

HumeLink Environmental Impact Statement

Biodiversity 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 to 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 would 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 biodiversity topic covered in this factsheet.

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.



Biodiversity

HumeLink Environmental Impact Statement Specialist Studies



Aboriginal heritage



Electric and magnetic fields



Social



Agricultural land



Greenhouse gas and climate change risk



Soils, geology and contamination



Air quality



Historic heritage



Surface water and groundwater



Aviation safety



Hydrology and flooding



Sustainability



Biodiversity



Landscape character and visual amenity



Traffic and transport



Bushfire risk



Land use and property



Economic



Noise and vibration



Biodiversity impact assessment

As part of the HumeLink EIS, Transgrid has undertaken a biodiversity impact assessment to evaluate the potential impacts to biodiversity from construction and operation of the project.

This assessment was completed in accordance with relevant Commonwealth and NSW regulatory requirements including the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act), the *NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*, the Biodiversity Assessment Method (BAM) 2020 and the Guideline for applying the Biodiversity Assessment Method at severely burnt sites 2020.

Under the BAM, the project must apply the key principle of avoiding or minimising direct, indirect and prescribed impacts on biodiversity values. After implementing the avoid and minimise principle there might still be impacts on biodiversity values, which are classified as residual impacts. Residual impacts on biodiversity values form the basis of the project's biodiversity offset obligation.

Direct impacts

Areas of land that would be temporarily or permanently cleared for construction, operation and maintenance are defined as having a direct impact on biodiversity.

Indirect impacts

Areas impacted by noise, dust, light or the potential transport of weeds are defined as having an indirect impact on biodiversity.

Prescribed impacts

Prescribed impacts are those that have an impact in addition to or instead of direct and indirect impacts and might include things like disruption to habitat connectivity.

Biodiversity Development Assessment Report (BDAR)

Assessment findings have been documented in the HumeLink BDAR. The BDAR identifies biodiversity offset requirements as well as the measures proposed to address the offset obligations.

Biodiversity Offset Scheme (BOS)

The options proposed to address the offset obligations are outlined in the project's Biodiversity Offset Strategy, which has been completed in line with the NSW Biodiversity Offset Scheme (BOS).

What are biodiversity values?

Biodiversity values is defined in the *NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* as the following:

- **vegetation integrity** refers to the degree that vegetation at a particular site has been altered from a near natural state
- **habitat suitability** refers to the degree to which the habitat needs of threatened species are present
- **biodiversity values** and other biodiversity-related values as prescribed by the regulations.

What are biodiversity offsets?

The NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust defines biodiversity offsets as: 'The protection of native biodiversity values within a landscape, whether it be habitat for a particular species, a vegetation type, or similar'. For more information visit the [DPE Biodiversity Offset Scheme](#) page.



Pictured: Migratory species recorded within the study area include the Rufous Fantail.

What does this study tell us?

The study area includes the project footprint plus a 500 metre buffer either side, and a project locality assessment which includes the project footprint with a 10-kilometre buffer. The Biodiversity Impact Assessment also includes a more refined area within the project footprint that was identified as the project's indicative disturbance area. The indicative disturbance area estimates how much vegetation clearing would be required within the project footprint for construction and operation of the project based on an indicative concept design and construction methodology.

HumeLink's biodiversity assessment involved:

- reviewing data and reports relevant to existing vegetation and threatened flora and fauna
- determining threatened flora and fauna species that may be impacted
- applying a spatial mapping process to understand potential areas and habitats for threatened flora and fauna species and to target areas for further investigation

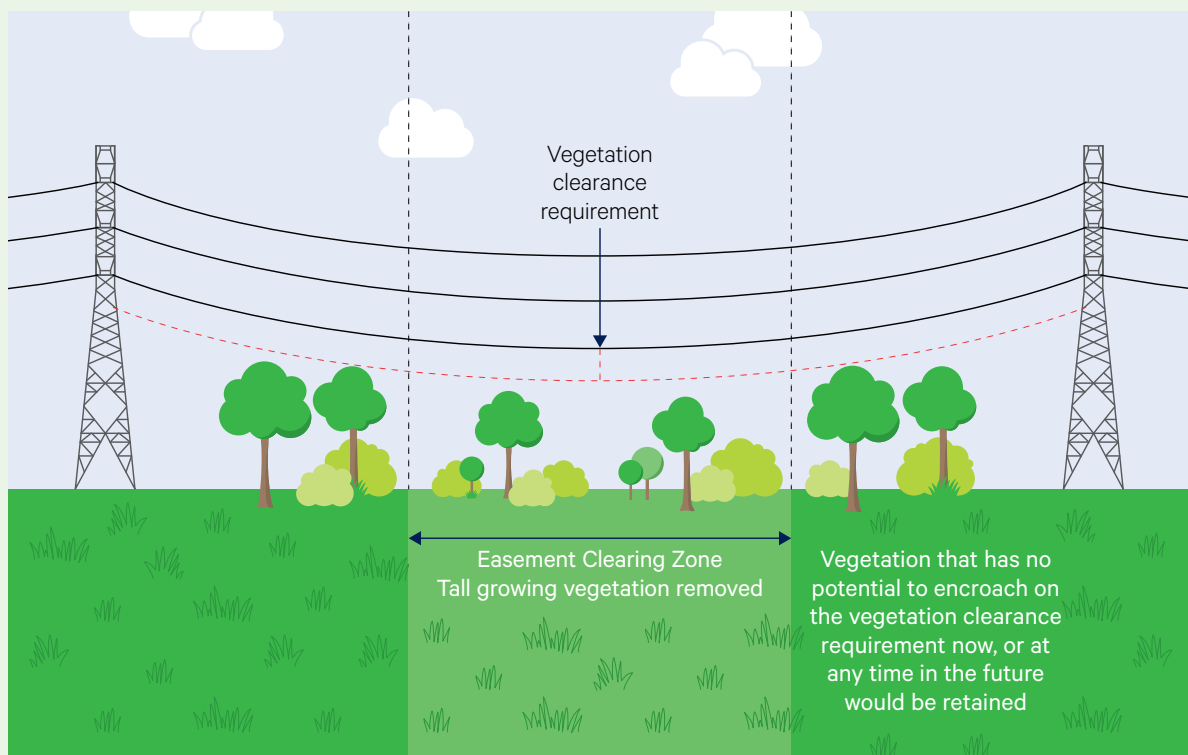
- carrying out field surveys to verify vegetation communities, assess threatened fauna and flora habitats, survey for presence of threatened species, and assess and survey bushfire affected lands

Some areas within the project footprint could not be surveyed due restricted or unsafe access conditions. In these instances the projects assumes the threatened flora and fauna species are present until further investigations can be complete.

- assessing aquatic habitat condition and suitability for threatened aquatic species
- assessing potential direct, indirect, prescribed, and serious and irreversible impacts
- identifying management and mitigation measures to address potential impacts and determining the need for offset requirements to address any residual impacts.

Indicative disturbance area refers to the indicative area of land that would be temporarily or permanently cleared for the project. This includes areas required for construction, operation and maintenance of HumeLink.

The final area of disturbance will be confirmed during the detailed design stage and will consider biodiversity impact avoidance and minimisation where possible.





Potential impacts and management measures

Biodiversity impacts may occur when clearing the area during construction, or during operation of the proposed transmission line, substations and associated temporary or permanent infrastructure.

Transgrid is committed to minimising biodiversity impacts during the development of the project, given the scale of the project, a number of potential biodiversity impacts were identified.

These included impacts that have potential to occur to:

- five threatened ecological communities
- 58 threatened flora species
- 33 threatened fauna species including 12 birds, 11 mammals (including three bats), three reptiles, five amphibian and two insects
- two endangered fauna populations
- loss of vegetation from clearing for temporary and permanent project infrastructure
- fragmentation of habitats as a result of the easement
- disturbance to threatened species from noise, dust or light spill from construction activities
- weeds, pests and pathogens from construction sites spreading to surrounding areas
- loss of breeding habitats such as large old growth trees, hollows, stick nests, drays and fallen timber.



Pictured: Threatened fauna species recorded in the study area include the Gang-gang Cockatoo.

Proposed management measures

During detailed design and construction planning, biodiversity impacts will be avoided where practicable with priority given to avoiding recorded threatened species and their habitat.

A Biodiversity Management Plan (BMP) will be prepared as part of the project's Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). This plan will include processes to implement, evaluate and report on mitigation measures for biodiversity impacts during construction.

During operation, a Connectivity Strategy will also be prepared to identify connectivity corridors required for fauna movement to minimise any potential impacts on fauna habitat.

Residual biodiversity impacts will be offset in accordance with the BAM via the HumeLink Biodiversity Offsets Delivery Strategy. The strategy includes different of offset options, including establishing Biodiversity Stewardship Sites, purchasing biodiversity credits or making a payment into the Biodiversity Conservation Fund. For more information please visit [Transgrid's Biodiversity Offset Opportunities Guide](#).

As the project progresses through the development of the EIS and detailed design, more information about the impacts to biodiversity, as well as the proposed management measures will become available.



Pictured: Arboreal mammals recorded in the study area include the eastern Pygmy Possum.

Connect with us

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



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