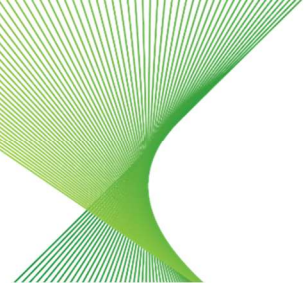


Meeting Minutes

VNI West Regional Reference Group



Meeting Title:	VNI West Regional Reference Group	Date:	19 July 2023
Location:	Deniliquin RSL Club, End St, Deniliquin	Time:	14:00 – 16:00
Chairperson:	Brendan Blakeley		
Attendees:			
VNI West Project Team, Transgrid			
Michael Johnson	Program Director, Stakeholder Relations, Major Projects		
Michael Lloyd	Community and Stakeholder Manager, VNI West		
Nathan Menser	Community and Stakeholder Lead, VNI West		
Reem Nasr	Community and Stakeholder Advisor, VNI West		
Regional Reference Group			
Neil Bull	Policy and Project Manager, Ricegrowers Association of Australia		
Terry Dodds	CEO, Murray River Council		
Sarah Ryan	Director of Community and Economic Development, Murray River Council		
Rod Croft	Director of Infrastructure, Murray River Council		
Mark Cook	Technical Services Officer, Edward River Council		
Garry Stoll	Director, Planning Development and community, Murrumbidgee Council		
Edwina Hayes	CEO, Regional Development Australia, Murray		
Colin Bull	Director, Murray Local Land Services		
Mick Lalor	NSW Parks and Wildlife Services		
Trevor Clarke	Yanco Creek and Tributaries Advisory Council		

Meeting proceedings

Item	Summary Notes
1. Welcome remarks	Brendan Blakeley
2. Draft Corridor Report	<p>Michael Lloyd provided a brief overview of the project background , the submission of the RIT-T and the release of the PACR triggering the route development work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Originally it was proposed that the NSW component of the route would need to link into a point south-east of Kerang.• As noted in the last meeting this has changed to a point somewhere to the north-west of Kerang. This has guided route development away from Moama.• The preferred option that is out for comment is longer but in closer proximity to the REZ to drive greater renewable development.

Item	Summary Notes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Route development starts at a regional level and works down to a 10-15km corridor that works on an avoidance principal. For example, we avoid RAMSAR wetlands and complexity around irrigated agriculture. • We then look at a range of constraints: Technical, environmental, and social and community/social. The assessment provides a rating of high, moderate, or low impact. Then we sought to compare impacts across corridors as a positive, neutral or negative score. • We included all the corridors excluded in the RIT-T to show transparency but have noted some confusion on from the community. • We than re-ran the assessment only on Corridors 1,2 and 3. • Transgrid are seeking feedback on the draft corridor report. Have we got something fundamentally wrong? Have we gone to narrow or broad? Are there gaps in the work, is there data missing? • We are looking to meet with landowners to do detailed mapping across the whole corridor, which is part of our upcoming engagement.
<p>3. Consultation update and engagement program</p>	<p>Transgrid issued a suite of letters to landowners within the preferred corridor to start the conversation, so we can confirm contact details, and to understand specific property impacts and feed into ongoing route development phase.</p> <p>The letters have been followed by drop in events at Moulamein (Approximately 90-100 participants), Deniliquin (Approximately 30 participants) and Jerilderie, and we have started introductory meetings with landowners.</p> <p>There were some strong feelings in the room, but people were overall very constructive with their feedback.</p> <p>Two things we consistently heard were requests for more information as well as, calls for more time to digest the report.</p> <p>We've committed to take that away and provide a response by the end of the week (21 July 2023).</p> <p>Other things we have heard included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern about taxation implications, • aerial operations, • buffers around lines for aircraft and drones • fire risks. <p>In the first week of August we'll be in Moulamein and Deniliquin again so people can drop in and have a one-on-one chat. Transgrid will have fact sheets, holding maps and all the information required so if landowners want to do a mapping session on the spot we can. We have focused on Moulamein as the number of lots there are smaller and there are more landowners.</p> <p>Times for the community information days are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuesday 1 August, 10am - 4pm at Moulamein Bowling Club • Wednesday 2 August, 10am - 4pm at Moulamein Bowling Club

Item	Summary Notes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thursday 3 August, 10am - 4pm at Moulamein Bowling Club Friday 4 August, 10am - 4pm at Deniliquin RSL Club
<p>4. Community Consultation Group formation</p>	<p>The CCG will be a similar group with a similar function. It's key task to get information out and getting the information back to feed into the planning process.</p> <p>We are seeking broad representation from groups with substantial constituencies. Groups such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Farming and agriculture Training and education Tourism and business <p>Expression of interest to participate will be advertised soon. This is just one engagement tool of many.</p>
<p>5. Community investment and benefits</p>	<p>Part of the investment picks up a few common themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training and development Connectivity – Mobile as well as social Smart Agriculture – CSU developing a clean energy centre at Wagga <p>How can we work with telecommunications providers to use our assets to improve connectivity?</p> <p>Using social impact assessments, engagements and landowner to work with community and key stakeholders to identify and grow opportunities</p> <p>Community partnerships program – Grants up to \$5k. Next round of funding opens in September (https://www.transgrid.com.au/community-engagement/community-partnerships-program)</p>
<p>6. Next steps</p>	<p>Community drop-in sessions to be held during first week August (see above)</p> <p>A decision regarding extending consultation period on Corridor Options Report will be made.</p> <p>Transgrid will continue to reach out to landowners.</p> <p>We will soon be advertising EOI for Community Consultative Group.</p> <p>Each landowner will have a dedicated land access officer and a community and place manager.</p> <p>A more defined corridor will start taking shape from Quarter 4 2023.</p>
<p>Questions and comments</p>	<p>Q: <i>The Plains Wanderer is ground dwelling bird, what impact will the line have on it?</i></p> <p>A: Construction for a tower base is about 40m x 40m, and then we have the clearance from the centreline. We develop access tracks tower to tower or there may be existing access, i.e. tower to gate to road. We can take a circuitous route to avoid.</p> <p>Q: <i>Have you engaged a consultant to undertake that work (Plains Wanderer)?</i></p> <p>A: We have WSP for initial work, there will be a full assessment during EIS phase. If you have suggestions for local consultants, or know of people with particular expertise please let us know.</p> <p>Q: <i>Why not show a final route rather than a corridor? Wouldn't that be an easier process, seems the current method is cumbersome?</i></p>

Item	Summary Notes
	<p>A: Experience says by showing a defined line, it assumes a decision has been made. This approach of narrowing progressively works better for information gathering.</p> <p>Q: <i>Can we be briefed regularly on upcoming events?</i></p> <p>A: Yes we have provided dates in the presentation and will include in the minutes and we will email you in the lead up.</p> <p>Q: <i>Suggest you change the Deni session to Conargo and Wangenella?</i></p> <p>A: We are unable to change at this stage due to the events already being advertised. Our first step is to close the loop on the question of extending the consultation period. We hear what you are saying about a presence closer to smaller communities along the corridor is needed.</p> <p>Comment: <i>You will get better engagement in smaller towns</i></p> <p>Comment: <i>Once you got north of Billabong, people are getting confused with the one coming from North (PEC)</i></p> <p>Comment: <i>With the number of projects within the area there is a lot of confusion. It is likely many people think this project is part of PEC and may not involve them. It might be helpful to have some of that information distributed about who is doing what, what TransGrid's role is, what we're responsible for and stages various projects are at.</i></p> <p>Q: <i>You need to give the community more time – 4 August is a bit late if that's the closing date?</i></p> <p>A: We are looking at providing an extension and will be communicating what that looks like at the end of the week (21 July 2023)</p> <p>Q: <i>With the fire risk, you need to consider undergrounding, all our fires come out of the North West, it is pristine agricultural land the lines should be underground.</i></p> <p>A: There has been a lot of discussion about undergrounding at the events and that the line should follow the road network from Dinawan to Victoria. There is a parliamentary inquiry currently looking at this issue.</p> <p>Q: <i>There were massive fires 1987 with 187,000 hectares burned in hours. The fire travels at 60km hour. Is that bushfire prone land mapped?</i></p> <p>A: Yes it is mapped, but if your experience doesn't match the map we need to know and ask that you make a submission.</p> <p>Q: <i>Emergency management, Department of Regions and other state agencies how are they involved in this process?</i></p> <p>A: Many of these agencies are engaged during the EIS process but with regards to the CCG they are often invited as subject matter experts or as observers.</p> <p>Q: <i>From Moulamein to Dinawan we have about 20 landowners Not sure how you would structure that. At Moama, one particular commercial landowner has about 80km of your line.</i></p> <p>A: Transgrid is aware of this, and the corridor is ballooned in this region.</p> <p>Comment: <i>You need to take a strategic approach to community benefits and legacy A combination of small community grants and projects such as sustainability planning for small communities – More strategic investments would have better outcomes for the community as a whole</i></p> <p>Comment: <i>Please don't invest in projects that have ongoing liabilities for councils and do not provide a meaningful community benefit.</i></p> <p>Q: <i>The REZ is oversubscribed by double, if there's so much interest is there any capacity to put additional generation in and plug this into VNI West?</i></p>

Item	Summary Notes
	<p>A: This has been raised in the sessions. VNI West is planned to have 900 MW export capacity from the REZ</p> <p>Q: <i>Investments being made but is the investment being wasted? How many connections can be made in the system? Current competitive system encourages drive to invest, but limited ability to connect.</i></p> <p>A: EnergyCo's Network Infrastructure Strategy addresses this: https://www.energyco.nsw.gov.au/industry/network-infrastructure-strategy-nsw</p> <p>Q: <i>When you talk about mobile connectivity, does that mean a good mobile service for people within the area crossed by the transmission lines?</i></p> <p>A: Yes, that means using our assets to improve network connectivity. We are engaging with service providers and looking at blackspot data. Proof of concept is in progress and alternative solutions are being developed.</p> <p>Q: <i>What about NBN connectivity? For commercial use in businesses?</i></p> <p>A: The earthing cable on our towers is fibre optic so we can find out if it can be used for that.</p> <p>Q: <i>Do the meetings with landowners include ground truthing and farm visits. If this is the case, you should do them before the end of September. After that landowners will restrict activity on their holdings to manage fire risk.</i></p>
Closing comments	

Actions	Person responsible	Date
Issue meeting pack and minutes	Reem Nasr	28/07/2023
Look into additional information sessions at Wangenella and Conargo	Nathan Menser	28/07/2023