

MINUTES

WESTERN RENEWABLES LINK COMMUNITY CONSULTATION GROUP – MEETING #15 – 7 September 2022

Meeting date: 7 September 2022
Meeting time: 6pm – 8.00pm, online
Meeting called by: Catherine Botta

CCG Meeting Purpose: The CCG is a consultative forum and not a decision-making forum.

Attendees

Catherine Botta	Independent Chair
Randall Cape	Community member – Moorabool/CCG East
Darren Edwards	Community member – Energy Grid Alliance Moorabool/CCG East
Vicki Johnson	Community member – Ballarat/CCG Central
Ian Terrill	Ballarat Group of Fire Brigades – Ballarat/CCG Central
Damien Kennedy	Strategic Advisor – Hepburn Shire Council
Jeff Rigby	Executive Project Sponsor – AusNet Services
Justin Justin	Stakeholder Engagement Specialist – AusNet Services
Jamie Ganly	Construction and Commissioning Lead – AusNet Services
Dina Jones	Secretariat – Premier Strategy

Apologies

Allan Harnwell	Community member – Melton/CCG East
Martin Webb	Community member – Moorabool/CCG East

Not attended

Grant Harrison	Community member – Melton/CCG East
Katie Gleisner	Manager Planning & Development – Pyrenees Shire Council
Vanessa Osborn	Coordinator Major Developments – Moorabool Shire Council
Darren Rudd	Manager City Design & Strategy – Melton City Council
David George	Head of Planning & Development – Northern Grampians Shire

Agenda item 1	Minutes, apologies, and actions of previous meeting
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- Independent Chair opened the meeting noting the apologies.
- No comments nor changes to the August meeting minutes had been received, the minutes have therefore been accepted.
- Actions from the previous meeting were discussed and resolved as follows:

Actions	Status
Discussion about redundancy and load capacity within the network to be held offline with technical expert and presented to group at next meeting.	To remain open, as more questions are anticipated.
Questions around underground construction impacts to be sent to secretariat prior to a future session, so presenter can respond accordingly.	No specific questions have been received, however action to remain open, as more questions are anticipated.
Further questions regarding the CSR and/or CBF to be sent to secretariat prior to a future session, so presenter can respond accordingly.	No specific questions have been received, however action to remain open, as more questions are anticipated.
AusNet to confirm whether an options agreement is tied to the landowner or the land.	It was noted that the easement is tied to the land and transferred to new owner. However, it was requested that the entire land access process be discussed in detail, therefore the action item remains open.
AusNet to provide additional information about the Newlyn substation site, especially regarding its size.	This is addressed in the presentation of today's meeting. Closed.

Actions	Who
Provide information about the entire land access and acquisition process in detail.	AS

Agenda item 2	Further questions/comments on construction impacts
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- Refer to attached presentation.
- NB, questions and responses are not verbatim.

Question/comment referring to the presentation	Response
Is the section from Bulgana to Ballarat 500kv or 220kv?	AusNet is planning a 220kv line at this stage.
Would the size of the terminal station need to be increased to accommodate the VNI West?	The current plan allows for WRL related lines in and out. We do not know the technical requirements of the VNI West. The terminal station as it is currently planned does not allow for VNI West and additional infrastructure would need to be installed.
What are the offsets to the transfer station boundary lines?	There is a 15m clearance around the transfer station as a firebreak. Any land beyond that can be used for other approved purposes.

Where will the access to the site be?	This will be determined as part of the detailed design process. Further surveys are required, for instance cultural heritage.
Do the transformers contain oil? What if they explode? The fire hazard needs to be addressed in the EES, as this is a high bushfire risk area and only CFA volunteers as firefighters in the vicinity.	The switch yard is made of crushed rock, to avoid flammable ground surface. There is a 15m firebreak around the station. Each phase (line coming into the station) has its own transformer tank with concrete firewalls between each tank to prevent spread or contain any fire. Monitoring equipment is installed on the transformer that can trip the transformer if issues are found prior which could prevent any serious event. Fire risks will be considered as part of the detailed design and addressed in the EES documentation. It was noted that design elements can limit how the fire spreads and that AusNet is working with the CFA on this issue.
Will visual screening be applied to all four sides or only along the road facing side? Will this be natural screening, ie shrubs and bushes or structural screens?	This will be considered as part of the visual impact assessment and addressed in the EES documentation. The nature of the screening depends on the site and location, ie in urban areas a mural might be installed and rural it could be perimeter screening.
If there is an incident, how long would it take until someone is onsite?	The first responders are local contractors in Ballarat. If specialists are required, they would come from further afield.

- The chair suggested a deep dive into the fire risks can be a topic for the future. Encourages CCG members to send in questions in advance.

Actions	Who
CCG members to send questions around the fire risk to the secretariat to be addressed at a future meeting.	All

Agenda item 3	Highlights/messages from the Renewables Forum
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- No presentation was given, it was an informal discussion about the CCG members' impressions from the Renewables Forum.
- Discussion around the acknowledgement that the RIT-T process is not fit for purpose and that the communities along the WRL route are carrying the burden.
- There was agreement that the benefits of this project are generated elsewhere and the disbenefits are inappropriately allocated.

- Questions around the role and purpose of AEMO, given the inadequacy of the RIT-T process.
- It was noted that the discussion about the fire risks should have been longer and more time allocated for questions.
- Discussion about the status of the review of the RIT-T process, especially around how to improve cost estimates in the RIT process, undertaken by the Australian Energy Market Commission (AEMC). The review encouraged public submissions. (It has since been confirmed that the consultation closed on 1 September 2022). It was agreed that more information on the RIT-T review would be appreciated.
- Mention of VicGrid releasing a Victorian Transmission Investment Framework (VTIF) Preliminary Design Consultation Paper around the RIT-T process and opportunity for the public to contribute to this. Submissions have since closed.
- Discussion about introducing modern transmission technology and adaptability of the project.
- Discussion about the costs for the project and how they can prohibit using more costly technology.
- Discussion about whether the WRL project will receive a National Significance designation and how that would influence the compensation to be received.

Actions	Who
Provide further information on the RIT-T process and AEMC's review.	AS
Monitor and feedback whether the WRL project will be designated as a project of National Significance.	AS

Agenda item 4	Stakeholder Engagement - AusNet
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- The drop-in sessions and dinners attracted some good attendance and useful conversations.
- A webinar planned for Thursday 8 September was highlighted and CCG members encouraged to attend.
- It was requested that any presentations and hand-outs to be shared with the CCG. It was noted that the presentations were localised for each section.
- Feedback received was that the Creswick session was well run and well attended. The atmosphere was good and there was opportunity to ask questions about compensation etc. An info pack was received that contained: a feedback survey; a land access fact sheet; the EES consultation plan; and the route overview.

Actions	Who
AusNet to share with the CCG any presentations and hand-outs from the drop-in sessions and dinners.	AS

Agenda item 5	Community perception/questions/emerging issues
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- The CCG requested that any localised issues that were raised be shared with the CCG so the members are aware of them.
- It was raised that there have been some concerns within the Hepburn communities about the use of drones for the aerial cultural heritage surveys. AS responded that there were aerial flyovers planned to capture topographic features. These would be done by plane and not helicopter and would be at a minimum of 800m height. There is a two-week window where this was planned and the local landowners would be informed.
- Discussion about night time flights and that the exact times should be published, ie no one expects flights at 2am.
- It was raised that some landowners, who are now within or outside of the proposed route, have not been notified. AusNet requested that if such instances are raised, that the CCG members provide the details directly to the AusNet team.
- Question whether a change of state government would impact the project, given the opposition's commitments to change the route. AusNet is not in a position to comment on political matters.
- The Coimadai Primary School's public letter was raised and AusNet are committed to responding.

Actions	Who
AusNet to share localised issues that were raised at the drop-in sessions and dinners.	AS

Agenda item 6	Future of the CCG
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- The chair acknowledged that there is no reference to an end date for the CCG on the Terms of Reference, however there was a natural break once the EES documentation has been submitted at the end of the year. The CCG members were asked to consider ideas for a future CCG or equivalent mechanism that could be considered for the implementation phase of the project to be discussed at the next meeting.

Actions	Who
CCG members to consider the future format of the CCG post EES submission.	All

Agenda item 7	Next meeting date, topic
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- Next meeting: In person in Ballarat, date is yet to be decided by majority preference.
- Next topic: The new executive leadership team consisting of Stephanie McGregor as Executive Project Director (Delivery), Ahmad Attar-Bashi as Executive Project Director (Development) and Jeff Rigby as new Executive Project Sponsor would be available for informal discussion.
- Meeting closed at 8.00pm.

Actions	Who
Provide information about the entire land access and acquisition process in detail.	AS
CCG members to send questions around the fire risk to the secretariat to be addressed at a future meeting.	All
Provide further information on the RIT-T process and review.	AS
Monitor and feedback whether the WRL project will be designated as a project of National Significance.	AS
AusNet to share with the CCG any presentations and hand-outs from the drop-in sessions and dinners.	AS
AusNet to share localised issues that were raised at the drop-in sessions and dinners.	AS
CCG members to consider the future format of the CCG post EES submission.	All