

# MINUTES

## WVTN COMMUNITY CONSULTATION GROUP – MEETING #9 – 1 DECEMBER 2021

**Meeting date:** 1 December 2021  
**Meeting time:** 6pm – 8.00pm, in person and online (hybrid)  
**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
Allan Harnwell	Community member - Melton/CCG East
Randall Cape	Community member - Moorabool/CCG East
Darren Edwards	Community member, Energy Grid Alliance - Moorabool/CCG East
Ian Terrill	Ballarat Group of Fire Brigades – Ballarat/CCG Central
Fiona Gray	Executive Manager Catalyst Projects - City of Ballarat
Paul Ower	Land and Easement Manager – AusNet Services
Alan Hives	Practising Valuer – Preston Rowe Patterson (Ballarat)
Craig Clifton	Bushfire Technical Lead - Jacobs
Lou Ellis	Stakeholder Manager - AusNet Services
John Kingsley-Jones	Project Communications Manager – AusNet Services
Justin Justin	Stakeholder Engagement Specialist - AusNet Services
Dina Jones	Secretariat - AusNet Services

### Apologies

Katie Gleisner	Manager Planning and Development - Pyrenees Shire Council
Vanessa Osborn	Coordinator Major Developments - Moorabool Shire Council
Darren Rudd	Manager City Design & Strategy - Melton City Council
Martin Webb	Community member - Moorabool/CCG East
Grant Harrison	Community member - Melton/CCG East
Bronwyn Southee	Manager Development and Community Safety - Hepburn Shire Council

### Not attended

Rebecca St Ledger	Community member - Ballarat/CCG Central
David George	Head of Planning and 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.
- Minutes of previous meeting were accepted without amendments.
- Action list read out.



Agenda item 2	Presentation – Landowner compensation
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- Introduction of the Landowner guide document.
- Evaluation of easement compensation is based on Valuation of Land Act 1960 and Land Acquisition and Compensation Act 1986.
- The evaluation process covers two evaluations, one before the project commences to assess current market value and sets a base line, the second determines the difference in market value after the establishment of the easement.
- Regarding the easement, the market value considers the available use of the land, the rate of compensation varies depending on the existing land use.
- Regarding the towers, the evaluation considers the footprint of the towers.
- Regarding the easement, compensation assessments consider the impact to the whole property, including aesthetic considerations.
- The valuer looks at balance of land impacted by the easement and/or towers.
- Special value comes into play if property has a special set up, ie a house is set up for a person with disabilities, the same applies to farmland as the land use is considered.
- Disturbance to farming is also considered, ie extra costs to manage around easement/towers, disturbance of crops during construction, remediation following construction to mitigate compaction, which leads to loss of productivity.
- Dust during construction is also considered a disturbance.
- Landowner can have an assessment undertaken by a qualified valuer, and claim their valuer's reasonable costs.
- At this stage it is too early to determine the value or compensation, as the tower locations are not yet determined.
- Landowners are encouraged to liaise with the Liaison Officers to determine individual use of the properties and to highlight issues, which could influence the evaluation.
- Land value assessment begins after the EEs is completed.
- Below are questions relating to the presentations.
- NB questions and answers aren't verbatim.

Question/comment referring to the presentations	Answer
<p>Neighbours can be materially impacted by the development, construction and operation phases of the project. In the renewable generator space, developers have designed neighbour agreement payments based on a formula of distance from a residence to the turbine(s) and the number of turbines located within that distance.</p> <p>While neighbour agreements are not legislated, do AusNet understand the importance of negotiating compensation based on distance from the infrastructure?</p> <p>In the interest of best practice planning and social license, I suggest this is critical.</p>	<p>The presentation was about valuation and compensation process for the easement acquisition. The Community Benefit Fund (CBF) considers other types of compensation.</p> <p>Wind farm neighbour compensation are undertaken as commercial considerations which is separate from assessments for easement acquisition.</p>



The Community Benefit Fund should not be confused with compensation, visual impacts are not covered by the CBF and it is not fair that community receives a benefit but individuals carry the impact.	The broader compensation issue is not covered by this easement discussion.
The Land Acquisition and Compensation Act does not apply to neighbours of easements and does not allow for compensation.	Correct.
There are rumours that some landowners have received compensation for granting access to their land.	Access to land is different than the easement acquisition. If there has been a monetary impact due to land access, this would have been covered by AusNet under individual arrangements.
There is confusion around compensation, ie \$200,000 per tower etc. The issue is very complex and needs individual assessment, it is important that AusNet makes it clear how compensation is calculated, ie design a flow chart.	Good feedback, AusNet will look into anything that makes it clearer. There is a webinar recording online regarding compensation.  Each property is different, ie lifestyle property vs farmland and it is important to consider all the variables. It is hard to generalise and AusNet is keen to discuss land use and impact with each landowner.

Agenda item 3	Presentation – Bushfire risk
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- See attached presentation for details.
- Brief was to provide a bushfire impact assessment for the project.

Question/comment	Answer
Who is responsible to maintain the easement in regard to bushfire risk?	It is AusNet's responsibility to maintain the area during construction based on its Fuel Management Program.  It will be the responsibility of the landowners to maintain the easement post-construction.
It is CFA policy to maintain a 20m no-go zone around transmission lines, crews need to find a safe way around the lines when fighting fires.	Clearances are specified in the Safe Operating Procedures, it is 8m near power lines, it is important to be aware if the issues
Further questions and comments will be provided in writing.	Noted.
Having limits or exclusions when firefighting under power lines could make fires worse or get out of control.	Effect of the impact to fire fighting will depend on the fire, the wind etc. The CFA has not raised this as a serious issue, it can complicate the



	firefighting efforts, but these are not insurmountable.
Further concerns raised about fire risk and firefighting impacts/disruptions.	AusNet to address this with relevant stakeholders again.
Would fire impacts be mitigated if the lines were underground?	Brief has not included to investigate underground lines, it is noted that many distribution lines are underground.  Focus of the brief was to determine if the project adds to the fire risk given it is in a fire prone area.
Avoidance is better than mitigation, irrespective of bushland or open grass fire.	AusNet will organise special meeting with the CFA.

Agenda item 4	Discussion/feedback – upcoming community engagement
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- Community Engagement session are coming up, bookings for individual one on one meetings with experts are available online.
- Sessions will be held in Waubra, Miners Rest, Darley, Melton and Ballarat.
- A few bookings have already come in.

Agenda item 5	Community perception/questions/emerging issues
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- Why is the final route so similar to the old route while the EES is still ongoing? Investigations are still ongoing. The final route will be determined as part of the EES.
- One community member submitted a letter to the Project Director outlining alternative options, the response will be shared with the group.

Agenda item 6	Next meeting date, topic
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- Next meeting: 9 February 2022 online.
- Meeting frequency: suggestion to meet every 4 - 6 weeks, to allow time to prepare responses and address actions.
- Future meetings to be held online, with occasional meeting in person.
- Next topics: Update on the EES process.
- Meeting closed at 8.00pm.

Actions	Who
AusNet will organise special meeting with the CFA to discuss fire risks.	AS

Membership of the Community Consultation Group does not equate to support for AusNet Services nor endorsement of the project. The CCG is not a decision-making body. Please refer to the Terms of Reference.



Share AusNet's response to letter with the group.
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Secretariat
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## WVTNP - CCG meetings - Action list

Meeting date	Action	Who	When	Completed
1 December 2021	AusNet will organise special meeting with the CFA to discuss fire risks	AS		
1 December 2021	Share AusNet's response to letter with the group	Secretariat		
10 November 2021	Secretariat to share letter to the Project Director with the group	Secretariat	12 November 2021	11 November 2021
13 October 2021	Secretariat to follow up with members to sign or acknowledge Code of Conduct.	Secretariat	Next meeting	13 October 2021
13 October 2021	Group members to let the secretariat know if they want to share their contact details.	All.	Next meeting	13 October 2021
15 September 2021	Group members to provide feedback on the six CBF pillars.	All	Next meeting	13 October 2021
15 September 2021	Group members to let the secretariat know if they want to share their contact details.	All	Next meeting	Closed
25 August 2021	Incorporate suggested changes to the Terms of Reference and re-send to group.	Secretariat		25 October 2021
13 July 2021	Chairperson to follow up with resigned CCG members to gain a better understanding of the reasons for the resignations.	Chair	31 July 2021	23 July 2021
13 July 2021	AS to contact community members on the waitlist.	AS	31 July 2021	30 July 2021
13 July 2021	Forward questions received to Barton Napier/AS and collate responses.	Secretariat	25 August 2021	Closed

13 July 2021	Change minutes format to include Q&A and action list section.	Secretariat	25 August 2021	10 August 2021
8 June 2021	AS to follow up with community member with concerns about lack of answers, information on the webpage including the pins provided via the interactive map.	AS	30 June 2021	
8 June 2021	Minutes to be amended as per discussion and agenda item "Community questions/sentiment" be added to the agenda.	Secretariat	18 June 2021	15 June 2021
8 June 2021	Include the overview of the 19 studies in minutes.	Secretariat	6 July 2021	24 June 2021
8 June 2021	Include a list of the TRG member organisations to the minutes.	Secretariat	6 July 2021	24 June 2021 (sent with May meeting minutes)
8 June 2021	Follow up with community member regarding Moorabool News article	AS	30 June 2021	Completed
18 May 2021	AS to provide feedback to Benestar regarding the steps to access the services	AS	8 June 2021	Completed
18 May 2021	AS to explore additional mental health support services offers	AS	8 June 2021	Completed
18 May 2021	AS to take CCG feedback provided and share with the project engagement and communications teams, as well as technical teams as needed.	AS	8 June 2021	Completed
18 May 2021	Secretariat to share group member's email details.	Secretariat	18 May 2021	Completed 21 May 2021
18 May 2021	AS to set up Teams page as a trial and share access details.	AS	12 June 2021	In progress
28 April 2021	Discuss future dates beyond July	Secretariat	8 June 2021	Completed 18 May 2021
28 April 2021	Publish minutes of the meetings on the project's webpage	AS	Ongoing (Within one week of minutes being ratified by the group)	Completed
28 April 2021	Chair and secretariat to forward plan and allocate topics and dates to meetings	Chair/Secretariat	18 May 2021	11 May 2021

28 April 2021	AS to provide link to map of initial project from AEMO's webpage and to provide additional information about AEMO and its underlying legislation.	AS	18 May 2021	11 May 2021
28 April 2021	AS to provide link to the Victorian Government's Directions Paper.	AS	18 May 2021	11 May 2021
28 April 2021	AS to share AEMO video from briefing of Moorabool Council	AS	18 May 2021	11 May 2021
28 April 2021	Outline how AS uses the information received	AS	18 May 2021	Completed 18 May 2021
7 April 2021	Update on FAQ document status	AS	18 May 2021	Completed
7 April 2021	Distribute minutes to TRG and further within AusNet Services	AS	Ongoing	Ongoing
7 April 2021	Provide history and details about the project's scope and key milestones at next meeting	AS	28 April 2021	28 April 2021
7 April 2021	Provide updated FAQ document to the group	AS	As updated	In progress
7 April 2021	Set up a review of CCG in mid-2022	Secretariat	mid 2022	<b>TBD</b>
7 April 2021	Attendees to review ToR and CoC and provide feedback and comments to secretariat.	All attendees	28 April 2021	28 April 2021
#7 April 2021	Set next meeting for last week of April	Secretariat	17 April 2021	20 April 2021
7 April 2021	Forward plan of next meeting dates and locations to be discussed at next meeting	Secretariat	28 April 2021	28 April 2021

## WVTNP - CCG meetings – Q&A

Meeting date	Question	Response
1 December 2021		



<b>10 November 2021</b>	<b>Questions/comments referring to the presentation – Electrical transmission 101: technology and differences regarding overhead/underground and AC and DC</b>	<b>Response</b>
<b>10 November 2021</b>	What is the difference in loss of transmission between AC and DC?	DC has lower transmission losses over AC due to the skin effect (the tendency of AC to crowd toward the surface of a conducting material). This phenomenon restricts the current to a small part of the total cross-sectional area and so has the effect of increasing the resistance of the conductor (from: Britannica.com).  With DC currents, because there is no change in polarity there is no skin effect, and therefore there are lower losses compared to AC.
<b>10 November 2021</b>	What is the optimum distance for AC or DC transmission?	The optimal distance depends on the costs associated with the construction of the transmission infrastructure (either overhead or underground). For DC the costs are driven by the converting equipment required and the amount of power being converted (converting from AC to DC and vice versa), which are offset by lower line/cable construction costs, etc. Generally, construction costs are lower for DC transmission over very long distances (250km+).
<b>10 November 2021</b>	In the presentation it was mentioned that solar produces DC and wind can produce both DC and AC, what do the wind and solar farms in western Victoria produce?	Wind farms produce a mixture of AC and DC. Modern wind farms do create DC.

		AS addition: Modern wind farms generate AC, then convert this to DC and then convert back to AC again. This AC-DC-AC conversion takes place to control the output of the turbine in all wind conditions. The conversion occurs at low voltages, within the turbine itself and the output from the turbine is AC. It is not economical to step up DC voltages to the high voltages required for transmission networks.
10 November 2021	Has AS undertaken a long-term cost analysis of HVAC vs HVDC, considering construction costs of overhead/underground and ongoing maintenance costs etc	This is being undertaken as part of the final route investigations.
10 November 2021	Why convert to AC, if DC is the output of the wind farms?	The WVTNP is not only for energy transmission to Melbourne but it also will connect into the local distribution network and as such needs to operate at AC to economically connect to the end-users.
10 November 2021	What is the transport limit on cable drums?	Generally, they remain within the road limits. They are 2.4m wide, 4.1m high and up to 27.5 tonnes.
10 November 2021	Is there capacity to carry larger loads?	Yes, but once you transport over dimensional loads you have to deal with other issues such as access restrictions, bridges etc.
10 November 2021	Currently there are still many variables being discussed, how far away is AS from finalising these issues, design etc?	Once the preferred final route is announced, further information will be provided in greater detail surrounding a number of topics, undergrounding will be one topic along with route selection.
	<b>Question/comment regarding the landowner guide</b>	
10 November 2021	Why was this not released at the beginning of the project? This could have alleviated some concerns	It has taken this time to assemble all the information. The new guide also consolidates information from previous fact sheets and information brochures.
10 November 2021	Reference to a Star Weekly article (see attachment) relating to the issuing of Section 93 letters to landowners. The project needs to be aware of the negative sentiment in the community about this	Noted
	<b>Question/comment regarding the approach to upcoming route announcement</b>	

<b>10 November 2021</b>	When will the announcement be made?	As per timeline before the end of the year, probably late November or early December 2021
<b>10 November 2021</b>	How concrete will the announced route be?	The announcement will outline the preferred single route, however this route is still open to feedback as part of the EES process.
<b>10 November 2021</b>	Is the route open to change?	As part of the EES process AS will consider submissions and feedback on this route.
<b>10 November 2021</b>	Last time issues arose due to the media embargo and the release of the information as soon as the embargo lifted, AS needs to find a way to advise both the media and landowners at the same time	Noted, AS preference would be to notify the landowners before the media this time, but not clear on what that timeframe is yet.
<b>10 November 2021</b>	Will the route be announced before the undergrounding report is released?	The outcomes of the undergrounding report will influence the route selection. The report will be available to TRG and information regarding undergrounding will be released more widely.
<b>10 November 2021</b>	AS to be mindful that any information released to the community will be distributed through Social Media.	Noted, this is to be expected
<b>Follow up question after 13 October 2021</b>	Who is responsible for enforcing a non-compliance of any of the Environmental Management Conditions under a Ministerial approval?	<p>The Environmental Management Framework (EMF) for the EES is presently being drafted and has not been socialised with the Technical Reference Group or other stakeholders at this time. It is within the EMF that the responsibilities and processes for monitoring compliance will be established. In general, compliance measures will take a number of different forms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relevant regulatory authorities will review and approve environmental management plans including construction environmental management plans where required.</li> <li>• Regulatory authorities will be responsible for administering and enforcing statutory approvals, or where not complied with undertaking necessary measures to reach compliance.</li> <li>• The Proponent and their contractors will be responsible for maintaining compliance and this will involve regular monitoring and auditing of compliance, against all requirements of the EMF, including Environmental Performance Requirements.</li> </ul>

		Some Projects that have undergone an EES process have had an Independent Environmental Auditor appointed to audit compliance with Environmental Performance Requirements. It is uncertain if this will be the case for WVTNP.
	<b>Question/comment referring to the EMF</b>	<b>Answer</b>
<b>13 October 2021</b>	Is the proposed Planning Scheme Amendment (PSA) based on the exact route alignment or the wider corridor?	It is based on the route alignment, as the PSA documentation will only be submitted once the final route is known and the EES is completed.
<b>13 October 2021</b>	What is a road zone 1?	This refers to an arterial road, if the proposal seeks to alter the access a separate planning approval is required.
<b>13 October 2021</b>	Is the PSA documentation prepared?	No, at this stage only the framework for the PSA is complete.
<b>13 October 2021</b>	Are buffers considered around sensitive use zones?	There is no formal requirement for buffers in planning schemes, generally only around defined noxious uses, i.e., mining activities.
<b>13 October 2021</b>	Is consideration given to planning policy conflicts?	Yes, all relevant stakeholders are engaged with as part of the TRG.
<b>13 October 2021</b>	Does the VC157 Amendment apply?	This amendment only applies to energy generation projects, not transition projects.
<b>13 October 2021</b>	Is Council agreement to the PSA required?	The planning minister will sign off on the PSA, however councils are engaged throughout the process through the TRG. Councils can also submit a submission as part of the EES process, they do not have a veto right.
	<b>Question/comment referring to the EPR</b>	<b>Answer</b>
<b>13 October 2021</b>	If impacts can't be effectively managed, at what point does the project continue? (Reference to the flow chart)	Specialists will make recommendations to avoid or minimise the impact, this feedback loop is occurring now between the specialists and the designers. It is ultimately up to the Planning Panel to make the final decision whether the suggested mitigation measures are appropriate.
<b>13 October 2021</b>	Where are we in the process?	The project is currently in the 'Impact Assessment' phase.
<b>13 October 2021</b>	If there are objections to the projects through the public exhibition phase, what happens then?	The Minister will make an assessment.

<b>13 October 2021</b>	Is the project team liaising with the Minister now during the process?	No.
<b>13 October 2021</b>	At what point are the EES scoping requirements considered, i.e., the use of DC and undergrounding?	These are considered throughout the process, as there is a requirement to address these in the documentation.
<b>13 October 2021</b>	When will the assessment be with the Minister?	See timeline of the project on the project webpage.
<b>13 October 2021</b>	Who is responsible under the EMF if there is a compliance concern?	This will be considered as part of the TRG with DEWLP and councils.
<b>15 September 2021</b>	What if the project does not go ahead, why bring forward funding? How much is 20%	Waiting on approval within AS to total funding amount and to bring 20% forward into the pre-EES approval phase of project.
<b>15 September 2021</b>	What about the issue of land fragmentation, if the project interrupts bio-links, impacting the work of local land care groups.	The project will look for local areas, where possible, to implement the required offsets and will work with the local land care groups.
<b>15 September 2021</b>	AS to note that bringing the funding forward can be seen as wanting to buy influence.	Noted.
<b>15 September 2021</b>	The benefits from the fund should go to the impacted communities, not to energy start-ups or for-profit groups.	Noted, this is the intention.
<b>15 September 2021</b>	What about neighbouring landowners, who are not directly affected and therefore not compensated?	Access to the fund is for not-for-profit community groups, not to be confused with compensation to landowners, not intended to go to private entities.
<b>15 September 2021</b>	There is confusion in the community about how far along the EES process the project is, there are rumours there will be a route announcement late October.	<p>The project is 12 months into the EES process, it is anticipated that the documents will be on public display and there will be public hearings in approximately 12 months from now, with a decision due late 2022.</p> <p>The final route will be announced by AusNet Services in late 2021. This route will be subject to further investigations and surveys as part of the EES.</p> <p>The Minister for Planning will decide on the EES and whether the project can go ahead or not and what conditions are placed on the project, if any.</p>
<b>15 September 2021</b>	There is the potential that the project will be challenged through the legal courts, is there a mechanism to provide feedback to the Minister and/or AEMO to avoid this?	The project is working through the EES process and there is no definite project until the planning and environmental approvals have been issued.

<b>15 September 2021</b>	What are the actual costs of the project to date?	We are not in a position to provide information on the costs of the project to date.
<b>15 September 2021</b>	Why won't AS consider DC for undergrounding, instead of AC?	Noted, this will be addressed when undergrounding is discussed.
<b>15 September 2021</b>	Concerns about mental health were raised, especially if the project goes until 2022 and once the section 93 notices go out.	Noted.
<b>15 September 2021</b>	Issue about accessing information on the project's website was raised. Would be appreciated if the information about the EES was clearer and easier to find.	Noted.
<b>15 September 2021</b>	There is the perception that the EES process is designed to make the project work, not many projects in the past have been changed due to the EES outcomes.	Noted.
<b>15 September 2021</b>	Comment was raised that compulsory acquisition of land is not preferable, as the landowners lose the option to negotiate. There needs to be a distinction between land acquisition and land access, they are not the same.	Noted.
<b>15 September 2021</b>	Suggestion was made to use an interactive online tool to make information more accessible. Comment was made that the website is not the only tool the project should rely on.	Noted, the website is being re-designed and will launch soon with more features including interactive pages.
<b>15 September 2021</b>	Has the project had any discussions with the Liberal Party about their alternative route and will AS consider alternative routes?	No discussions have been held with the Liberal Party about their alternative route. Our focus remains on identifying the least constrained route that meets the project objectives. AS does consider alternative routes that meet project objectives.
<b>15 September 2021</b>	Can the power lines use existing infrastructure/easements or alternative delivery models?	The project is intending on utilising existing easements where possible including in the Bulgana to Waubra section where we intend on running parallel to the existing 220kV line. Houses have built up to the edge of easements which means it is not possible in many instances to use existing easements. We have been asked whether we could run transmission lines along the Western Highway however there is no space particularly in areas such as Melton where again, houses are built up to the road corridor.

<b>15 September 2021</b>	Should the group meet more frequently?	AS shares information with the group as it becomes available, more frequent meetings won't mean that more information will be available.
<b>Follow up after 25 August 2021</b>	<p>It was noted Ausnet were awarded the contract to build the WVTNP by AEMO following a competitive tender process. How many other companies tendered for the job?</p> <p>Were any other routes considered for the task?</p> <p>If the answer to 2 is yes, what other routes were considered and why were they rejected? If the answer to 2 is no, if not and why not?</p> <p>What considerations did AEMO take into account before settling on the proposed corridor and commencing the tender process?</p>	<p>In 2017, AEMO, in its role as the transmission network planner for Victoria, commenced a RIT-T to identify the most economically efficient investment option to increase the amount of electricity that can be transported across western Victoria. The investment option selected within the RIT-T process informed the scope of the WVTNP.</p> <p>At the first meeting of the CCG Stephanie McGregor presented a detailed overview of the project including responding to questions which can be found in the minutes of that meeting:  <a href="https://www.westvictnp.com.au/52677/widgets/339677/documents/204437">https://www.westvictnp.com.au/52677/widgets/339677/documents/204437</a></p> <p>A Fact Sheet The role of the Regulatory Investment Test for Transmission process in the development of the WVTNP,  <a href="https://www.westvictnp.com.au/62122/widgets/312640/documents/189117">https://www.westvictnp.com.au/62122/widgets/312640/documents/189117</a></p> <p>was also developed and may also assist with some answers to your questions. If you have any further questions relating to AEMO, we can send them to AEMO for a response.</p> <p>In addition, AEMO attended a Moorabool Council webinar session in late 2020, link to the webinar and the follow up QA are below.  AEMO explains RiT-T and findings <a href="#">Watch the recording</a>  <a href="#">Additional Q&amp;A - AEMO(PDF, 933KB)</a></p>
<b>Follow up after 25 August 2021</b>	<p>Given the scope of the contract, what flexibility do Ausnet have to:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Alter the design of the project</li> <li>. Alter the route from other than the proposed corridor</li> </ul>	<p>The WVTNP is subject to an Environment Effects Statement (ESS), the most rigorous environmental impact assessment process in Victoria.</p> <p>The EES process is administered by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) on behalf of Victoria's Minister for Planning under the Environment Effects Act 1978.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider transmission alternatives ie Overhead or Underground or other whatever that maybe.</li> <li>Suggest alternative ways to achieve the goals of the project to AEMO</li> </ul>	<p>The purpose of the EES is to ensure that major projects are designed, constructed and operated to minimise adverse environmental and community impacts. It gives decision-makers (such as Ministers and statutory authorities) the information they need to determine whether approvals should be granted and what conditions should apply.</p> <p>The EES provides a transparent investigation of potential environmental impacts and provides the community with an opportunity to review and provide feedback as the project develops. During the preparation of the EES, we will undertake environmental investigations to understand potential impacts from the project and identify how any impacts can be avoided, minimised or managed.</p> <p>The Victorian Minister for Planning has requested, under the EES scoping requirements, that AusNet demonstrates consideration of feasible alternatives, including the rationale for the preferred mode of construction - overhead or underground, including potential for partial underground construction - and other feasible alternatives raised through community and stakeholder feedback.</p> <p>AusNet is looking at feasible alternatives including the alternatives raised through community and stakeholder feedback such as the Western Highway.</p>
<b>Follow up after 25 August 2021</b>	How much of an input other than the Community Groups like Stop Ausnet Towers have other stakeholders had? By other stakeholders I mean the like of the electrical retailers who send us our electricity bills, the local shire councils along the proposed route and government representatives both elected and contracted.	The project team has regular meetings with multiple stakeholders. Some of the stakeholder groups include, six local councils, Government and opposition MP's, industry organisations, regional stakeholders including community groups, emergency services, tourism, business, environmental and local associations.
<b>25 August 2021</b>	How is AS engaging with politicians?	Both state and federal sitting and opposition politicians are provided with regular updates. Requests for route changes are for AEMO to address.
<b>25 August 2021</b>	What is the timing between the letters, as outlined in the land access process presentation?	This depends on the frequency and level of engagement between the parties. The Electricity Act does not prescribe a timeline.



<b>25 August 2021</b>	How will AS try to win back trust within the community?	AS will provide factual and relevant information to address questions, as this information becomes available.
<b>25 August 2021</b>	Acknowledging the process regarding publishing technical reports, is there a way to release information sooner?	AS appreciates the comments. This can be looked at as technical specialists complete their reports. Presentation on land access arrangements provided relevant and valuable information.
<b>25 August 2021</b>	AS should share this with the community	Noted
<b>25 August 2021</b>	More information on the Electromagnetic field would be appreciated	An independent EMF survey will be undertaken in the area soon.
<b>25 August 2021</b>	Can the existing easement and/or infrastructure be used when upgrading from the planned 220kv to 500kv?	The upgrade from the planned 220kv to 500kv is being investigated by AEMO and the state government. AS is not involved in the process.
<b>13 July 2021</b>	Does AS keeps a database of questions asked regarding the project. And how many questions have been recorded? There have been hundreds of questions raised. All questions raised get shared with the relevant teams within AS to make sure they are appropriately responded to.	There is a consolidated list of all questions raised as part of the community drop in sessions, as well as a list of all questions raised by landowners through meetings. AS has published responses to the drop in session questions on the website.
<b>13 July 2021</b>	Would the assessment be any different if planning for an underground route?	This corridor is assessed for an overhead route. The need to consider an underground option is required as part of the EES scoping document, which was released in December 2020, approximately six months after the overhead investigations began. Therefore, there is a six-month delay between the overhead assessment and the underground investigations, which are currently underway.  As such, further constraints might arise as part of the undergrounding investigations. An undergrounding design has different constraints e.g., geology and terrain, compared to an overhead design so the route will differ.
<b>13 July 2021</b>	Regarding the bar chart with the constraints (slide 9) this is a qualitative assessment, is there also a quantitative assessment, i.e., constraints per km?	The analysis of constraints can only go so far. Conceptual routes need to be identified to understand whether a constructable route that manages environmental and land use impacts can be designed within the corridor/s.

		<p>The constraints mentioned are not weighted. Previous experience has shown that weightings are subjective and based on value judgements that should be avoided.</p> <p>Individual constraints are analysed to understand what constraint or constraints were contributing to the low, moderate or high constraint. The constraints analysis that was undertaken identifies key differences between conceptual routes with regards to values and constraints.</p> <p>Those constraints with material differences were analysed in consultation with technical specialists to understand whether they could be mitigated or managed, that is whether they are material differences that would influence the selection of a single corridor.</p> <p>The corridor assessment is not based on costs.</p>
<b>13 July 2021</b>	In the presentation, there was a reference to the Ballarat to Bendigo overhead lines, what type is this?	These are 220kV lines.
<b>13 July 2021</b>	Regarding the bar chart, this is only representative of a point in time, the long-term impacts could be less?	<p>The corridor assessment considered the life of the project, that is design, construction and ongoing maintenance.</p> <p>Constructability and operability issues are considered in understanding whether constraints can be effectively managed.</p> <p>Undergrounding can be more invasive during construction, even with a narrower easement. To cross a river valley, for instance, it is easier to overfly the river than bore under the river. The focus is on managing each constraint by applying appropriate mitigation.</p>
<b>13 July 2021</b>	There is a perception in the community that this is a State Government project, not a AS project	This gets raised a lot, especially given the uncertainty around the upgrade from the 220kv to 500kv, which is a State Government decision outside of AS's control.
<b>13 July 2021</b>	What is the purpose of the project and is it required to strengthen the national energy security as the state transitions from fossil to renewable energy?	The purpose of the project is to increase transmission capacity in Western Victoria where the network is constrained and cannot support the current and future investment in renewables in the area.
<b>13 July 2021</b>	Do Councillors receive the same information as the CCG?	AS provides Councillor briefings upon council request (Hepburn and Pyrenees so far). Councils are engaged through a range of ways and have

		membership of the Technical Reference Group. AS will continue to provide briefings as requested by the Councils.
8 June 2021	How are the public notified about the start of the public exhibition of the documents?	<p>The public exhibition will be advertised in at least one metropolitan daily newspaper and in the relevant regional/local newspapers. The notification of relevant stakeholders is supported by the proponent, ie to circulate information via mailing lists, councils to reach out to communities. AS will also provide information on the project website and via email.</p> <p>Community member would like AS to contact relevant public members personally and directly as well.</p> <p>The public exhibition period will be advertised on the AS website and emails will be sent out to subscribers.</p>
8 June 2021	Concern expressed that any feedback from CCG to AS has been stonewalled by AS	Noted
8 June 2021	In regard to the undergrounding, how should feasibility be interpreted, does this only relate to costs? References that the AS tender only refers to overhead lines and AEMO did not consider undergrounding	<p>Cost is an aspect of feasibility, and the guidelines aren't prescriptive regarding feasibility. AEMO's process provides context to the EES, but it does not limit AS in their investigations.</p> <p>The proponent must demonstrate objectivity and robustness regarding the feasibility assessments.</p>
8 June 2021	Who are the lead consultants for the EES?	The two main consultants are Jacobs and Coffey. There are also some specialists subcontracted to Jacobs to provide subject matter expertise in areas that Jacobs does not have in-house expertise.
8 June 2021	What are the 19 studies that are being undertaken?	This was referenced at the April meeting in AS's PowerPoint. Diagram attached to the minutes, see Appendix 1.
8 June 2021	How is the cost versus community and environment balanced?	<p>The proponent needs to explain their rationale for the proposed alignment. A balance or comparison is very subjective, based on personal values. This relies on the process being objective and transparent in how aspects are considered.</p> <p>It was noted that not everyone will agree on an assessment outcome.</p>
8 June 2021	Does DELWP support the CCG minutes being shared with the TRG?	This does not commonly happen. Request to take it on notice but noted if the minutes are online, each TRG representative can access them.

		Note, the TRG doesn't issue minutes, it only documents actions and provides comments on draft reports to the proponent
8 June 2021	How does DELWP deal with conflict of interests, ie the Minister for Environment is also the Minister for Energy?  Reference to MPs not responding to communities' contact attempts.	Conflicts may occur, however the EES process lies within the Planning Minister's portfolio. DELWP is agnostic to political parties and their role is to follow the legislation. The EES process is designed to gather information to support decision-making, therefore transparency and rigor around interests are a focus. The process does not aim to remove or hide tensions.
8 June 2021	How does community and local government feedback flow into the project?	Formal and informal submissions by community members as well as local government are important, whereby the substance of a submission is relevant, not the number of opposing submissions. Local councils also have representatives on the TRG.
8 June 2021	What are the specific negative environmental effects of undergrounding?	As a general comment only, as cannot relate to this project. The relative surface disturbance is generally greater, which could impact on cultural heritage sites, certain flora species, ground cover etc. It is important to have an open mind and view the facts and the assessment before determining that something has a negative outcome.
8 June 2021	Who is on the TRG?	A list of the TRG member organisations is attached, see Appendix 2.
8 June 2021	In percent, how many affected landowners can AS notify?	AS has contact details for approximately 90% of the landowners. The team is searching for further details of the remaining 10%
8 June 2021	How can it be that you don't have a solid list of all sensitive recipients?	AS is trying to confirm details of each parcel of land, which is difficult, if the listed owner is not a person but an organisation. AS, as a private company, is not able to access local government rates notice databases, therefore AS is relying on publicly accessible sources of information. AS is investigating as best they can.
8 June 2021	Is AS only contacting directly impacted landowners? What about those indirectly affected? The Planning Act requires proponents to inform further than just the directly affected.  Comment by another member: What about those who will be visually impacted or tourism businesses?	Under the EES as well as for planning approval consultation with directly impacted landowners is required. AS will be sending letters and emails and will have face to face meetings with impacted landowners and also host community information sessions for indirectly impacted.  There are 19 different technical studies. Each technical study has an assessment area based on a potential area of impact. The potential area of impact and receptors can differ between technical studies.

		AS is currently in the existing conditions phase where the environment is characterised within the area of interest and along the corridors.
8 June 2021	<p>Why has AS informed landowners who are not in the corridor already?</p> <p>The webpage hasn't been updated since the start of the project and doesn't provide any information, it is too convoluted, and it is not clear how people can air their concerns with AS. When will it be updated?</p> <p>Why have pins dropped on the interactive map have not been included?</p> <p>The community member threatens to resign from the CCG, if answers aren't provided by the next meeting.</p>	<p>AS acknowledges that the webpage is not great and is reviewing it. However AS is reluctant to put a timeframe on completion due to the large amount of work that is required to improve the webpage.</p> <p>The information from both interactive maps is available on the website.</p> <p><a href="https://westvictnp.com.au">Area of Interest   Western Victoria Transmission Network Project (westvictnp.com.au)</a></p> <p>NB: This page is being updated to MAP PINS FEEDBACK.</p>
8 June 2021	Landowners and those with line of site to the towers are listed as the first stakeholders in the EES Stakeholder Engagement Plan. Does the mailing list of approximately 1000 include these?	<p>The mailing list is made up of those who registered for e-updates via the project's website. This is separate to the landowner database.</p> <p>The landscape and visual impact studies will investigate line of site receptors. AS needs to determine the single corridor and then a route to understand the extent of visual impacts.</p>
8 June 2021	<p>When will the announcement be made and what level of detail will be included on the map?</p> <p>Comments on feeling frustrated about not feeling more informed by being part of this process.</p>	The announcement will be made mid-year. As a publicly listed company there are certain requirements and approval processes to go through. AS is still on track for the announcement, which will narrow down the corridor, however there is further work required to determine the route within the announced corridor.
8 June 2021	Based on this, the community will want to know the alignment and the actual impact on their land. This is a grave impact to the communities, if there is no clarity and confirmation as part of the announcement.	Noted
8 June 2021	What does registered mean? As a landowner they have not had any further contact since an initial meeting with JLL in 2020.	Register refers to signing up to receive e-updates by clicking on a link on the website and filling in a form. Anyone who AS has had contact within meetings or via the community drop in sessions, and have provided their email and phone details are recorded.

		AS is recruiting more staff to allow for more contact with landowners.
8 June 2021	Harkness and Melton-West is developing rapidly. AS needs to make sure they inform widely given the visual impacts to this area.	Noted
8 June 2021	Why has it taken so long to respond to the feedback received in community drop-in sessions? Over 70 days to receive email that provides a generic response to the questions raised.  Comments were made how many other community members received the same generic email and no new information has been provided nor questions answered.	The technical investigations are underway to determine some of those answers. There is a lot of work to do and AS will provide answers once the work has been completed by the technical specialists and reviewed by the TRG.
28 April 2021	Query raised about the potential to upgrade the line between Bulgana and the new terminal station north of Ballarat to 500kv in line with the Victorian Government's <i>Victorian Renewable Energy Zones Development Plan Directions Paper February 2021</i> .	It was clarified that the line upgrade is subject to discussions between AEMO, the State Government and AS. AS confirmed it is not currently contracted to deliver the upgrade.