

# Notice of decision – HumeLink

## Section 2.22 and clause 20 of Schedule 1 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*

<b>Application type</b>	Critical State significant infrastructure
<b>Application number and project name</b>	HumeLink (SSI-36656827)
<b>Applicant</b>	Transgrid
<b>Consent Authority</b>	Minister for Planning and Public Spaces

### Decision

Under section 5.19 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (the Act), the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces has approved the critical State significant infrastructure (CSSI) application to develop HumeLink, subject to conditions.

The key components of the development involve:

- development of around 365 kilometres (km) of new double circuit 500 kV transmission lines and associated infrastructure between Wagga Wagga, Bannaby and Maragle;
- development of a new 500/330 kV substation at Gregadoo (Gugaa 500 kV substation);
- demolition and rebuild of around 2 km of Line 51 as a double circuit 330 kV transmission line connecting to the existing Wagga 330 kV substation;
- augmentation of the Wagga 330/132 kV substation and Bannaby 500/330 kV substation; and
- ancillary infrastructure such as site offices, workforce accommodation camps, internal roads, and grid connections to the transmission network.

Construction of the development would take about 2.5 years, and once operational would transfer renewable energy generated by Snowy 2.0 and other wind and solar projects in southern NSW to the National Electricity Market (NEM), and would play an essential role in supporting the transition from a long-standing reliance on coal-fired power stations to a reliance on renewable energy.

A copy of the Department's assessment report and Minister's infrastructure approval are available [here](#).

### Date of decision

13 November 2024

### Reasons for decision

The following matters were taken into consideration in making this decision:

- the relevant matters required under the Act, including the objects of the Act;
- relevant Commonwealth and NSW legislation, policies and guidelines;
- all information submitted to the Department during the assessment of the application;
- the findings and recommendations in the Department's assessment report; and
- the views of the community about the development (see **Attachment 1**).

The findings and recommendations set out in the Department's Assessment Report were accepted and adopted as the reasons for making this decision.

The key reasons for approving the application are as follows:

- the development would provide a range of benefits for the State and the National Electricity Market (NEM) as a whole, including transportation of renewable energy from Snowy 2.0 and other wind and solar projects in southern NSW to energy consumers, enhancing the capacity of the NEM, and supporting the transition from coal-fired power stations to renewable energy;
- the Project is consistent with relevant NSW Government policies and guidelines, including the *Transmission Infrastructure Strategy* (2018), the *Electricity Strategy* (2019), and more broadly the *Climate Change Policy Framework* (2016) and *Net Zero Stage 1: 2020 – 2030* (2021) and *Implementation update* (2022);
- the impacts on the community and the environment can be appropriately minimised, managed or offset to an acceptable level, in accordance with applicable NSW Government policies and standards;
- the issues raised by the community and Councils during consultation and in submissions have been considered and adequately addressed through changes to the development and the recommended conditions of approval; and
- weighing all relevant considerations, the development is in the public interest, subject to strict conditions of approval.

## Attachment 1 – Consideration of Community Views

The Department exhibited the application from 30 August 2023 until 10 October 2023 (42 days) and received 112 unique public submissions (99 objecting, 11 comments and 2 in support) and 12 submissions from special interest groups (9 objecting and 3 comments).

The Department also visited the site.

A summary of how the key issues raised by the community were taken into consideration is provided in the below table.

Issue	Consideration
<p><i>Landscape and Visual</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interruption of views from existing residents</li> <li>• Impacts to existing landscape character</li> </ul>	<p><i>Assessment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Department considered impacts to non-easement affected dwellings and public viewpoints surrounding the project.</li> <li>• Transgrid has committed to managing the predicted visual impacts of the project by implementing appropriate mitigation measures. The Department has recommended conditions requiring Transgrid to implement appropriate mitigation measures (such as landscaping and vegetation screening) in consultation with the owners of dwellings A33, A67, C35, E27, H19, H56, K23, K40, K44, K45, K46, K47, O18, O45, Q20, R12, R24, S12, T14, T15 and T16.</li> <li>• The Department has recommended conditions requiring Transgrid to implement additional visual impact measures at properties A29, K23, Q20, R12, R24, S12 and V23 during detailed design.</li> <li>• Of 39 representative public viewpoints, visual impact was assessed as moderate at five locations, moderate-low at 16 locations and low to negligible for all other locations. Of the five locations with moderate visual impact, four viewpoints are on the road network. While viewpoints along the road corridor would be direct, views would be short duration and partially screened by existing vegetation and topography.</li> <li>• One other viewpoint at Greendale Church would also experience a moderate visual impact. However, transmission infrastructure is already part of the landscape, with existing transmission infrastructure visible in front of and adjacent to the project from this location. Additionally, views towards the project would be partially screened by existing vegetation. As such, the Department considers that visual impacts at public viewpoints would not be significant.</li> <li>• No adverse impacts on significant vistas in the landscape are anticipated. Impacts are considered moderate-low, increasing the presence of electricity infrastructure in the landscape in views where the project would cross the road and vegetation clearing required.</li> <li>• The Department acknowledges that undergrounding the transmission lines may have a lower visual impact, however, this option would result in other environmental impacts and would result in the project not meeting the project objectives and would not allow the timely transmission of renewable energy from Snowy 2.0 to energy consumers.</li> </ul> <p><i>Conditions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement appropriate visual impact mitigation measures, such as landscaping and/or vegetation screening at specific receivers upon receiving a written request from the owners of these residences.</li> <li>• Implement additional visual impact measures at properties A29, K23, Q20, R12, R24, S12 and V23 during detailed design prior to submitting final layout plans for identified transmission towers.</li> <li>• Ensure that external lighting is minimised and complies with the relevant Australian Standards.</li> <li>• Prohibit any signage or advertising on the site, unless it is for safety purposes.</li> <li>• Ensure ancillary facilities, accommodation camps and earthwork material sites are rehabilitated.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Bushfire</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impacts of bushfire to project workers and infrastructure</li> <li>• Potential for the project to ignite fires</li> </ul>	<p><i>Assessment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parts of the project area are classed as bushfire prone land. Transgrid would be required to maintain asset protection zones (APZ) around the construction site, accommodation camps and substations. Vegetation removal and trimming along the transmission line easement and APZ surrounding the switching stations and accommodation camps would be undertaken to maintain appropriate clearances to manage bushfire risk.</li> <li>• The Department notes that evidence provided to the Select Committee on the Feasibility of Undergrounding the Transmission Infrastructure for Renewable Energy Projects in relation to Bushfire risk associated with overhead transmission lines compared to underground transmission lines was that high intensity, 500 kilovolt lines, were unlikely to act as an ignition source.</li> <li>• The Department considers that the bushfire risks can be suitably managed through the implementation of standard fire management plans and procedures during construction and throughout operations.</li> </ul> <p><i>Conditions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that the project complies with relevant requirements in the RFS's <i>Planning for Bushfire Protection 2019</i> (or equivalent) and Australian Standard AS3959-2018.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure the project is suitably equipped to respond to fires on site, including the provision of a 20,000 litre water tank at each construction compound and accommodation camp.</li> <li>• Prepare and implement a Bushfire Emergency Management and Evacuation Plan.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Biodiversity</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impacts on native vegetation</li> <li>• Impacts on flora and fauna species and habitat</li> </ul>	<p><i>Assessment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Department acknowledges that the construction of 365 km of transmission line would inevitably result in impacts to biodiversity, and notes that the development would disturb up to 926 ha of native vegetation within the 8,835 ha indicative construction area footprint.</li> <li>• The Department considers that the development has been designed to avoid and minimise impacts on high quality vegetation and habitat, as far as practicable, particularly co-locating sections of the transmission line with existing infrastructure and relocating other sections to avoid key biodiversity features.</li> <li>• In addition, the project involves various other mitigation measures to reduce biodiversity impacts, including partial vegetation clearing beneath the transmission lines. Importantly, the final detailed design of the transmission line alignment would also be based on further reductions in impacts, wherever practicable.</li> <li>• The Department considers that subject to the recommended conditions, the development would not significantly impact the biodiversity values of the locality.</li> </ul> <p><i>Conditions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimise the clearing of native vegetation and key fauna habitat, including hollow bearing trees and habitat for threatened bird and bat populations, within the project footprint and protect native vegetation and key fauna habitat outside the approved disturbance area.</li> <li>• Prepare and implement a Supplementary Biodiversity Strategy prepare a Supplementary Biodiversity Strategy which would detail methods for additional targeted surveys required for assumed present species, with reference to the Biodiversity Assessment Method.</li> <li>• prepare a Biodiversity Assessment Verification Report which would include the findings of additional targeted surveys undertaken for the Supplementary Biodiversity Strategy and a review of measures to avoid or mitigate impacts following completion of targeted surveys and finalisation of the project design and recommendations for any credit liability reduction resulting from this review.</li> <li>• Prepare and implement a Biodiversity Management Plan, including details of measures to avoid and minimise impacts, and a program to monitor and report on the effectiveness of biodiversity mitigation and management measures monitor.</li> <li>• Prepare and implement a Biodiversity Offset Package and provide financial security to ensure offsets are implemented.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Social and economic benefits</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Availability of accommodation and housing</li> <li>• Impacts to local services such as health and emergency services</li> <li>• Perceived negative behaviours associated with worker accommodation camps</li> </ul>	<p><i>Assessment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The project is consistent with a range of national and state policies, which identify the need for transportation of renewable energy from Snowy 2.0 to energy consumers, enhancing the capacity of the NEM, and to support energy security and reliability.</li> <li>• The Department recognises that using underground transmission lines may be feasible in some locations. However, the Department considers this option is significantly constrained in meeting other project objectives, as the project is urgently needed to support energy security and reliability in NSW and facilitate the energy transition.</li> <li>• The project's workforce accommodation camps would provide accommodation for up to 1,840 construction workers and ease pressure on availability of local housing and accommodation.</li> <li>• The workforce accommodation camp would be managed in accordance with an Accommodation Camp Management Plan, which would include a code of conduct for workers and cultural awareness training for the workforce.</li> <li>• Transgrid has committed to preparing a Social Impact Management Plan and a Community Engagement Management Plan to ensure landowners, businesses and local residents with the potential to be affected by construction activities are promptly notified about upcoming activities and potential impacts. This plan will also include consultation with local health and emergency services to establish processes for managing potential increased demands due to non-resident workforce.</li> <li>• The project would deliver significant economic benefits to NSW, including a capital investment of \$4.8 billion and the creation of up to 1,600 full-time equivalent jobs during construction.</li> </ul> <p><i>Conditions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare an Accommodation Camp Management Plan and a Local Business Employment Strategy for the project in consultation with relevant Councils, with consideration to prioritising the employment of local workers.</li> <li>• Prepare and implement a Social Impact Management Plan in consultation with Councils and affected stakeholders, with the intent of enhancing positive social impacts from the development.</li> <li>• Prepare and implement a Local Business and Employment Strategy in consultation with the relevant Council.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Agriculture and biosecurity</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of agricultural land</li> <li>• Interruption of ongoing agricultural operations</li> </ul>	<p><i>Assessment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The project area traverses primarily rural areas, with a range of land uses that includes existing transmission line easements, agriculture, forestry, and renewable power generation.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During the 2.5 year construction period, up to 1,005 ha of agricultural land would be unavailable for agricultural activities, resulting in a total productivity loss of around \$1.48 million.</li> <li>• During operation, the project would have a permanent direct impact on around 593 ha of agricultural land. This loss is equivalent to around 0.04% of the total area of agricultural property holdings in the land use and property study area. The loss of agricultural productivity associated with this loss is estimated to be around \$350,106 per year.</li> <li>• Impacts to agricultural land and disruptions to landholders would be mitigated through ongoing consultation with landholders, the development of individual Property Management Plans and Biosecurity Management Plan, limiting new access tracks and ongoing weed management.</li> </ul> <p><i>Conditions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No specific conditions have been recommended</li> </ul>
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