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Thursday, 7 July 2022

The Planning Secretary  
NSW Department of Planning and Environment  
12 Darcy Street  
Parramatta NSW 2150  
Locked Bag 5022  
Parramatta NSW 2124

CC: Dominic Crinnion

Dear Mr Cassel

**Re: EnergyConnect (NSW – Western Section) (SSI-10040) – Funding of study of electric and magnetic fields on birds (condition D28 b) and bird monitoring program (Condition D28 c)**

I refer to Project EnergyConnect (NSW – Western Section) (SSI-10040) (the Project), which the then NSW Minister for Planning and Public Spaces approved on 28 September 2021 under section 5.19 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (NSW).

Condition B2 of the Infrastructure Approval requires that the Project prepare a Biodiversity CEMP Sub-plan as part of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). Condition D28 describes the required content of the Biodiversity CEMP Sub-plan (the Plan). Condition D28 b) requires that the Plan includes 'details of the Proponent's commitment to make a one off \$150,000 funding contribution targeted at further scientific study into the impacts of electric and magnetic fields on birds in Australia'. Condition D28 c) requires that the Plan includes 'preparation and implementation of a two year bird impact monitoring program at the commencement of operations'.

Transgrid's construction contractor, SecureEnergy, has prepared the CEMP and associated CEMP Sub-plans to describe how potential environmental impacts during construction will be managed. Noting that the requirements in conditions D28 b) and c) do not relate directly to the management of potential biodiversity impacts during construction, Transgrid sought to exclude

them from the Biodiversity CEMP Sub-plan via a staging request in accordance with condition E2, which the Planning Secretary subsequently approved. Accordingly, these requirements are not addressed in the Biodiversity CEMP Sub-plan, but Transgrid remains committed to complying with them, as outlined below.

#### Funding commitment for study into electric and magnetic fields on birds (condition D28 b))

Transgrid notes that the requirement to fund this study is also a Project commitment (to occur before completing construction – refer to Revised mitigation measure B9) and forms part of the Project's Biodiversity Offset Package that was prepared to the satisfaction of the Planning Secretary in accordance with condition D26.

Progress with this funding commitment is summarised below:

- Transgrid made contact with Charles Sturt University (CSU) in February 2022 to discuss the commitment. CSU is local to the project and has the only accredited raptor course (the birds of most interest) in Australia, making them a perfect candidate for the funding.
- Transgrid has had several discussion and meetings with key personnel from CSU, including the resident raptor specialist, to discuss the research and the funding process.
- CSU has committed to providing Transgrid with a high-level position description for a PhD research project candidate that the university intends to advertise within appropriate academic circles nationally and international. This is expected in the coming weeks. Transgrid will review and comment on the position description to ensure that it meets the intent of the funding commitments.
- Once agreed, CSU will advertise the research project and accept applications, Transgrid and CSU will confirm the next steps in the funding process.
- Transgrid expects that the funding contribution will occur by the end of 2022, ahead of the project commitment (prior to completing construction).

#### Bird monitoring program (condition D28 c))

Transgrid committed to carrying out a bird monitoring program in Revised mitigation measure B8, as follows:

*A two year monitoring program following the completion of construction will be implemented to better understand interactions of bird species with the transmission lines and towers. Problematic interactions identified during the program would be considered and options for addressing them implemented as practicable. Options that would be considered include nesting deterrents in high risk areas, installation of alternative nest habitat, relocation of nests or their deconstruction in certain circumstances.*

Transgrid committed to carrying out the monitoring program during the project's operational phase, noting that it cannot commence until construction of the transmission line is complete (currently anticipated late 2023). Transgrid, therefore, proposes to design the monitoring program with the assistance of an appropriate ecological specialist in Q4 2023, so that it is ready for implementation after construction of the transmission line.

Transgrid notes that compliance with the requirements in condition D28 b) and c) will be reviewed during the program of independent environmental audits carried out in accordance with condition E11.

If you wish to discuss any aspect of the above, please do not hesitate to contact the Project's Environmental Manager John Fisher ([John.Fisher@transgrid.com.au](mailto:John.Fisher@transgrid.com.au)).

Yours Sincerely

*Yousseph Ters*

**Yousseph Ters**

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