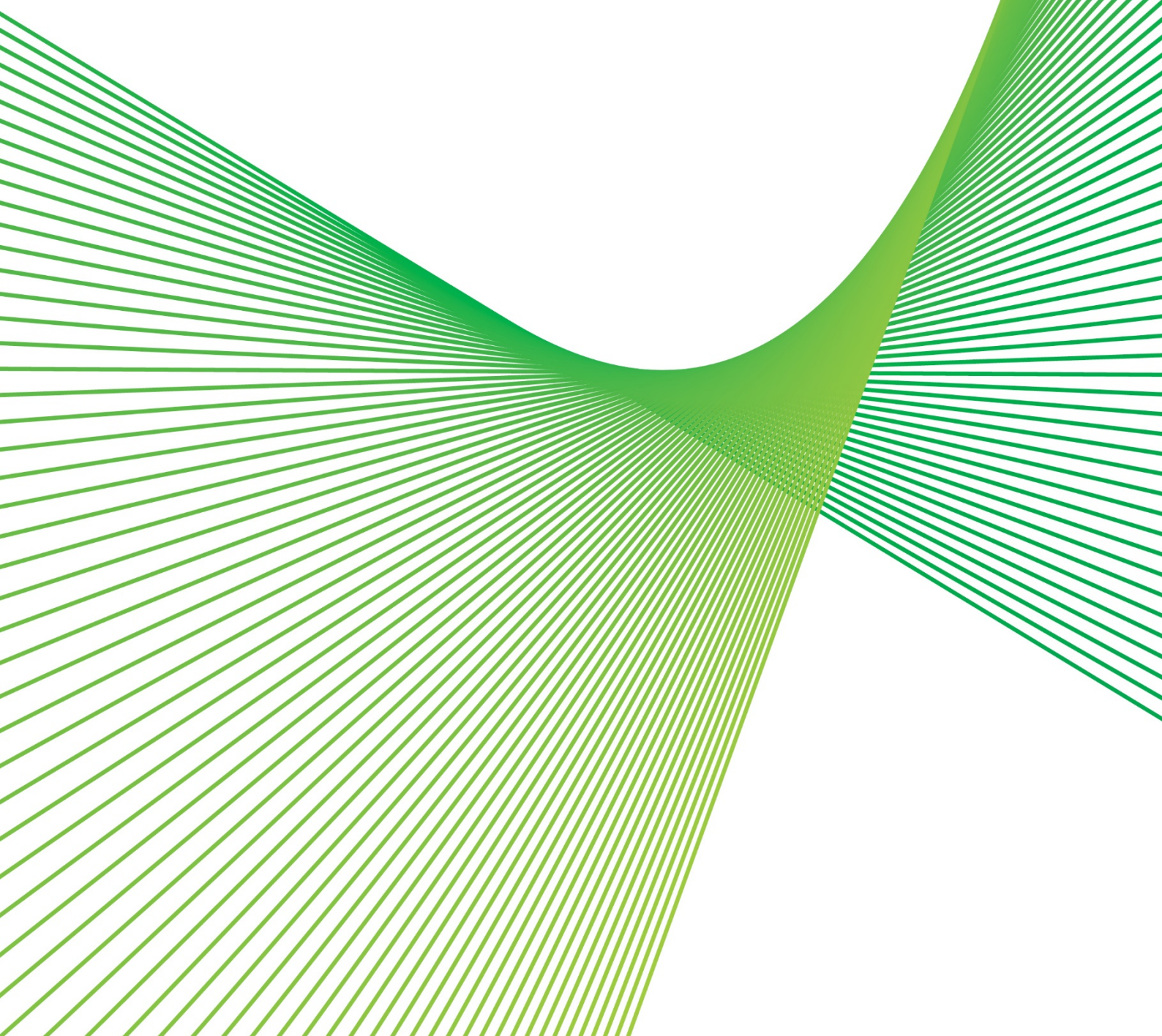


Online Community Information Sessions

Report for attendees

Questions and answers summary for EnergyConnect



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1. Introduction

EnergyConnect involves the construction of a new transmission line connecting New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria. The proposed interconnector would be around 900km long and run between Wagga Wagga in NSW and Robertstown in SA, with a connection to Red Cliffs, in VIC.

Transgrid held online community information sessions for stakeholders along the proposed alignment for the interconnector route. Three sessions took place on Tuesday 14th, Thursday 16th and Friday 17th September 2021. Transgrid advertised these sessions through local newspapers along the route, Council Facebook pages and newsletters, and the EnergyConnect Community Newsletter.

1.1. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide transparency to all participants with the questions asked and the answers given during these sessions. Where the same or similar question was asked in multiple sessions, the questions and the respective answers have been combined. Where an action was taken to provide reference material, the links to these are included at the end of each section.

1.2. The sessions

The objectives of the sessions were to provide:

- access to a panel of technical specialists and EnergyConnect team members
- detailed information about the project overall and on specific topics
- an open Q&A to facilitate the flow of specific details and information relevant to the concerns and questions of each participant
- an introduction to SecureEnergy, the principal contractor for the project.

1.3. The panel

The technical specialists on the panel are listed below, including their area of speciality:

- Evonne Bennett, Project Director
- Anthony Armstrong, Construction
- Tim Donnan, Land Access and Approvals
- Mitchell Hume, Stakeholder Engagement and Communications
- Chris Gilmore, EIS Delivery
- Mark Jones, Engineering
- Carmen Marshall, Engagement Manager, SecureEnergy

Consultation and engagement with the community will continue throughout the project.

2. Questions and answers

2.1. Route identification and alignment

Question	Answer
<p>What is the updated route plan?</p> <p>When will the final route be delivered?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current transmission route can be viewed on our Social Pinpoint map • A preferred corridor has been identified for most sections, particularly where paralleling existing infrastructure, although minor amendments are being considered to address localised constraints • Some portions of the greenfield section, between Four Corners and Lockhart are still subject to property owner engagements and specialist assessments • The preferred route alignment will be detailed in the upcoming NSW-Eastern Section Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), anticipated to be on exhibition in early 2022. However, it is possible that engagement with directly affected property owners may extend beyond the EIS exhibition period, after which any further changes would be addressed in the Response to Submissions report
<p>Considering the re-alignment at Lockhart away from residences, what about considering the distance from rural residences?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The alignment near Lockhart took into account the extensive community feedback regarding the current zoning and future growth of the township • In the context of individual rural residences, Transgrid must balance several factors, including environmental, heritage and social impacts, including the distance from residences • We are engaging with landholders in the region to identify opportunities to minimise impacts • We encourage landholders to lodge questions and have discussions with the land agents representing Transgrid
<p>How can you not be an affected party when the powerline goes along your boundary and closer to your home than the affected party?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transgrid appreciates that neighbours and community members are impacted by the transmission infrastructure and we try to take into account everybody's feedback and comments • The legislation relating to property/easement acquisition requires Transgrid to negotiate with directly affected landowners, defined as those whose property will host the infrastructure • This process can include negotiations on where the infrastructure may be placed, and can result in placing infrastructure along property boundaries to minimise impacts to existing land uses • In cases where there are complex land use and environmental constraints, Transgrid works to negotiate the best overall outcome that balances these competing factors

Why isn't the transmission continuing along the current transmission lines in parts?

- Between Buronga and Wagga Wagga around 75 per cent of the project alignment is collocated with existing transmission lines.
- The section where this is not the case is roughly between the locality of Four Corners and the town of Lockhart.
- Transgrid investigated alternative routes in this area including those which would follow existing transmission easements to Darlington Point and further east to Wagga Wagga.
- The option to follow those easements was found to be unviable due to the presence of a number of land use, environmental and social constraints, which would have required diversions away from existing easements, thereby exacerbating those issues and diminishing any advantages found in collocation.

References

- [Transmission route](#)

2.2. Transmission infrastructure

Question	Answer
What voltage will the EnergyConnect lines be?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The EnergyConnect transmission lines are proposed to be 330 kV between Buronga and Wagga Wagga
Will the line be upgraded to 500kV and if so, what is the impact on the route and landholders' properties?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transgrid has been working with stakeholders - including energy market bodies and State and Federal governments - to explore future-proofing the section between Wagga Wagga and the proposed Dinawan substation, south of Coleambally One solution is to upgrade the line between Wagga Wagga and Dinawan from 330 kV to 500 kV An upgrade would minimise the need for additional transmission lines in this area in the future and reduce the overall impact on the community Note that on 28 September Transgrid announced that it will upgrade the Wagga Wagga to Dinawan section to 500 kV. Transgrid has engaged landholders in that region and will undertake additional activities related to land acquisition and valuation as a result. The proposed easement width (80m) will not change as it can safely accommodate both 330 kV and 500kV The main difference between the 330 kV and 500 kV infrastructure will be a slightly larger tower footprint
How do you build transmission lines over rivers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transmission lines can be built over rivers by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> helicopters pulling a draw wire or conductor from the towers on either side of the river unmanned aircraft (drones) pulling a pilot wire from the towers on either side of the river followed by the draw wire and conductors If the towers are close, the draw wire can be held in the sheath of a crane, and a boat could take the wire across the river
Will the transmission line connecting to Red Cliffs simply connect to existing lines in Victoria? Or, are there plans to upgrade the Victorian line too?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transgrid is upgrading and duplicating the transfer capacity between Red Cliffs and New South Wales Upgrade works at Red Cliffs will enable a second line between the two sites and increase capacity to 800m VA per circuit Our Regulatory Investment Test for Transmission (RIT-T) demonstrated this upgrade would provide consumer benefits due to the additional generation that can be scheduled from north-west Victoria
I see one new substation. Will there be others for possible solar wind renewable projects to log in?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Renewable energy projects will be able to connect to the network

References

- [EnergyConnect Transmission towers factsheet](#)

2.3. Timeline

Question	Answer
<p>When is the project expected to reach a committed status?</p> <p>When is it anticipated that each section will become committed?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In May 2021, the Transgrid Board committed to deliver the project • EIS approval for the Western section is expected by the end of 2021 and, for the Eastern section, in late 2022 • The Western section will become a committed project under the National Electricity Rules in early 2022 once construction has commenced • We expect the Eastern section will become committed in the second half of 2022 • The latest project timeline is available on our website
<p>When will the Buronga works commence?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Buronga works will commence after two milestones are reached <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The first is DPIE approval for the Western section EIS - The second is DPIE approval for the construction and environmental management plans • This process is expected to be concluded in early 2022 • The main construction is due to commence in the first half of 2022 • There will be some permitted early works such as site preparation, geotechnical work and site investigations
<p>Can you explain the expected commissioning of the project with timing estimates and duration?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transgrid is working with AEMO and ElectraNet to establish the commissioning program for the project. • The Project will be delivered in two stages, aligned with Transgrid's two stage EIS approach. The first stage sees the transmission line connected between Robertstown in South Australia and Buronga in New South Wales via the new Substation at Bunday in SA. This stage will allow reduced initial transfer capacity, supported by the upgraded connection to Red Cliffs in North-West Victoria. The timing of this is still under consideration pending environmental approvals and appointment of contractors for the South Australian section. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Post event note – on 12 October ElectraNet announced the appointment of Downer and CPP Australia as its construction contractors for substation and transmission line works.</i> • The second stage will see Buronga connected back to Wagga Wagga via the new substation at Dinawan and will be completed 12 – 18 months following the first stage. This will trigger the incremental testing and releasing of capacity into the market based on network requirements, energy demand and generation patterns.

References

- [Key project dates](#)
- [Australian Energy Regulator delivers FID](#)
- [Transgrid Board commits to deliver EnergyConnect](#)
- [Latest update](#)

2.4. Contract and connection opportunities

Question	Answer
<p>What is the timing for contractor packages being announced and awarded?</p> <p>How do we engage as mid-tier suppliers to the panel?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transgrid has engaged SecureEnergy as its principal contractor and to manage the work packages • Several packages are currently live on the Industry Capability Network (ICN) Gateway, such as Expressions of Interest for civil works, earthworks, steel and other early activities • We have a strong focus on providing opportunities for local businesses to be involved in the project • SecureEnergy has created a mid-tier supplier panel for local businesses who may see some work packages as too large for them • The panel is for companies unable to complete a whole scope of works in the larger packages • Once the package is awarded to a contractor, that contractor will then go to the mid-tier supplier panel to engage locals to support them in the scope of work • This model means that both SecureEnergy and its major subcontractors will be employing local companies • SecureEnergy is currently engaging with state and government organisations to provide administration training to mid-tier suppliers, enabling them to support large contractors in package delivery • To access contractor packages and register as a mid-tier supplier: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access www.secureenergyjv.com.au - Click on the Business tab - Click on the link to the ICN Gateway - Register for SecureEnergy projects - Receive notifications as packages are released
<p>How can developers lodge enquiries or applications for new generators that aim to connect to EnergyConnect?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developers should lodge connection enquiries through Transgrid's Network Connections team, via connections@transgrid.com.au

References

- Contract opportunities
View the [ICN Gateway](#)
For assistance, complete the [contact form](#)
- Transgrid's [Network Connections Team](#)
connections@transgrid.com.au

2.5. Employment opportunities

Question	Answer
<p>What are the employment opportunities, particularly for young Indigenous people?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transgrid is committed to providing employment opportunities for locals, including young Indigenous people • Job opportunities will be posted on the SecureEnergy and Transgrid websites • We are setting in place targets for Indigenous employment. Transgrid's Australian Industry Participation Plan states that <i>“TransGrid requires the Contractor to spend at least 2.5 per cent of the contract value on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) workforce participation and on ATSI suppliers.”</i> • We are also making opportunities available through Transgrid's Graduate Program

References

- [Transgrid Careers portal](#)
- [Transgrid Graduate Program](#)
- [SecureEnergy Careers portal](#)
- [EnergyConnect Australian Industry Participation Plan](#)

2.6. Accommodation

Question	Answer
<p>Will all of the accommodation providers, for example motels in the Wentworth area, benefit from the project or will it be larger establishments that see business going their way?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to long travel distances between sites, to ensure the safety of our site team during the construction phase, the project's main accommodation will be in purpose-built camps based along the 700km alignment. The purpose-built camps can house between 200 and 400 people • The majority of our workforce, if not locally based, will be housed in those camps to ensure tourism season is not impacted at local accommodation • Visitors to site will use local accommodation across the length of the interconnector

2.7. Aboriginal sites

Question	Answer
<p>You used the phrase 'known' Aboriginal sites. Can you explain what you mean by 'known'?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As part of the Aboriginal cultural heritage studies, records of known and recorded Aboriginal cultural places and items is obtained from the NSW Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System (AHIMS). While this existing record of Aboriginal cultural heritage does not include all sites of cultural significance, it provides the basis to our engagement with knowledge holders and the development of heritage survey plans • We engage with Local Aboriginal Land Councils, registered Aboriginal parties, local Aboriginal stakeholders and property owners to further identify areas of importance • We appoint experienced Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment consultants to carry out detailed in-field studies and survey the impacted areas
<p>What happens when a known Aboriginal site is found, in terms of placement of the transmission line? Is the line moved?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The study corridors for EnergyConnect considered the available information on registered and known Aboriginal sites (AHIMS records) • During preparation of the Environmental Impact Statement, a range of field survey activities have occurred to identify known and previously unknown sites of Aboriginal cultural heritage value • Where a site of heritage value is identified, Transgrid assesses a range of measures to either avoid impact to the site or mitigate any unavoidable impact. This can include relocating transmission towers, and adapting construction or operational methodologies to avoid or reduce impact. In very rare cases, Transgrid may consider potentially relocating items of heritage value if practical. These relocations may be temporary or permanent, and would be assessed on a case-by-case basis in consultation with relevant Traditional Owners and Registered Aboriginal Parties.

References

- [EnergyConnect Heritage Surveys factsheet](#)

2.8. Project costs

Question	Answer
<p>How will the project save money for consumers when the cost of construction could be at least 50 per cent higher than current estimates (as per HumeLink costs that are already being reported)?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EnergyConnect is at a different stage in the project to HumeLink, where estimates have varied due to route changes and cost increases of various factors such as steel prices • The Australian Energy Regulator (AER) has determined the total cost for EnergyConnect is \$2.28 billion across both NSW and SA sections • In approving the Regulated Investment Test – Transmission (RIT-T) for the project, the AER has also found that there will be a net benefit to consumers – i.e. the savings generated by the project will be greater than the approved cost • The EnergyConnect team has committed to a construction price through our contract with SecureEnergy • We have secured estimates based on valuations for property easements and largely completed environmental planning • In total, energy consumers across NSW will save \$180 million a year on power bills as a result of EnergyConnect

2.9. Environment

Question	Answer
<p>How much consideration has been given to avoiding sensitive wetlands and ancient trees?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transgrid is required to consider a broad range of environmental aspects when assessing the potential and likely impacts arising from the project • These aspects - as outlined in the preliminary environmental assessment and, later, the EIS - include biodiversity, Aboriginal heritage and hydrology, and consider wetland areas and existing native vegetation • We also look at environmental, social, economic and landholder aspects from public information and feedback received from landholders and local stakeholders • This information helps us refine the route and avoid sensitive areas and ancient trees where possible while considering other environmental constraints and landholder impacts • We look to avoid impacts but where we can't, we aim to minimise or reduce the severity of those impacts through mitigation measures • As part of the EIS, there are a range of management plans containing measures and rules around how construction and operations take place to minimise impacts
<p>How and when were the environmental surveys undertaken?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The environmental surveys are ongoing and have been carried out since late 2020 • We are currently in a critical portion of the year [September 2021] in regards to the seasonal aspects of biodiversity • Aboriginal heritage surveys have been ongoing for several months, notwithstanding the restrictions of COVID-19 • The EnergyConnect team has been working to address concerns of property owners but also registered Aboriginal parties who assist us with these surveys • We anticipate that surveys will continue into 2022 to ensure comprehensive information is made available for both the EIS and the Response to Submissions Report
<p>Can you provide examples of mitigation to damage to wetlands and trees?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transgrid's recently approved EIS for the NSW (Western) section of EnergyConnect contains examples of conditions of approval and mitigation measures applicable to riparian zones (rivers, creeks and similar ephemeral features) • These conditions and mitigation measures require that Transgrid will avoid, minimise and mitigate the impacts of the proposal and in particular erosion and sedimentation, pollution of waters, riparian areas, flooding, acid sulfate soils, salinity and biodiversity, all of which will account for potential and likely impacts on these areas • As examples, these conditions identify that Transgrid must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - prepare a Biodiversity Offset Package in consultation with the Biodiversity, Conservation and Science Directorate of the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment - adhere to strict caps for the amount of defined vegetation or threatened species habitat which can be removed as part of the project

- secure offsets for any removal of defined vegetation or threatened species habitat, or pay an equivalent amount into the Biodiversity Conservation Fund.
- We expect that the conditions of approval for the subsequent NSW EIS (East) will address these matters as required to account for wetlands and biodiversity

References

- Transgrid is targeting an [Infrastructure Sustainability Council of Australia](#) (ISCA) rating of Excellent
- NSW Government [biodiversity requirements](#)
- [EnergyConnect Ecology factsheet](#)

2.10. Community engagement

Question	Answer
<p>Can landholders be heard in the EIS preparation?</p> <p>How will landholders be advised of when the EIS is on exhibition?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We take your feedback seriously at all times. Landholders and the broader community can be heard throughout the planning process, including during the preparation of the EIS • There are several channels for landholders or other members of the community to connect – see Section 3 for details • When the EIS is on exhibition, Transgrid will continue to communicate to those landholders directly impacted by the project, including notifications that public submissions are now being accepted by the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment • In addition, we will advertise the release of the EIS on public exhibition via local media, social media and the EnergyConnect newsletter • You can also register on the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment Major Projects Planning Portal to receive updates
<p>How is EnergyConnect responding to the report prepared by Rod Stowe? In particular, what is the current width of the proposed corridor?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current width of the proposed corridor is 200-500m • The report prepared by Rod Stowe specifically relates to a separate Transgrid project, HumeLink. The report has been shared internally with the wider Transgrid team. We are working through the recommendations and how we will apply them to EnergyConnect • The EnergyConnect team has already implemented many of the report recommendations relating to earlier project phases

References

- NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment [Major Projects Planning Portal](#)
- [Office of the Landowner and Community Advocate](#)

3. EnergyConnect contact details

For any enquiries regarding the EnergyConnect project, please use the following phone number or email address.

- Toll-free phone number: 1800 49 06 66
- Email: pec@transgrid.com.au

You can also access information resources on our [website](#).

Stay up-to-date by [subscribing to the project newsletter](#).

Comment on our [Social Pinpoint map](#) - this is a really helpful community tool and an effective way for us to understand what is important in the project area.