

**MINUTES
WESTERN RENEWABLES LINK COMMUNITY CONSULTATION GROUP –
MEETING #20 – 31 January 2024**

Meeting date: 31 January 2024
Meeting time: 5.30pm – 7.30pm, 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
Vicki Johnson	Community member – Ballarat/CCG Central
Peter Dreimanis	Strategic Planning – City of Ballarat
Allan Harnwell	Community member – Melton/CCG East
Randall Cape	Community member – Moorabool/CCG East
Bronwyn Southee	Strategic Advisor – Hepburn Shire Council
Malcolm Tinkler	General Manager – AusNet Services
Carolyn Balint	Approvals Manager – AusNet Services
Carlee Grant	Stakeholder Engagement Manager – AusNet Services
Dina Jones	Secretariat – Premier Strategy

Apologies

Martin Webb	Community member – Moorabool/CCG East
Ian Terrill	Ballarat Group of Fire Brigades – Ballarat/CCG Central
Natalie Robertson	City of Ballarat

Not attended

Henry Bezuidenhout	Moorabool Shire Council
Catherine McLay	Melton City Council
Jennifer Thomas	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 August meeting minutes had been received, the minutes have been accepted.
- Malcolm introduced himself and provided some personal background.
- Actions from the previous meeting were discussed and resolved as follows:

Actions	Status
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 send VIA photos of the Darley golf course to Randall.	Closed. AusNet to send the VIA photos plus clarifications.
AusNet to source a VIA report from another relevant project.	Closed. AusNet have sourced some reports from other similar projects and will distribute them ASAP.
Ausnet to organise a VIA on Martin's property.	Closed. Martin Webb has had a visit from Hayden Burge for a residential visual impact assessment. This was done in 2023. The results have not been discussed with him as yet as the residential visual impact assessments are being finalised.

Agenda item 2	WRL update
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- Since the last CCG meeting, the EES has been re-referred to the Minister for Planning due to the change of scope of the project.
- The upgrade to 500kv in the western section has required an alignment change.
- AusNet aims to submit the EES by the end of 2024 for adequacy review by the Department.
- Discussion about the learnings from past landholder interactions.
- Between 82% - 85% of landholders now interact with the project.
- Discussion around the tax and insurance implications for some of the landholders was not clear, the CCG members request AusNet Landholder Engagement Officers to be clearer on such implications.
- AusNet is working with an independent tax organisation to provide information, but stresses that landholders need to seek their own individual advice.
- Discussion about the state government announced payments to landholders who host infrastructure, given these payments have not been legislated. Concerns were raised around the implications of these payments.
- Discussion around the lack of compensation for loss of amenity/visual impact, given there is no legislated compensation requirement.
- AusNet will offer augmented and virtual reality tools, around EES exhibition, so communities can see what the project could look like. This will be available once the proposed route has been determined.
- Questions whether alternative routes, ie across the Merrimu Reservoir, will be considered?

- Discussion around the Community Benefit Fund (CBF) and the issue of defining a community for a linear project. AusNet is developing a CBF and will present to the CCG.

Agenda item 3	EES update
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- The Sydenham Terminal Station rebuild has been brought forward as a separate project to be managed through a Planning Scheme Amendment process with the City of Melton.
- It was questioned whether another transmission line will be required at Sydenham to deal with the expected amount of energy. The state-wide network planning is AEMO's responsibility and AusNet can't comment.
- The Technical Reference Group (TRG) has re-commenced with site visits and the Historical and Aboriginal Heritage reports and Stakeholder Engagement Plan will be discussed at the next TRG.
- AusNet has compiled all of TRG's feedback, further feedback on the impact assessment reports from community groups, landholders, councils and regulatory agencies is now being compiled.
- Less than 10% of landholders refuse access to their land. In this case AusNet has to make assumptions about condition of the land and impacts. Discussion about how this will impact the EES.
- It was questioned what the feedback has been from landholders in the western section, which has now been upgraded to 500kv. The feedback has been minimal, as the geography and land use is different to the eastern section, with more broad-acre cropping and bigger plot sizes.
- The EES reports will be submitted to the Department in batches from mid-2024, with the last batch anticipated to be delivered in the fourth quarter of 2024. The Department then reviews the reports for adequacy, meaning whether they address the scoping requirements of the EES.

Agenda item 4	Community Engagement
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- AusNet proposes a five staged approach to community engagement over the course of the EES process, as follows:
 - Stage 1: Building awareness of around the EES, including releasing the preliminary findings;
 - Stage 2: Pre-EES exhibition, what to expect, how people can navigate the process;
 - Stage 3: Lodgement of the EES;
 - Stage 4: Exhibition period of the EES;
 - Stage 5: Ministerial findings.
- AusNet plans a range of communication tools and activities from factsheets, monthly newsletters, regular updates to key stakeholders, including surrounding landholders and the CCG, webinars, info sessions, ads, videos and virtual reality. Also considering preparing booklets for each section.

- AusNet will provide a one/two-page overview (factsheet) on each technical report. The CCG is keen to review the factsheets before they get published.
- Discussion about the definition of a surrounding landholder. AusNet considers landholders within 2km from the alignment as surrounding landholder. Discussed previous efforts to inform this group and future plans. The CCG members stress AusNet needs to make sure the letterbox drops are done properly, or for AusNet to do it themselves.
- The issue of landholders who are outside this area, but will still be affected visually, was raised.
- One suggestion was to cooperate with Powercor to create a link from the Powercor website to the WRL webpage.
- CCG members are keen for AusNet to find venues as close to the project as possible for info sessions, and are willing to provide advice on this in detail.
- Discussion around how AusNet deals with protests and the safety of its staff. It was suggested to upskill TRG members to interact with community members.
- AusNet is keen to give CCG members access to the specialists over the course of this year. CCG members to nominate their top 5 topics to narrow down the list.
- Discussion about how to recruit new CCG members, AusNet suggested the Regional Development Victoria representatives and local councils could suggest key community members.
- CCG members to consider whether they can nominate new members from their networks.

Agenda item 5	Community perceptions
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- The CCG members will submit a list of concerns in writing.

Agenda item 5	Next meeting date, topic
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- Next meeting will be called, once AusNet receives the top 5 list of topics from the CCG.
- It was discussed and agreed that face to face meetings were preferred over online meetings.
- Meeting closed at 7.40pm.

Actions	Who
AusNet to present on CBF at future CCG.	AusNet
CCG members to inform Dina of their top 5 specialists they want to hear from.	CCG community members
Consider new CCG members from within network.	CCG community members
Submit list of community concerns to AusNet.	CCG community members