feedback with concerns about groundwater bores and water allocations.</p> <p>DH: Note that council supplies don't have much capacity. Murrumbidgee have flagged no capacity from their point of view.</p> <p>TC: To access water from the creek systems, you need an approval.</p> <p><b>Next steps</b></p> <p>Advised members regarding the public exhibition period for the EIS, scheduled for mid 2025. During this exhibition period, community and stakeholders can provide written submissions to DPHI for consideration in its assessment of the proposal.</p>
5. What are you hearing?	<p>BC: Tabled his resignation from the VNI West Community Consultative Group.</p> <p>BB: The Chair thanked BC and noted the groups' appreciation of his contribution</p> <p>BC noted his disappointment with the direction of the project and failure to meaningfully consider alternative options.</p> <p>CB: It is important to replace critical vegetation planned to be removed, with offsets and seeding that is local. Not far away.</p> <p>GH: That will be addressed through the Biodiversity Development Assessment Report (BDAR), and we've talked to Murray Local Land Services Seed bank.</p> <p>CB: Regarding the PMPs I had previously heard nothing about them. There needs to be more communication on what a PMP entails and concerns prior to the meeting.</p> <p>CB: While we see the side on view of the photomontages, what we don't see is the impact of the cleared 70m projected corridor. The environmental impact is a significant issue, they will have to clear the Boree Woodland.</p> <p>DC: In terms of closing loops when conversations have been had, there should be information coming back. Relationship building first and then transactional matters follow.</p> <p>GH: We are recalibrating the Aboriginal Focus Groups process to ensure this engagement activity is effective and meaningful for those involved.</p> <p>RK: I'd like to know a bit more about maintenance of offsets down the track. We have to ensure the flora planted can survive in the natural landscape of the area. There is a cost to maintaining this.</p> <p>The community investment and benefits schemes should be greater than 1.4% of the total cost, in Scotland they are talking about 6-7%. A bit more money needs to go back to the community.</p>
6. Wrap up and close	Next meeting TBC

### Action items

Agenda item	Description	Person responsible	Status
1. Welcome, introductions and housekeeping and review of previous minutes	Update Minutes of Meeting # 7 to reflect Old Mans Plains and republish.	Secretary	Closed

Agenda item	Description	Person responsible	Status
3. Project update	Discuss in further detail the community investment and benefits scheme. Including any more detail about ideas, cost, timeframes, etc. – April meeting agenda item	Secretary	
	Provide details of the proposed community benefit and investment initiatives and where they fall along the route.	Paul McFadyen	
4. EIS Update	Provide contextual data for slide 21 (SIA engagement since	WSP	
	Provide definition of categories from Visual Impact Assessment Guidelines	WSP	
	Include direction photomontages are taken as reference	WSP	
	Confirm if there are minimum guidelines around the distance between the end of an airstrip and transmission lines.	WSP	
5. What are you hearing	Future agenda item: Biodiversity offset program	Secretary	

## Resources

Item	Link
Community Investment and Benefits – Interim Feedback Report – December 2024	<a href="https://www.transgrid.com.au/media/wrreolqc/community_investment_benefits_interim_report_dec2024.pdf">https://www.transgrid.com.au/media/wrreolqc/community_investment_benefits_interim_report_dec2024.pdf</a> (PDF 1.6MB)
Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act 1991	<a href="https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/whole/html/inforce/current/act-1991-022">https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/whole/html/inforce/current/act-1991-022</a>
VNI West CPA1 Determination	<a href="https://www.aer.gov.au/documents/aer-determination-transgrid-vni-west-stage-1-early-works-contingent-project-may-2024">https://www.aer.gov.au/documents/aer-determination-transgrid-vni-west-stage-1-early-works-contingent-project-may-2024</a> (PDF 648Kb)
VNI West Contingent Application (CPA) 1	<a href="https://www.aer.gov.au/documents/transgrid-vni-west-cpa-stage-1-a1-principal-application-31-january-2024">https://www.aer.gov.au/documents/transgrid-vni-west-cpa-stage-1-a1-principal-application-31-january-2024</a> (PDF 1.28MB)
Preferred Route Report	<a href="https://www.transgrid.com.au/media/5whhsuo2/vni-west-preferred-route-report-march-2024.pdf">https://www.transgrid.com.au/media/5whhsuo2/vni-west-preferred-route-report-march-2024.pdf</a> (PDF 4.7MB)
Draft Route Report	<a href="https://www.transgrid.com.au/media/1vbfkt2d/vni_west_draft_route_report-29-january-2024.pdf">https://www.transgrid.com.au/media/1vbfkt2d/vni_west_draft_route_report-29-january-2024.pdf</a> (PDF 23.3MB)
Preferred Corridor Report	<a href="https://www.transgrid.com.au/media/0wue2k4h/vni-west-preferred-corridor-report-october-2023.pdf">https://www.transgrid.com.au/media/0wue2k4h/vni-west-preferred-corridor-report-october-2023.pdf</a> (PDF 3.66 MB)
Draft Corridor Report	<a href="https://www.transgrid.com.au/media/af5d3pry/ps135761-env-rep-001-reva_corridor_rpt_v2-2.pdf">https://www.transgrid.com.au/media/af5d3pry/ps135761-env-rep-001-reva_corridor_rpt_v2-2.pdf</a> (PDF 39.34 MB)
Regulatory Investment Test for Transmission Documents	<a href="https://www.transgrid.com.au/projects-innovation/vni-west#Regulatory-Investment-Test-for-Transmission--RIT-T-">https://www.transgrid.com.au/projects-innovation/vni-west#Regulatory-Investment-Test-for-Transmission--RIT-T-</a>
RIT-T Consultation documents	<a href="https://aemo.com.au/initiatives/major-programs/vni-west/stakeholder-consultation">https://aemo.com.au/initiatives/major-programs/vni-west/stakeholder-consultation</a>
State Significant Infrastructure	<a href="https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/development-and-assessment/state-significant-infrastructure">https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/development-and-assessment/state-significant-infrastructure</a>
Assure Programs	The service is confidential and anonymous. Transgrid does not receive any information about who uses these services.



Item	Link
	<p>There is no cost to landowners in accessing this service.</p> <p><b>How to make an appointment</b></p> <p>You can book an appointment by calling Assure on 1800 808 374, or you can <a href="#">request an appointment online</a>.</p> <p>When you call Assure, please let the team know that you are from Transgrid, and the business unit is “Landowners.” This will ensure you are able to get the support you need. You are not expected to provide the reason – this is a conversation saved for your session with the psychologist.</p> <p>In addition, the NSW Centre for Property Acquisition has free support and counselling services available to any landowners affected by an acquisition. For more information, call 1300 029 146 or <a href="#">visit their website</a>.</p>

### Attachments

Attachment	Format
Glossary	PDF
Transgrid Slides	PDF