

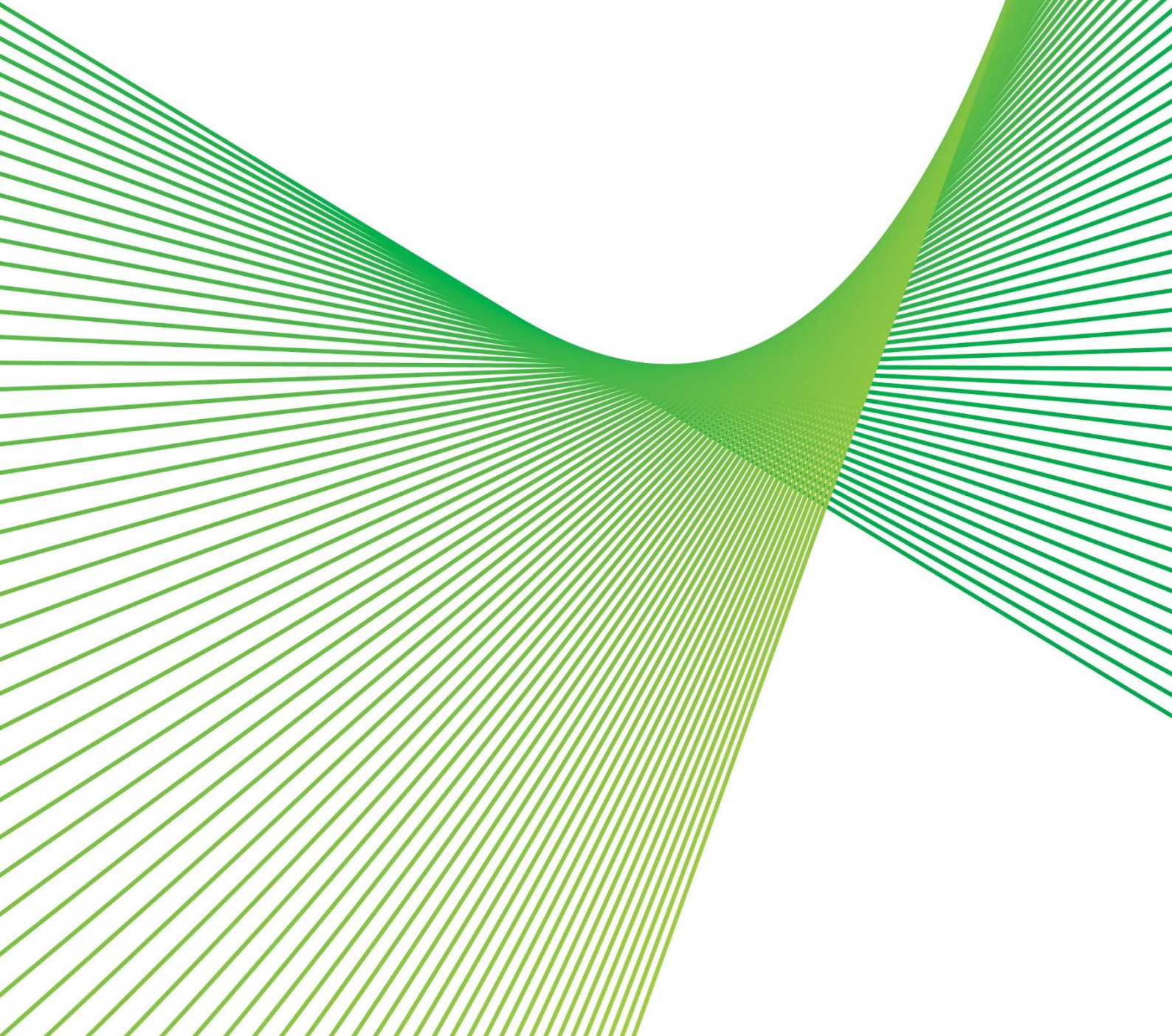


People. Power. Possibilities.

What We Heard Report

HumeLink Amendment Report Community Information Sessions

February 2024



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Purpose

The purpose of the *What We Heard* report is to capture and share information and issues discussed at key engagement events. The reports are published on the HumeLink project website for those not able to attend an event, as a record of engagement and to ensure transparency. They are also passed onto the project team for consideration during project development.

Summary

The in-person HumeLink Community Information Sessions (CIS) and street meetings were designed to engage with the general community and provide landowners, impacted communities, local government and businesses with information on the Amendment Report and Submissions Report, including proposed project amendments and refinements and general project updates.

The Submissions Report collates, categorises and responds to the submissions received on the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The Amendment Report assesses and reports on a number of proposed project amendments and refinements identified in response to community and stakeholder feedback raised in EIS submissions, as well as in response to ongoing design refinements. The Submissions Report and Amendment Report should be viewed concurrently, and will be submitted to the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) in Q2 2024, and made publicly available on the NSW Major Projects Planning Portal.

The in-person engagement sessions were held at locations across the project alignment over two weeks between 12 February and 23 February 2024. Locations were determined through consultation with the Community Consultative Groups (CCGs) during the early planning stages of the project, and according to the locations of the amendments and refinements included in the Amendment Report.

The sessions focused on sharing information on the amendments and refinements outlined in the Amendment Report including:

- Green Hills State Forest route
- Minor changes to the transmission line corridor
- Nomination of access tracks
- Updates to construction compounds and changes to worker accommodation facilities
- Additional fibre cable connections to existing substations
- Transmission line and substation refinements
- Access to water sources
- Use of helicopters and drones.

The community information sessions offered a two-way communication opportunity for stakeholders to meet and discuss the project with representatives from the HumeLink engineering, property, and community and stakeholder engagement teams. Collateral available at each session included:

- Printed copies of the proposed amendments and refinement fact sheets for Gugaa substation, Green Hills alignment and Construction
- Stylised map identifying key Amendment Report items including the amended project footprint with the Green Hills alignment and the proposed accommodation facilities and construction compounds that will support the construction stage of the project
- January edition of the HumeLink project monthly newsletter

- Printed maps of the 365-kilometre alignment outlining the two delivery partner packages: HumeLink East and HumeLink West
- Posters with key information on project progress and the environmental and planning approvals process, and visual impressions of the HumeLink alignment.

The Amendment Report community engagement activities were advertised through a cross-channel campaign via print, digital, and social local media. An Electronic Direct Mail (EDM) advertising the upcoming engagement activities was also sent to project subscribers. The *HumeLink January 2024 Newsletter* highlighted the in-person and online engagement activities with the schedule and RSVP link. The project team delivered posters to local businesses, information and community centres, newsagencies, and libraries to display on noticeboards and advertise the upcoming CIS and street meetings in the East and West section of the alignment.

Transgrid's Remote Access Communication Hub (RACH) was used for street meetings at locations close to the proposed accommodation facilities and/or construction compounds outlined in the Amendment Report. RACH was also set up outside several of the information session venues to increase their visibility and accessibility.

Background

The community information sessions are one way for the HumeLink project team to engage, share information and answer questions with the local communities along the alignment.

The February 2024 community information sessions are the latest round in a series held since September 2022. The HumeLink team held pre-EIS information sessions as part of the engagement in the lead-up to the public exhibition of the EIS. The first round of pre-EIS public exhibition sessions was held in September and October 2022, with 89 people attending 17 sessions. These sessions provided an overview of the project and EIS process. A second round of events was held in February and March 2023, with 16 sessions and a total of 67 people attending. These events focused on potential visual impacts from the project as well as potential impacts on land use. A third round of community information sessions were held in May 2023, with 44 people attending 11 sessions focusing on potential noise and vibration impacts.

The HumeLink team also held a round of EIS community information sessions during the public exhibition of the EIS with 19 in-person CISs and three CCG (Community Consultative Group) information sessions with a total of 59 people attending. In addition to in-person events, three EIS webinars were held with 14 attendees across all sessions. RACH was also present at in-person events to increase the visibility and accessibility of the sessions while undertaking two visits to landowners who were unable to attend CIS and webinars. In November and December 2023, RACH completed the first round of street meetings in Tarcutta, Batlow, Yass and Crookwell with a total of 3 attendees, targeted to discuss the amendments and refinements included in the Amendment Report.

February 2024 Community Information Sessions

In February 2024, the HumeLink project team held 15 in-person community information sessions and four street meetings with 71 attendees across all sessions.

The topics raised most frequently across all engagement activities included:

- Amendment Report proposed refinements and amendments

- Proposed accommodation facilities and construction compounds, including locations, capacity and light and heavy vehicle movement to and from these facilities
- Green Hills alignment
- Construction impacts – noise and vibration, traffic and transport and dust
- Work opportunities and opportunities for local businesses
- General project updates – project timeline, project footprint and planning and environmental approvals
- Engagement with landowners, CCG members and near neighbours
- Bushfire risk and management.

This report summarises the feedback received and the key themes raised by stakeholders and the community, while providing specific insights from each individual session. Questions and actions taken on notice during the sessions were all responded to following the sessions.

Engagement approach

Community Information Sessions

The February community information sessions were a drop-in style, with project team members available over a two-hour period to speak directly with the community and stakeholders. The sessions were held during the daytime and evening to attract the largest number of people possible and ensure most had the opportunity to attend.

The community information sessions were held in central locations across regional towns nearby the project footprint, in venues set up with information displayed around the room (corflute display boards) to allow group movement and flow. Large maps of the project footprint showing the amendments and refinements were displayed in the centre of the room to facilitate collaborative discussions. Project team members were available to explain the project and answer questions in small groups or with individuals.

Remote Access Communication Hub (RACH)

RACH is a portable community information hub with the capacity for remote and off-road travel. It is equipped with satellite connectivity for remote internet access, allowing visitors to access the HumeLink interactive map via a touch screen, as well as search and print out additional maps or information on request. RACH has been used since May 2023 to engage with communities and landowners in remote locations across the HumeLink alignment and at local events.

In February 2024, a number of street meetings were held with RACH being placed on and around the main roads of local townships to ensure foot traffic and passers-by could be engaged. Street meetings were held in Tarcutta, Batlow, Yass and Crookwell, which are the regional towns closest to the proposed worker accommodation facilities and construction compounds outlined in the Amendment Report. RACH was also present at community information sessions to increase the visibility and accessibility of the sessions. The themes and discussions captured during the street meetings are outlined in this report on page 14.

Advertising

The community information sessions and street meetings were advertised via an Electronic Direct Mail (EDM) and in the HumeLink January 2024 Newsletter, which was emailed to more than 900 project subscribers, impacted landowners, local information distributors (local organisations which distribute project updates through their networks), CCG members and e-newsletter subscribers.

Along with email distribution, the roadshow had a tailored advertising campaign designed to raise awareness of the community information sessions with a focus on the Amendment Report. This cross-channel advertising campaign used print, digital, and social media to reach those who live, work, or commute through the project area, and achieve a diverse reach across demographics and media preferences.

The advertising campaign consisted of print and digital advertisements in local community print publications over a two-week period from 29 January – 12 February 2024. Social media advertising comprised of paid Facebook and Instagram advertisements and was live from 29 January – 12 February 2024. These advertisements geo-targeted users to a 40-kilometre radius around the major townships along the alignment of Wagga Wagga, Tumbarumba, Tumut, Gundagai, Yass, Crookwell, and Tarcutta. The advertisements promoted the in-person and online events hosted by the project team throughout February and March. The advertisement campaign successfully reached over 47,500 users on Facebook and Instagram combined, with a total of 404k impressions and over 3,5k clicks on the advertisements.

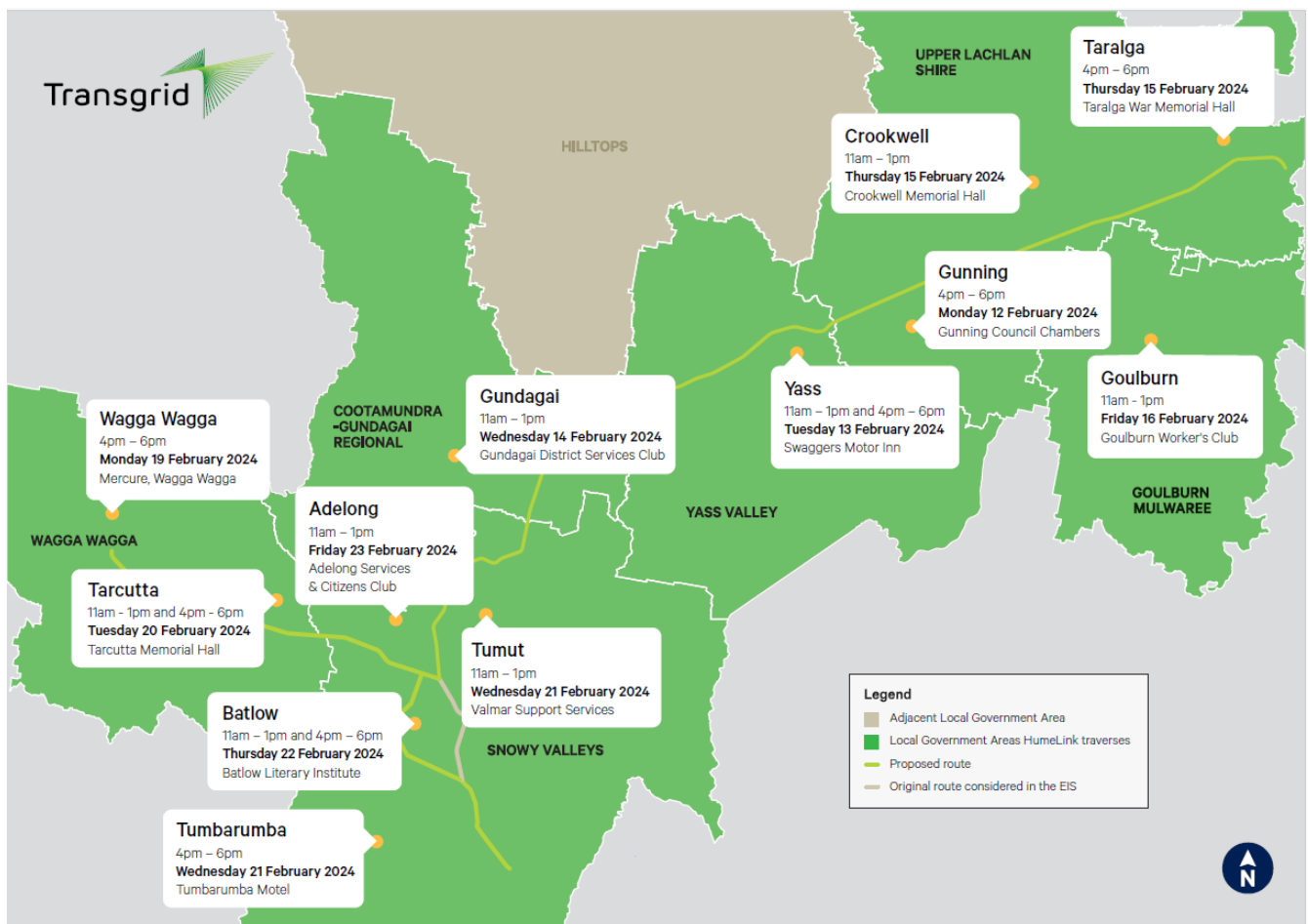
Posters advertising the community information sessions and street meetings in the East and West section of the alignment were distributed to local businesses, information and community centres, newsagencies, and libraries to be displayed on available noticeboards. The posters were distributed to Yass, Gunning, Gundagai, Crookwell, Taralga, and Goulburn to advertise and provide details on the in-person events scheduled in the East and distributed to Wagga Wagga, Tarcutta, Tumut, Tumbarumba, Batlow and Adelong for the in-person events scheduled in the West.

The table below outlines the dates, locations, and total attendee numbers at the community information sessions:

Week	Location	Date	Time	Venue
Week 1 (w/c 12 Feb 2024)	Gunning	Monday 12 Feb 24	4pm – 6pm	Gunning Council Chambers
	Yass	Tuesday 13 Feb 24	11am – 1pm	Swaggers Motor Inn
			4pm – 6pm	
	Gundagai	Wednesday 14 Feb 24	11am – 1pm	Gundagai District Services Club
	Crookwell	Thursday 15 Feb 24	11am – 1pm	Crookwell Memorial Hall
	Taralga	Thursday 15 Feb 24	4pm – 6pm	Taralga War Memorial Hall
	Goulburn	Friday 16 Feb 24	11am – 1pm	Goulburn Workers Club
				Total attendees in week 1: 20

Week 2 (w/c 19 Feb 2024)	Wagga Wagga	Monday 19 Feb 24	4pm – 6pm	Mercure Hotel
	Tarcutta	Tuesday 20 Feb 24	11am – 1pm	Tarcutta Memorial Hall
			4pm – 6pm	
	Tumut	Wednesday 21 Feb 24	11am – 1pm	Tumut Valmar Support Services
	Tumbarumba	Wednesday 21 Feb 24	4pm – 6pm	Tumbarumba Motel
	Batlow	Thursday 22 Feb 24	11am – 1pm	Batlow Literary Institute
			4pm – 6pm	
Adelong	Friday 23 Feb 24	11am – 1pm	Adelong Services, Citizens & Bowling Club	
				Total attendees in week 2: 45
				February total attendees: 65

The map below provides an overview of the events and locations of the CIS across the project footprint:



The table below outlines the dates, locations, and total attendee numbers at the street meetings:

Street meeting	Location	Date	Time
1	Meehan St, Yass	Wednesday 14 Feb 24	8am – 10am
2	Robertson Lane & Spring St, Crookwell	Thursday 15 Feb 24	8am – 10am
3	Across from Coffee @ Joe's, Tarcutta	Tuesday 20 Feb 24	8am – 10am, 11am – 1pm, 4pm – 6pm
4	Batlow Literary Institute	Thursday 22 Feb 24	8am - 10am
Street meetings total attendees: 6			

Overall key themes

The key themes from the community information sessions and street meetings throughout February are outlined below, ranking from the most popular theme raised to the least:

- **Amendment Report**
 This included Amendment Report refinements and amendments including accommodation facilities and construction compounds, the Green Hills route refinement, construction methodology, and proposed access tracks.
 Stakeholders enquired specifically about the expected traffic movement between worker accommodation facilities, the location and capacity of the facilities, local job opportunities at the facilities (i.e. catering and cleaning) and opportunities for repurposing the built facilities post-construction. This theme was the most popular, raised by 26 stakeholders throughout the CIS and the Tarcutta Street meeting.
- **Construction impacts**
 This was the second most popular theme throughout the community information sessions and the Batlow street meeting. Key impacts related to noise and vibration, traffic and transport including road use, heavy vehicle movement and traffic and safety management plans, proposed work hours, expected dust, and environmental impacts through undisposed rubbish.
- **Work opportunities**
 Opportunities for local businesses and workers throughout the upcoming construction phases was one of the key themes raised at the community information sessions. This theme was raised in the east and west locations mostly by local business owners or stakeholders working for construction contractors. The stakeholders enquired about the appointed Delivery Partners, the procurement process and general work opportunities.
- **General project overview**
 This theme included general project updates, planning stages, environmental and project approvals, the project footprint and the project timeline including expected start of construction. A handful of stakeholders enquired about the environmental approvals process particularly the EIS submissions, the Submissions Report, opportunities for community feedback on the Amendment Report and the approvals required prior to construction.
- **Engagement**
 Engagement was a popular theme, raised primarily by stakeholders in the west section of the HumeLink alignment. The stakeholders enquired about the advertising including direct communication about the sessions with landowners, the format of CIS, communication with near neighbours and CCG members, and future communication regarding local business opportunities.
- **Bushfires and bushfire risk**
 Bushfire risk was highlighted as a key theme, mainly raised in the community information sessions Transgrid's responsibility in the de-energisation process, were discussed at these sessions.
- **Undergrounding**
 Undergrounding of HumeLink was raised at some of the community information sessions. Key themes raised were related to environmental impacts from overhead transmission lines and the Parliamentary inquiry into feasibility of undergrounding transmission infrastructure. This theme was

mainly raised at community information sessions in Yass, Wagga Wagga, Adelong and Batlow, including the street meeting in Batlow.

- **Interconnectivity with surrounding energy projects**
HumeLink's connection and relationship with adjacent energy projects was a popular theme, mentioned in Gundagai, Tumbarumba, Tarcutta and Adelong. The Snowy 2.0 Transmission Connection project and how can this project and HumeLink collaborate moving forward was raised to streamline communication updates and community engagement.
- **Landowner compensation**
Easement compensation was raised in Yass, Adelong and Gunning. Stakeholders enquired about compensation for easement affected landowners, compensation for near neighbours and visually impacted landowners, and the devaluation of properties as a result of visual impact.
- **Farming operations**
Impacts of proposed transmission line structures on farming operations, in particular the use of aerial spraying nearby transmission lines.
- **Biodiversity impacts**
This theme was raised by stakeholders in Tumbarumba and Adelong. Impacts to biodiversity in the local subalpine areas, Biodiversity Stewardship Agreement (BSA), and concerns regarding vegetation clearance were raised at these sessions.
- **Transgrid legacy opportunities**
Attendees to the Tumut, Batlow and Adelong community information sessions discussed potential opportunities for Transgrid legacy projects. Topics included:
 - the telecommunications blackspots west of the Green Hills state forest
 - opportunities for Transgrid to collaborate and present at the Batlow United Community Chamber
 - opportunities to collaborate with local schools and educate school communities on electricity infrastructure and the transition to renewable energy sources
 - opportunities to repurpose the worker accommodation facilities for Aboriginal communities following construction of HumeLink.
- **Heritage impact assessments**
This theme was raised by stakeholders in Goulburn, Tumut and Adelong. The topics included cultural heritage surveys, the historic heritage assessment and the inclusion of a Hume and Hovel track in the report, and interest in the revised Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment Report (ACHAR).
- **Noise and vibration impacts**
This included a request for more information on corona noise and proposed mitigation measures.
- **Asset management and funding**
These included an enquiry regarding asset management, in particular the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) process with proposed transmission lines, and regulatory approvals for funding from the Australian Energy Regulator (AER). This theme was highlighted by stakeholders in Adelong.

Community Information Sessions overview per location

The following section includes an overview of each in-person session and common, high-level themes which were discussed. Please note, if you feel that high-level points you raised were not highlighted in this report, please reach out to the HumeLink team on:

Toll-free phone number: 1800 317 367

Email: humelink@transgrid.com.au

Week 1| Gunning

Session 1: Monday 12 February 2024, 4pm – 6pm

Key topics raised:

- Construction impacts, environmental concerns, noise impacts, and traffic and transport impacts
- Work opportunities during construction with appointed Delivery Partners
- Refinements in the Amendment Report, in particular Green Hills route refinement
- Compensation for near neighbours
- Community sentiment and mental health support.

Week 1| Yass

Session 1: Tuesday 13 February 2024, 11am - 1pm

Session 2: Tuesday 13 February 2024, 4pm - 6pm

Key topics raised:

- Farming operations and impacts with proposed transmission lines
- Project timeline, construction stages and material sourcing for construction
- Route selection process, including the Green Hills route refinement
- Bushfire risk, firefighting procedures, management plans and maintenance
- Undergrounding and overhead design
- Communication with impacted landowners and near neighbours
- Compensation for impacted landowners and visual impacts
- Mental health in local communities
- Project and environmental approvals
- Work opportunities during construction
- Amendment Report refinements, accommodation facilities, construction compounds and construction methodology.

Week 1| Gundagai

Session 1: Wednesday 14 February 2024, 11am - 1pm

Key topics raised:

- Work opportunities with Delivery Partners during construction
- General project overview project timeline, environmental approvals, project footprint
- Connection to adjacent renewable energy projects
- Community sentiment towards early construction
- Route refinement process including Green Hills refinement.

Week 1| Crookwell

Session 1: Thursday 15 February 2024, 11am - 1pm

Key topics raised:

- Advertisement for engagement activities and community attendance.

Week 1| Taralga

Session 1: Thursday 15 February 2024, 4pm - 6pm

Key topics raised:

- Mental health impacts in the community from social issues and adjacent projects
- Advertisement method for community engagement opportunities
- Community impacts of large regional projects.

Week 1| Goulburn

Session 1: Friday 16 February 2024, 11am - 1pm

Key topics raised:

- Business opportunities and procurement process
- General project update approvals process, construction timeline
- Workforce accommodation facilities and opportunities for local staff
- Aboriginal heritage assessment.

Week 2| Wagga Wagga

Session 1: Monday 19 February 2024, 4pm - 6pm

Key topics raised:

- Planning approvals process including EIS submissions and the Submissions Report
- Amendment Report content including accommodation facilities for workforce development
- Construction stages, expected timeframes for construction start and working hours
- Local business opportunities and general project opportunities
- Management of council assets, including waste facilities
- Parliamentary inquiry into feasibility of undergrounding transmission infrastructure
- Bushfire risk, management of assets and relationship with NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS).

Week 2| Tarcutta

Session 1: Tuesday 20 February 2024, 11am - 1pm

Session 2: Tuesday 20 February 2024, 4pm – 6pm

Key topics raised:

- Traffic impacts and road safety, in particular expected heavy vehicle movements in the local areas
- Safety issues with road use and increased traffic, and traffic and transport management plans
- Proposed worker accommodation facilities and positive impact on the local economy
- Acquisition process and council owned assets, including waste management facilities
- Opportunities for local businesses and raise project awareness through local schools.

Week 2| Tumut

Session 1: Wednesday 21 February 2024, 11am – 1pm

Key topics raised:

- General project update, approvals process, construction timeline
- Transgrid legacy, by repurposing workers accommodation facilities following construction
- Proposed access tracks to construction compounds
- Road use during construction and road upgrade opportunities
- Corona noise and noise mitigation measures
- Communication with near neighbours.

Week 2| Tumbarumba

Session 1: Wednesday 21 February 2024, 4pm – 6pm

Key topics raised:

- Opportunities for Biodiversity Stewardship Agreement (BSA) and environmental impacts in local habitats
- Historic heritage assessment and inclusion of huts on walking trails

- Local road use during construction and access tracks
- Traffic and transport impacts and expected traffic movement between worker accommodation facilities
- Collaboration with adjacent energy projects for joint communication outlets
- Communication with local businesses and work opportunities during construction.

Week 2| Batlow

Session 1: Thursday 22 February 2024, 11am – 1pm

Session 2: Thursday 22 February 2024, 4pm – 6pm

Key topics raised:

- Bushfire risk and bushfire mitigation measures, and possibility of undergrounding
- Green Hills route alignment and Green Hills accommodation facility and compound
- Traffic and transport impacts including road use – capacity and project teams lack of familiarity with roads
- Access tracks and fire trails for bushfire management
- Social and environmental impacts of construction workers and negative sentiment from construction worker behaviour from adjacent projects
- Transgrid community grant opportunities and collaboration opportunities.

Week 2| Adelong

Session 1: Friday 23 February 2024, 11am – 1pm

Key topics raised:

- EIS submissions and Submissions Report, including future opportunities for community feedback
- Definition of amendments and refinements in the Amendment Report
- Compensation for near neighbours
- Construction impacts, including expected noise, dust, soil quality, heavy vehicle movement and work hours
- Feasibility and possibility of undergrounding
- Impacts on farming activities, including aerial farming methods and management of pine seeds
- Impacts to trees and vegetation clearance
- Route selection process and decisions on route intersections
- Asset management including the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) process and corporate responsibility
- CPA2 funding and AER approvals, including HumeLink net benefits
- Collaboration with adjacent projects, scope of works and tower incidents

- Cultural heritage surveys
- Workforce accommodation facilities and property acquisition
- Bushfire risk and Transgrid's responsibility in the de-energisation process, including paralleling lines and appropriate weed management
- Community benefits and legacy opportunities
- Logistics of community information sessions and advertising
- Mental health impacts on local communities.

Street meetings overview per location

Week 1| Yass

Session 1: Wednesday 14 February 2024, 8am – 10am

Week 1| Crookwell

Session 1: Thursday 15 February 2024, 8am – 10am

Week 2| Tarcutta

Session 1: Tuesday 20 February 2024, 8am – 10am

Session 2: Tuesday 20 February 2024, 11am – 1pm

Session 3: Tuesday 20 February 2024, 4pm - 6pm

Key topics raised:

- Traffic control and road safety
- Influx of construction workers and community impact
- General project interest.

Week 2| Batlow

Session 1: Thursday 22 February 2024, 8am – 10am

Key topics raised:

- Transmission line structures
- Possibility of undergrounding.