

**MINUTES
WESTERN RENEWABLES LINK COMMUNITY CONSULTATION GROUP –
MEETING #18 – 14 June 2023**

Meeting date: 14 June 2023
Meeting time: 5.30pm – 8.00pm, Oscar’s Hotel
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
Damien Kennedy	Strategic Advisor – Hepburn Shire Council
Vicki Johnson	Community member – Ballarat/CCG Central
Allan Harnwell	Community member – Melton/CCG East
Ian Terrill	Ballarat Group of Fire Brigades – Ballarat/CCG Central
Jeff Rigby	Executive Project Sponsor – AusNet Services
Justin Justin	Stakeholder Engagement Specialist – AusNet Services
Dina Jones	Secretariat – Premier Strategy

Apologies

Randall Cape	Community member – Moorabool/CCG East
Martin Webb	Community member – Moorabool/CCG East

Not attended

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

Actions	Status
Provide information about the entire land access and acquisition process in detail.	AS - It was highlighted that the information provided was not sufficient and a clear and simple factsheet outlining the process and landowner rights is still being requested, to remain open . There was a broader discussion about the heightened stress and concern within the community about this and the unclear messages on compulsory acquisition being

	<p>provided by Land Engagement Officers. It was also requested that a fact sheet be provided in other formats as well, just not as a document.</p> <p>Individual CCG members will discuss their concerns with AS outside of the CCG.</p> <p>Update 14 June: Closed, see presentation on the compensation/agreement options</p>
CCG members to send questions around the fire risk to the secretariat to be addressed at a future meeting.	All – No further questions have been received. Closed .
Provide further information on the RIT-T process and review.	AS – AS provided papers on this topic prior to the meeting. Closed , subject to the referenced presentations to be sent separately.
Monitor and feedback whether the WRL project will be designated as a National Significant project.	AS - AS provided papers on this topic prior to the meeting. Closed .
AusNet to share with the CCG any presentations and hand-outs from the drop-in sessions and dinners.	AS – this presentation was shared prior to the meeting. Closed .
AusNet to share localised issues that were raised at the drop-in sessions and dinners.	AS – this will be provided to the group on 3 Nov 2022. Closed .
CCG members to consider the future format of the CCG post EES submission.	All – discussed at this meeting, see agenda item 5. Closed .
Previous action items:	
Discussion about redundancy and load capacity within the network to be held offline with technical expert and presented to group at next meeting	<p>To remain open, as more questions regarding capacity and backup are anticipated.</p> <p>Meeting to discuss questions held on 3 Nov 2022 at 10am did not resolve all issues.</p> <p>Update 14 June: Closed, Allan to forward further questions re system redundancy to Justin.</p>
Questions around underground construction impacts to be sent to secretariat prior to a future session, so presenter can respond accordingly.	To remain open , an opportunity to discuss final questions will be provided once the EES is exhibited.
Further questions regarding the CSR and/or CBF to be sent to secretariat prior to a future session, so presenter can respond accordingly.	To remain open , an opportunity to discuss final questions will be provided once the EES is exhibited.
AusNet to confirm whether an options agreement is tied to the landowner or the land.	To remain open , it was noted that the easement is tied to the land and transferred to new owner. However, it

	<p>was requested that the entire land access process be discussed in detail.</p> <p>Update 14 June: Closed, see presentation on the compensation/agreement options</p>
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Agenda item 2	Advisory group update
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- Michael Willis, Strategic Engagement Manager joined the meeting online via Teams.
- Michael outlined his role in engaging with strategic stakeholders such as regulators, AEMO, VicGrid, Central Services Commission etc
- AusNet is considering setting up a community advisory group consisting of impacted landholders and representatives of the Moorabool Central Highlands Power Alliance (MCHPA) and it may also involve VicGrid and AEMO.
- It is anticipated to be a small forum, which meets regularly to share information on high-level processes such as the grid selection process, how projects may interact etc, however the details and Terms of Reference are yet to be decided in consultation with MCHPA.
- There was discussion about the MCHPA steering committee members and who has been involved to date in these discussions.
- There was a brief discussion about conflict of interests, if the MCHPA is involved in legal action against AEMO/AusNet and yet a member can still attend consultation group meetings. However, this was considered appropriate as the potential legal action is against AEMO and does not involve AusNet, and the CCG meeting minutes are in the public domain as well.
- It was agreed that AusNet needs to be clear about the purpose of the new group and manage expectations accordingly.
- Inviting an AEMO representative to the CCG (as per action from last meeting) was discussed. An invitation was sent, however there has been a restructure and the relevant stakeholder manager just recently commenced in the role. He will be invited to the next meeting

Actions	Who
Vicki to raise status of Terms of Reference discussion with the MCHPA steering group	Vicki
Invite Mitch Hume, AEMO, to the next CCG	Justin/Secretariat

Agenda item 3	WRL/EES update
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- Consultation on the VNI-West Consultation Report – Options Assessment has concluded and a VNI-West Project Assessment Conclusion Report (PACR) was released outlining the preferred option.
- A second National Electricity (Victoria) Act 2005 (NEVA Order) was also issued, which complements the VNI-West PACR and it also revokes certain parts of the first NEVA Order. It confirms the functions AEMO can undertake under the NEVA Order for early works.
- AEMO has founded the Transmission Company Victoria to procure early works on its behalf.
- The Second NEVA Order prescribes WRL to be uprated to a 500kV along the entire route with a new terminal station near Bulgana, and the terminal station at Mount Prospect is now not required.
- AusNet is cooperating with AEMO in determining what effect the second Order has on the WRL project regarding the timeframes and process implications etc. The EES scoping requirements relate to the initial WRL project nominated in the 2019 PACR, and both AEMO and AusNet will engage with the Department of Transport and Planning's (DTP) Impact Assessment Unit.
- Given the uprate to 500kV west of Ballarat, a route deviation of approximately 11km is needed as part of the current proposed corridor is too constrained for the upgraded transmission line. Potentially affected landholders have been informed.
- The project team continues with work to establish and confirm a single proposed route for the Hepburn Lagoon area.
- It was requested that AusNet provides an update on the EES and potential scope alterations to the community as soon as possible, as there is a lot of interest for this.
- AusNet will work closely with DTP's Impact Assessment Unit and AEMO on the EES process and what the Victorian Government might now need to consider.
- The Technical Reference Group will be informed on these discussions through the Impact Assessment Unit.
- Hepburn Shire Council will request from AusNet to re-route the transmission line to avoid going through the municipality altogether.

Agenda item 4	Presentation on the compensation/agreement options
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- See presentation for further details.
- The landholder guide is now available on the AusNet webpage.
- The Compensation Framework is informed by the statutory requirements under the Land Acquisition Compensation Act (LACA) (1986).
- Under the Framework, landholders will be reimbursed for legal advice and other costs, associated with the Option Agreement offer.
- The signing of an Option Agreement does not preclude any landholder from participating in the EES process or expressing opposition to the project.

- AusNet prefers to negotiate a voluntary agreement rather than compulsorily acquire an easement and encourages landholders to engage with the project.
- AusNet believes the Framework in the guide provides more flexibility than the LACA process and includes compensation for disturbance/occupation during works construction and rehabilitation post-construction for landholders hosting infrastructure.
- There is also a provision to re-negotiate particular terms within the Agreement as the final design plans and impacts become clearer. AusNet will also be required to reinstate land after construction ('make good').
- The tax implications were discussed, but each landholder will need to obtain their own independent financial advice.
- The Option Fee will be retained by the landholder, even if no option is taken up or the project does not proceed.
- In the case of land sale, the transfer of land will require AusNet's consent and the Option Agreement is transferable to the new owner.
- There is no cooling-off period as such, but the landholder can cease the negotiation process at any time where they have not signed on.
- A dispute resolution process applies under the agreement if a landholder considers AusNet has breached the agreement, which will trigger a mediation process with an independent mediator to resolve the dispute. Alternatively, the landholder can commence legal proceedings as a last resort.
- Stakeholders such as banks, councillors, DTP, DEECA, WWF etc. were invited to an Industry briefing on this Framework, and around 10 people were in attendance.

Agenda item 5	Stakeholder engagement update
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- The pop-up stalls were well visited with approx. 60-80 people per day, incl some landholders who previously declined to engage.
- The CFA and Energy Safe Victoria (ESV) met with representatives of MCHPA to discuss firefighting concerns. A follow-up letter was sent to MCHPA outlining the discussions held. AusNet to ask ESV for an anonymised copy of the letter.
- The CFA also met with landholders in the western section.

Agenda item 6	Community perception/questions/emerging issues
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- Information on the timing and scope of the EES is critical.
- There were complaints about negative landholder engagement, such as the cutting of a chain and providing short notices for visits.

- Access for the landholders to the data and information gathered on their land as part of the EES process was discussed. AusNet to clarify the process for access to the Cultural Heritage Assessments. All reports will be available as part of the public exhibition of the EES documents.
- Regarding the Visual Impact Assessment, AusNet will provide a sample template to the CCG and landholders who participated can request a report.
- Discussion about works notifications, many are advised on AusNet's webpage, request to send notifications as e-updates.
- Hepburn Shire council requests AusNet to provide information on upcoming survey works requiring traffic management. Risk management and OH&S was discussed, especially as many contractors unrelated to the WRL project are being harassed.

Agenda item 7	Next meeting date, topic
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- Next meeting will be in August 2023, it was requested to have it in the first half of the month.
- Meeting closed at 8.00pm.

Actions	Who
Vicki to raise the status of discussions with AusNet on the Advisory Group with the MCHPA steering group.	Vicki
Invite Mitch Hume, Stakeholder Manager AEMO, to the next CCG.	Justin/Secretariat
AusNet to ask ESV for an anonymised copy of the letter sent to MCHPA regarding firefighting impacts.	Justin
AusNet to clarify the process to provide the Cultural Heritage Assessments reports to individual landholders.	Justin
AusNet will provide a sample template of a Visual Impact Assessment report to the CCG.	Justin
AusNet to inform Hepburn Shire Council of upcoming activity requiring traffic management plans.	AusNet