

HumeLink Environmental Impact Statement

Social Impact Assessment

AUGUST 2023

What is an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

The HumeLink project has been classified by the NSW Government as Critical State Significant Infrastructure (CSSI). All CSSI development applications must be accompanied by an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The purpose of the EIS is to identify and assess the potential environmental, economic and social impacts of the project to help government agencies, relevant authorities, community and stakeholders make an informed decision or provide an informed submission on the merits of the project.

EIS project footprint

The [HumeLink project](#) extends from the existing Wagga Wagga 330 kV substation to the existing Bannaby 500 kV substation and the future Maragle 500 kV substation.

The EIS footprint is based on an indicative 200 metre corridor and is defined as the area directly affected by the construction and operation of the project. It includes the indicative location of project infrastructure, the area that will be directly disturbed during construction and any easement required during operation.

The final location of all proposed infrastructure will be confirmed during detailed design.

HumeLink planning approvals and EIS

As part of the planning approval process for HumeLink, Transgrid is preparing an EIS in accordance with the [Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements \(SEARs\)](#). The SEARs identify matters which must be addressed in the EIS and essentially form its terms of reference. It includes the requirements from both the NSW and Commonwealth Governments.

A series of detailed technical studies and reports are completed as part of the EIS. This includes the social impact assessment topic covered in this fact sheet.

Can I provide feedback?

Once the EIS is finalised, the NSW Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) will place the EIS on exhibition and call for public submissions. Feedback on the EIS can be provided directly to the DPE during this public display period.

To learn more about the HumeLink EIS, please visit the [EIS Frequently Asked Questions](#) on our website.

Social

HumeLink Environmental Impact Statement Specialist Studies

Aboriginal heritage	Electric and magnetic fields	vibration
Agricultural land	Greenhouse gas and climate change risk	Social
Air quality	Historic heritage	Soils, geology and contamination
Aviation safety	Hydrology and flooding	Surface water and groundwater
Biodiversity	Landscape character and visual amenity	Sustainability
Bushfire risk	Land use and property	Traffic and transport
Economic	Noise and	



Social Impact Assessment

As part of the HumeLink EIS, Transgrid completed a Social Impact Assessment (SIA) to evaluate social impacts including potential changes to way of life, community, accessibility, culture, health and wellbeing during the construction and operation of the project. The assessment also recommends management and mitigation measures to minimise the identified impacts.

What does this assessment tell us?

The SIA was prepared in accordance with the *Social Impact Assessment Guideline* (DPE, 2023) (SIA Guideline).

For the purposes of the SIA, the study area is referred to as the **'social locality'**. The SIA social locality has been examined at three different levels:

- the local government area level, including the following LGAs: Wagga Wagga City, Snowy Valleys, Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional, Upper Lachlan Shire, Yass Valley, Hilltops and Goulburn Mulwaree
- key communities level, including the following urban centres: Wagga Wagga, Tumbarumba, Batlow, Tumut, Gundagai, Yass and Goulburn
- project footprint level, including the area to be directly impacted by the construction and operation of the project.

The SIA involved three phases as outlined below:

Phase 1 : Scoping

The scoping phase included:

- identifying the social locality and potential social impacts

- gathering data to establish the social baseline, including a review of the ABS 2021 Census data for population and demographic information
- engaging with community and stakeholders to understand concerns and perceived social impacts from the project
- reviewing relevant state, regional and local plans and policies
- reviewing other relevant EIS technical reports that may influence the assessment of social impacts, including the Landscape Character and Visual Impact Assessment, Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment, Land Use and Property Impact Assessment and the Traffic and Transport Impact Assessment, amongst others.

Phase 2 : Assessment

The assessment phase evaluated the identified impacts by looking at the likelihood (probability) and scale (magnitude) of each potential impact during both the construction and operational stages of the project. Based on this assessment, impacts were assigned a significance rating ranging from low to very high.

Phase 3 : Impact management

The impact management phase identified measures to minimise the identified impacts.



Pictured: HumeLink SIA social locality.



Potential impacts and proposed mitigation and management measures

Social impact categories



Way of life



Accessibility



Health and wellbeing



Livelihoods



Community



Culture



Surroundings



Decision-making systems

Potential social impacts were grouped into the categories identified in the SIA Guideline. The key social impacts identified during construction and operation are summarised below.

Way of life



Way of life relates to how people live, work, play and interact with each other.

Potential impacts to way of life during construction of the project include:

- noise and vibration caused by construction activities and heavy vehicle movements, which could result in sleep disturbance (where out of hours works are required) and impact to amenity of a quiet, rural lifestyle. A Noise and Vibration Management Plan will be implemented as part of the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) to reduce noise and vibration levels to acceptable levels during construction. Refer to the [Noise and Vibration](#) fact sheet for more information.
- reduced availability of accommodation for tourists and renters from an increase in construction workers in key communities. The provision of temporary worker accommodation as part of the project will help manage impacts on housing availability.

Operational noise from the transmission lines and substations may result in amenity impacts on nearby sensitive receivers. For residences where noise monitoring identifies operational noise levels above the relevant criteria, the project team will consult with the relevant landowners to identify potential solutions.

Community



This category looks at community cohesion, composition, character, resilience and people's sense of place.

During construction, community investment is expected to increase due to a temporary increase in workers resulting in greater business interactions.

The project will provide opportunities for investment through Transgrid's support initiatives, which will have a positive social impact in the surrounding community. HumeLink's Community Investment and Benefits Plan will guide investment and deliver positive social outcomes and benefits during construction and operation stages, including partnerships with the community.

Accessibility



The accessibility category considers how the community accesses and uses infrastructure, services and facilities.

Potential impacts during construction include:

- temporary traffic impacts such as increases in vehicle movements, access changes and partial or complete road closures. This could result in delays and disruption to traffic in some areas. A Traffic Management Plan will be prepared and implemented as part of the CEMP to ensure traffic impacts are appropriately managed. More information can be found in the [Traffic and Transport](#) fact sheet.
- temporary increase in the demand for social infrastructure or services such as doctors, emergency services, leisure or recreation facilities. Some of these impacts would be positive.
- temporary increase in demand for goods and services resulting in a potential shortage to the local community or changes to prices.
- temporary interruptions to utility services due to an increase in demand from workers.



Example of a photomontage: View from Tumut Lookout.

Culture



The culture social impact category includes both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal culture. This category explores topics such as shared beliefs, customs, values and connections to country, land, waterways, places and buildings.

Potential construction impacts on culture may be positive or negative and include:

- potential visual amenity impacts on heritage items
- the ability of Aboriginal people to maintain and develop culture
- the sense of trust that Aboriginal people have in the management of matters of cultural heritage.

An Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment Report as well as a Historical Heritage Impact Assessment have been developed as part of the EIS and will be available during public exhibition. More information on heritage can be found in the [Aboriginal Heritage](#) and [Non-Aboriginal Heritage](#) fact sheets.

Transgrid is also undertaking a Cultural Values Assessment (CVA) in parallel to the EIS to better understand the non-tangible Aboriginal cultural heritage within the HumeLink project footprint and its surroundings.

Transgrid is also working with its construction partners to promote workforce training and development and local industry participation, including Aboriginal businesses. Consultation with Aboriginal stakeholders for the SIA found that sentiment was positive around the potential project opportunities.

Transgrid will continue to directly engage with Aboriginal people, groups and communities to identify employment and business opportunities.

Health and wellbeing



This category describes potential impacts to both physical and mental health. Some topics explored included social exclusion or change, psychological stress from financial or other pressures, access to open spaces and effects on public health.

Potential construction impacts to health and wellbeing were identified from:

- dust generation and noise and vibration impacts from some construction activities and vehicle movements, which can lead to disruption to amenity, nuisance and sleep disturbance. These impacts will be managed with the implementation of the CEMP. More information on these issues is provided in the [Air Quality](#) factsheet and [Noise and Vibration](#) factsheet.
- increased stress and uncertainty on directly impacted landowners from property acquisition and easement negotiation processes.

Health and wellbeing of construction workers was also considered as part of the SIA and will be managed through the implementation of a Workforce and Workforce Development Plan.

Potential impacts during operation include stress and anxiety for residents living near the project footprint arising from perceived risks from bushfires and electric and magnetic fields (EMF). More information can be found in the [EMF](#) and [Bushfire](#) fact sheets.

For more information on how Transgrid supports landowners please visit our [website](#).

Surroundings



This category explores ecosystem services including shade, pollution and erosion control, public safety and security, access to and use of the natural and built environment, and its aesthetic value and amenity.

Some construction activities, the presence of plant and equipment and the removal of vegetation may disrupt the views and amenity of residents near the project footprint. Visual impacts are expected to be localised and will vary throughout the project footprint.

During operation of the project, landowners and the community may experience visual impacts from the introduction of new transmission line structures into the landscape. The visual impact may contribute to a sense of loss when viewed by local residents who may have formed an attachment to particular views within the landscape.

During detailed design, opportunities to refine the location of transmission line structures to minimise visual impacts will be considered. Property specific mitigation measures will be investigated for residents identified to have a high visual impact. More information is provided in the [Landscape Character and Visual Amenity](#) fact sheet.



Pictured: Property Management Plans are being developed in consultation with landowners to address landowner concerns during construction.

Livelihoods



Livelihood is a social impact that is defined by people's capacity to sustain themselves through employment or business.

During construction, the project could:

- create additional employment and upskilling opportunities, creating positive benefits for the community
- increase tourism from temporary workers and their visitors, benefiting local businesses
- result in property-related impacts, both positive and negative, from the temporary alteration to property tenure and ownership to facilitate construction.

Some land use changes are anticipated during operation from easement acquisition. This may impact on livelihoods and result in some stress and anxiety for landowners. Transgrid will continue to refine the transmission line route to minimise property and land use impacts as far as practicable. Compensation processes and other relevant property impact information is provided in the [Land Use and Property](#) fact sheet.

Decision-making systems



The decision-making systems category relates to the extent to which people can have a say in decisions that affect their lives, and have access to complaints, remedy and grievance mechanisms.

Property acquisitions, easements and temporary leasing arrangements are required for the project. These changes and uncertainty about project decisions may affect how landowners use their property and operate their businesses, resulting in anxiety and stress for landowners.

Transgrid recognises that acquiring a transmission line easement over land can cause stress, however, seeks to achieve a long-term partnership with its landowners. Transgrid has commenced early engagement with landowners and is working to minimise their stress and anxiety with regard to the project. Transgrid will maintain ongoing relationships with landowners including providing opportunities for complaints and dispute resolution in the event that conflicts arise in the future.

For more information on landowner support visit our website. <https://www.transgrid.com.au/community-engagement/how-we-engage/landowner-support-and-advocacy>



Management of impacts

Transgrid will continue to work with local landowners to address potential negative social impacts through the implementation of mitigation measures.

Individual Property Management Plans (PMPs) will be developed during the property acquisition and compensation process. PMPs will be developed in consultation with directly impacted landowners.

The project will also develop the following tailored plans to manage specific impacts, deliver positive outcomes for the community and achieve a positive social legacy from the project:

- Social Impact Management Plan
- Workforce and Workforce Development Plan Worker Accommodation Strategy
- Local Industry Participation Plan
- Australian Industry Participation Plan
- HumeLink Community Investment and Benefits Plan.

Additional measures that will help to avoid and minimise potential social impacts of the project include:

- maximising distance between residences and project infrastructure to reduce impacts to amenity
- considering additional temporary worker accommodation facilities to minimise impact on accommodation availability within the relevant LGAs
- consultation with local service providers to minimise impacts to accessibility and manage increased demand for community services and facilities.

As the project progresses through the EIS and detailed design, more information about the identified social impacts as well as the proposed management measures will become available.



Pictured: Example of a 500 kV transmission tower.

Connect with us

Transgrid is committed to working with landowners and communities through the development of HumeLink. Please connect with us for more information.

For landowner support, please contact our external service provider, Assure Programs on 1800 808 374

For more information on how Transgrid support landowners please visit www.transgrid.com.au/community-engagement/how-we-engage/landowner-support-and-advocacy



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