



The Energy
Charter

Better Practice Social Licence Guideline

Co-existence and shared value
opportunities for transmission
+ agricultural landholders

SUMMARY

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#BETTERTOGETHER

We are the Energy Charter: a unique coalition of like-minded energy organisations with a shared purpose and passion for customers and communities.

Energy customers rely on all of us. We all use energy every day. It lights our homes and powers businesses. We're all part of the same ecosystem, so working #BetterTogether is vital now and into the future.

Our purpose is to empower one another across the energy supply chain to deliver better energy outcomes for customers and communities. Our vision is that together, we can create a better energy future for all Australians.

For us, the opportunity is to keep humans at the centre of the design and delivery of energy solutions; to navigate the changing needs of customers and communities as we transform to a cleaner energy future.

There really is no other collaboration like us; and the work we do, together, has never been more important than it is today.

We are #BetterTogether.

Our strengths are our CEO-led guidance and our diverse representation across industry, customer and community groups. But what gives us power, is our ability to take a whole-of-sector view; to collaborate, innovate and strive for better. To share knowledge and connections from all sides and, importantly, to proactively co-design customer-led solutions.

Transitioning to a low-emissions future needs collaboration. Our role is to encourage the difficult conversations and to amplify the customer's needs. To bridge the gap between 'hard-to-do' and 'can-do'; to go beyond what any one of us could achieve alone.

Together, we are the Energy Charter.

Empowering one another

to deliver better energy outcomes for all.

**For further information on this
Better Practice Guideline, contact
director@theenergycharter.com.au.**



We proudly acknowledge and pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the land upon which we live and work and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture.

We also acknowledge the significance of Country for First Nations peoples and recognise that transmission infrastructure impacts First Nations peoples and their lands, waters and skies.

This Better Practice Guideline is specifically focussed on agricultural landholders. We also commit to developing specific guidance to strengthen relationships with and improve outcomes for First Nations peoples through our **#BetterTogether First Nations collaboration**.

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About this summary

This summary is intended to provide a high-level snapshot of the Better Practice Social Licence Guideline. For full details and further context on what we heard, our key take-aways and where we can do better please [download the Full Better Practice Social Licence Guideline](#).

The Better Practice Social Licence Guideline

As Australia moves towards a renewable energy future, a growing number of agricultural landholders are being approached to host electricity transmission and other energy infrastructure on their land.

Our energy businesses recognise that these transmission development projects, as well as the maintenance of existing infrastructure, can impact the agricultural operations, lives and livelihoods of agricultural landholders.

They also understand that they have a responsibility to recognise and minimise these impacts and work towards shared value outcomes for everyone.

The Better Practice Social Licence Guideline provides a checklist of actions and activities required to minimise impact and meet landholders' expectations, as well as activities transmission businesses should look to progress, align to and build on, to deliver shared value and build social licence.

An essential part of developing the Better Practice Guideline has been collaboration between a Community Outcomes Group (COG), made up of landholder and community representatives and a group of Transmission Network Service Providers (transmission businesses).

Our COG included representation from the **Ag Energy Taskforce, Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner, Bundaberg Regional Irrigators Group, National Farmers' Federation, National Irrigators Council, RE-Alliance, Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association, Queensland Farmers' Federation and Victorian Farmers Federation.**

Our Industry Collaborators included Energy Charter Full Signatories **Transgrid (NSW, ACT) Powerlink Queensland (QLD) and TasNetworks (TAS)** + #BetterTogether Collaborators **AusNet (VIC) and ElectraNet (SA).**

Our research partner was **KPMG Australia.**

Who is the Better Practice Guideline for?

By validating impacts and identifying opportunities to improve outcomes for agricultural landholders, the Better Practice Guideline supports transmission businesses to better understand and act on, the factors that contribute to building trust and maintaining social licence with agricultural landholder and their communities.

The Better Practice Guideline is also intended to support agricultural representatives, landholders and host communities to raise and discuss known impacts and work constructively with transmission businesses to achieve shared value outcomes.

Accountability

As part of their commitment to the Energy Charter, CEOs of **Full Signatories** agree to publicly disclose how they are delivering against the Energy Charter Principles through **annual disclosures**.

The Energy Charter accountability process provides an important opportunity to review and reflect on the implementation of the Better Practice Guideline by signatories, continuously evaluate outcomes for landholders and communities and provide direct feedback to signatory CEOs on opportunities for continuous improvement.



Our social licence approach

The Better Practice Guideline has been developed through the frame of social licence. By applying a social licence lens, we are able to see how individual impacts, actions and relationships add up and affect the building of trust and acceptance.

Social licence to operate is a concept that reflects community acceptance or approval around the operations of an organisation and its developments. Community acceptance comes from prioritising trust, delivering overall positive impact and is granted and denied by the community in line with their social, political and economic conditions.

Establishing social licence to operate is not simple due to it being based on the diverse values, interests and concerns that contribute to community expectations and as such requires the consideration of relational aspects between the industry and communities, industry affects, community understanding and confidence in a particular project.

Social licence exists on a spectrum and is dynamic. It can be weakened and strengthened by the actions of businesses and communities at any point within a project lifecycle.

For long, linear transmission projects that can run for hundreds of kilometres, impacting on dozens, if not hundreds of unique communities, acceptance, understanding, trust and confidence in an organisation and its developments can vary significantly. However, social licence lost in one community often influences how the organisation and its developments are viewed in their entirety.

Informed by research¹ and our discussions with landholders, the below principles have been identified as fundamental to transmission businesses building and maintaining social licence with affected landholders and their communities.

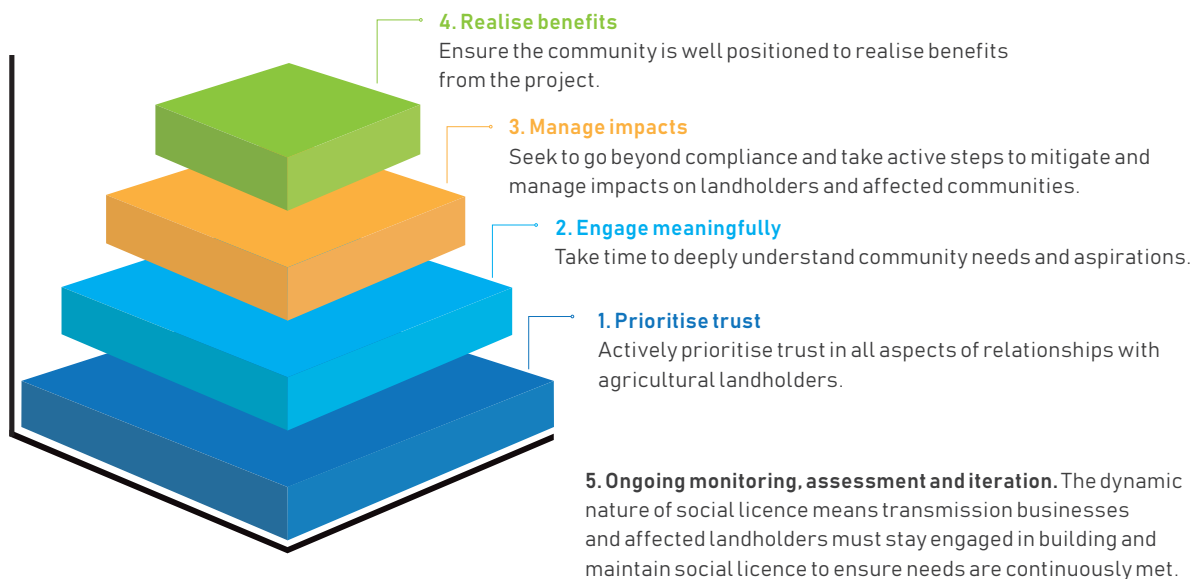
¹ Shelley Anne Baldwin (2021), *Gas on farms: Causal Layered Analysis of the meaning of co-existence from multiple stakeholder perspectives*. School of Agriculture and Food Sciences: University of Queensland; Kieran Moffat, Justine Lacey, Airong Zhang, Sina Leipold. (2016) 'The social licence to operate: A critical review', *Forestry: An International Journal of Forest Research*, Volume 89(5): 477-488; KPMG (2017), 'Social assessment of community owned renewable energy and large-scale wind energy in NSW', NSW Office of Environment and Heritage.

1. **Procedural fairness:** giving affected landholders and communities reasonable opportunity to engage with decision making that can, or will, impact their lives and livelihoods.
2. **Distributional fairness:** considering equity across tangible and intangible outcomes for affected landholders and communities.
3. **Stewardship:** acting as stewards of land and communities through the planning and development of transmission infrastructure.
4. **Partnership:** working with landholders and their communities in partnership to deliver positive outcomes for people and land.

To help put these principles into practice, five areas of focus have been identified as core to the building of social licence for transmission developments as shown in the diagram below.

While these principles have been developed with specific reference to transmission infrastructure, they also hold relevance for any infrastructure project that impacts landholders and their communities, including renewable energy generators.

FIGURE 1: Building social licence for transmission infrastructure projects



Our research

The research that informed the Better Practice Guideline was co-designed by Collaborators. It was part of a shared commitment to ensuring that the lived experiences of agricultural landholders remained front and centre in informing our collective understanding of both impact and opportunity.

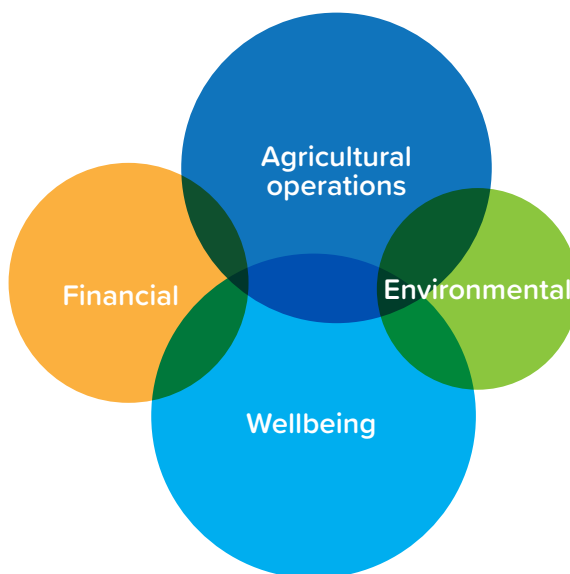
Our evidence-based approach included a landholder survey, which was completed by 144 landowners across QLD, NSW, TAS, VIC and SA, and 18 deep-dive interviews with landholders who shared their experiences of how transmission infrastructure has, or is expected to, impact them.

Significantly, our research validated 33 individual impacts across the areas of agricultural operations, wellbeing, financial and environmental.

All impacts identified are addressed in the Better Practice Guideline and included in this summary.

A full list of impacts can be found in **Appendix A**.

FIGURE 2: The size of the circle indicates the relative significance of impact types identified in the survey and interviews



Research snapshot

Our research showed that building and maintaining social licence requires a genuine and consistent commitment to:

- A.** Mitigate significant impacts on landholders and their communities
- B.** Provide meaningful benefits to landholders and their communities
- C.** Meet the engagement needs of landholders and their communities.

A. MITIGATION		B. BENEFITS	C. ENGAGEMENT
Our research identified landholders and their communities experience 33 impacts from transmission infrastructure		Only 18% of survey respondents felt hosting transmission infrastructure had any benefit to themselves or their communities	Landholders felt frustrated with the methods and quality of their engagement
Visual impacts, financial loss and biosecurity risks were the most significantly felt impacts to landholders	At a community level, electricity transmission infrastructure is most likely to impact property value, visual amenities and relationships with neighbours		
The impacts landholders experience change over the planning, construction and operation phases of the electricity transmission infrastructure lifecycle	Those proposed to host infrastructure tended to expect more significant impacts than those currently hosting infrastructure: 74% of those not currently hosting infrastructure expect to be significantly impacted by stress compared to 49% of hosts	The most attractive benefits identified related to wider community and economic benefits, coming from the transition to renewables	Landholders want to be respected, meaningfully consulted and have access to reliable, transparent information on projects





SUMMARY

Better Practice Guidance



Our Better Practice Guidance

To align with the impacts identified and validated by landholders and Collaborators through the research process, our guidance is divided into three Chapters.

CHAPTER 1: LANDHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS AND SERVICES

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| 1.1 Landholder and community engagement in route planning | 1.4 Compensation |
| 1.2 Engagement and communication | 1.5 Tower placement and screening |
| 1.3. Access | 1.6 Safety education |

CHAPTER 2: MANAGEMENT OF ON-FARM ACTIVITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| 2.1 Biosecurity | 2.3 Farm infrastructure |
| 2.2 Use of materials | |

CHAPTER 3: COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS AND SERVICES

- | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 3.1 Mental health and services | 3.3 Community infrastructure |
| 3.2 Community benefit sharing | 3.4 Community economic development |

Because impacts and opportunities are not linear and some issues such as biosecurity need to be managed at all stages within the transmission project lifecycle, the following icons have been used to show the stage at which the guidance is most relevant.



Planning



Construction



Operations



Decommissioning

Our guidance is also presented under two distinct headings:



Priority actions: A checklist of actions and activities required to minimise impact and meet landholders' expectations. In many cases, these actions align to the existing commitments of the transmission businesses involved in this Collaboration.




Better practice opportunities: These are actions and activities transmission businesses should look to progress, align to and build on, to deliver shared value and build social licence.

The actions and opportunities identified are directly informed by landholders' expectations and perspectives, as gathered through our research.



Better practice 'lighthouse' examples and case studies have also been included to showcase examples of industry collaborators and others, proactively managing impact, or providing benefit to landholders and their communities.










CHAPTER 1: Landholder relationships and services

1.1 Community involvement in route planning

Early engagement with landholders and community in route planning is essential to ensuring that wherever possible, transmission routes and methods are designed to minimise impacts. 58% of surveyed landholders said that transmission infrastructure will result in a direct loss of farmable land or disruption to their land productivity. 60% also believe transmission infrastructure will impact their use of machinery or equipment.

PRIORITY ACTIONS CHECKLIST		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Participation fees	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Consideration and communication around undergrounding	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Upgrades and maintenance activities in construction and operations	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Addressing power imbalances between transmission businesses and landholders	
BETTER PRACTICE OPPORTUNITIES		
	Consideration of public amenity of easements	

1.2 Engagement and communication

Landholders' experience of transmission infrastructure developments and their impacts is significantly influenced by the way they are engaged. Landholders strongly believe that transmission businesses need to spend time getting to know the land, the people and their needs to facilitate better outcomes for all parties.

PRIORITY ACTIONS CHECKLIST

☐ A designated person, 24/7 contact number and facilitated engagement



☐ Regional engagement teams



BETTER PRACTICE OPPORTUNITIES

Community engagement training for land agents and complaints officers



Better understanding social factors



1.3 Tower placement and screening

The placement of transmission towers can impact the mental wellbeing and visual amenity of landholders and communities, as well as the economic viability of landholder operations, including place-based and eco-tourism enterprises. Landholder and community engagement is critical to support decision making in relation to tower placement and this includes understanding on-farm operations and how existing farm equipment is used.

PRIORITY ACTIONS CHECKLIST

☐ Placement of towers to minimise impacts








BETTER PRACTICE OPPORTUNITIES

Landscaping and screening options to reduce impact



1.4 Access




Transmission investigations, construction and maintenance activities can have serious impacts on land condition, productivity and livestock if potential disturbances are not proactively and diligently managed. 78% of surveyed landholders were supportive of having input into the timing of construction and maintenance activities to reduce disruption to their farming operations.

PRIORITY ACTIONS CHECKLIST		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Provide clear schedules, detailing requirements for access	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Easy and timely access to records of access on request	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Clear steps and contacts for complaints	
BETTER PRACTICE OPPORTUNITIES		
	Management plan reviews	
	Financial support for landholder mitigation activities	

1.5 Compensation

65% of surveyed landholders felt that the level of impact they have, or will, experience is not adequately compensated for. Recognising that compensation calculations, payments and processes are subject to legal requirements that differ across jurisdictions, it is important that transmission businesses better understand and take into account landholder experiences, including the stress of negotiations, emotional sense of loss due to the changes in the landscape, land disturbance and disruptions to farming operations.


PRIORITY ACTIONS CHECKLIST

<input type="checkbox"/>	Transparent, plain English information regarding compensation	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Annualised compensation	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Easy and timely access to compensation for professional costs	


1.6 Safety education

There are varying levels of understanding amongst landholders on safety requirements surrounding transmission infrastructure. Proactive, tailored education programs are essential to ensure ongoing landholder and community safety and understanding. This is particularly important to address areas of community concern, including around bushfire mitigation and response.


PRIORITY ACTIONS CHECKLIST

<input type="checkbox"/>	Proactive, tailored education programs on safety	
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BETTER PRACTICE OPPORTUNITIES

Collaborate with emergency service agencies	
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CHAPTER 2: Management of on-farm activities and infrastructure

2.1 Biosecurity

75% of surveyed landholders felt that biosecurity risks were a concern for landholders and their communities, with 58% of them identifying biosecurity risks as a significant impact.

Given the potential impacts, there are opportunities to enhance protections to meet the biosecurity standards of landholders, including ensuring that plans are tailored to specific properties and applied consistently across all stages of development and operations.

PRIORITY ACTIONS CHECKLIST		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Strong, tailored biosecurity management plans	
BETTER PRACTICE OPPORTUNITIES		
	Proactive biosecurity audits	



2.2 Use of materials and management practices

Landholders are concerned that the construction of transmission infrastructure can disrupt the profile of soil, including by causing erosion, compaction and the displacement of fine sediments which impacts current or future use of the land.

59% of landholders surveyed noted that soil compaction altered their soil profile, with 42% of landholders identifying this as a significant impact.

It is critical to engage with landholders on their specific soil requirements and how any impacts can be best managed or mitigated.

PRIORITY ACTIONS CHECKLIST

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Engage with landholders on soil requirements |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Protect soil from compaction, erosion, or other damage |  |





2.3 Farm infrastructure

The skilled crews and materials used in the construction of transmission infrastructure could be leveraged to benefit landholders. Through the research landholders identified they would value:

- Upgrades to farm infrastructure such as fences, roads and gates
- Access to skilled crews and tradespeople to conduct maintenance works on farm infrastructure
- Use of the scrap materials leftover from construction, noting that in some cases this was motivated by a desire to reduce the waste from construction.

BETTER PRACTICE OPPORTUNITIES

Engage with landholders regarding use of scrap materials and equipment	
Provide labour and equipment in-kind	







CHAPTER 3: Community relationships and services

3.1 Mental health and services

Transmission businesses have a role to play in minimising these stressors and have an opportunity to help address the need within rural communities for enhanced mental health support.

Stress when thinking about or managing the impacts of and long-term planning relating to transmission was experienced by 60% of all surveyed landholders currently hosting infrastructure. 74% of those with infrastructure not yet built on their property had experienced, or expected to experience, stress in managing the impacts of and long-term planning related to transmission infrastructure.

BETTER PRACTICE OPPORTUNITIES

Reduce barriers to accessing counselling and mental health support



3.2 Community benefit sharing

Most surveyed landholders (67%) felt that the development of community-level benefit sharing agreements was important to local communities living with transmission infrastructure. However, priorities differ between and across communities. To maximise shared value, it is essential to engage with affected communities to understand the local contexts, priorities and needs and co-develop approaches to community benefit sharing.

PRIORITY ACTION AREAS

☐ Develop Community Benefit Sharing programs



BETTER PRACTICE OPPORTUNITIES

Prioritise access to affordable, reliable energy for hosts



Prioritise impact-aware Community Benefit Sharing



3.3 Community infrastructure

57% of landholders surveyed noted that building social infrastructure was an important initiative for local communities living with transmission infrastructure. There is an opportunity for transmission businesses to consider how they can work with responsible parties, including Government, to create shared value in the form of infrastructure upgrades and maintenance.

BETTER PRACTICE OPPORTUNITIES

Consultation on community infrastructure needs.



Assistance in negotiating power purchasing agreements



Increase regional coordination and collaboration



3.4 Community economic development

Local economic development can be a particularly important way to minimise the impacts of transmission infrastructure and to create shared value. Those surveyed said that the three most highly valued forms of economic benefit were local employment and procurement, investment in community organisations and tourism infrastructure.

PRIORITY ACTIONS CHECKLIST

☐ Preference procurement from local suppliers



☐ Social and environmental criteria in procurement decision-making



BETTER PRACTICE OPPORTUNITIES

Agreements with local businesses for local goods and services



Appendix A

Impacts

This list summarises all impacts identified through the research, including the landholder survey and interviews, a review of industry documents and interviews with Collaborators.

IMPACT	DEFINITION
Reduced land value	Land value, including resale value, is reduced due to factors such as visual amenity, loss of farmable land and reduced utility of land, including limited subdivision options.
Sense of loss	Emotional sense of loss due to factors such as reduced amenity, change in landscape and/or loss of serenity.
Stress	Stress experienced due to anticipating and/or managing impacts during planning and operation.
Disruption to farm biosecurity	Works threatening the biosecurity measures employed on farms through the spread of diseases, pests and/or weeds that enter the property via electricity transmission equipment, construction and maintenance vehicles, or staff. Additionally, commercial concerns, such as delays to the sale of livestock caused by substances sprayed during works, 'never ever land' that needs to be kept pesticide free and interruptions to the commercial agreements landholders have.
Visual impacts	Interruption to the usual visual amenity of the land and community.
Community division	Conflict generated between neighbours or the community over transmission line planning, construction or existence, including, but not limited to, compensation agreements and line placement.
Direct loss of farmable land	Loss of land available for current and future farming purposes. This may be due to restrictions on machinery, construction, land acquisition and/or easements.
Disruption to ongoing farming operations	Disruption to normal operation of farming, including disruption of mothering of livestock due to activities like helicopter flyovers, leaving gates open leading to mass escape of livestock and damage to access tracks.
Compensation inadequate to cover the financial loss associated with electricity transmission infrastructure on my land	Compensation packages that, either in design or in value, are unable to compensate the financial loss associated with transmission infrastructure.

IMPACT	DEFINITION
Disruption to soil health and profile	Disruption to the regular profile of soil, including erosion of access tracks and other assets and soil compaction, as well as displacement of fine sediments, which impacts current or future use of the land.
Reduction in land utility	Limitations on the enterprises landholders are able to operate on their land as a result of transmission infrastructure planning, construction or existence. This includes the inability to plan for future economic enterprises, e.g. cannot construct eco-tourism projects due to reduced visual amenity, limits on access to finance resulting from loss of land value, limits to development options and/or access to finance.
Investment of personal time	Substantive amount of personal time invested in negotiating and engaging with energy transmission infrastructure projects.
Reduction in sense of physical and property safety	Reduction in the sense of personal and property safety, including community safety around transmission lines, as well as vulnerability to lightning and bushfire events on land due to electricity transmission in forests and/or low grassland areas.
Reduced ability to respond to disasters	Perceived impact on the ability for land and properties to be defended in the event of bushfires.
Restrictions on use of equipment or machinery	Disruption to the tools and processes used for normal or future farming operations, e.g. aerial spraying and seeding, irrigation or harvesting machinery, use of augers or height of harvesting equipment that can be used within an easement.
Disruption of construction and/or maintenance of electricity transmission infrastructure occurring on property	Construction and/or maintenance activities disrupting the normal way of life of landholders and communities, e.g. inability to use roads to access their property.
Interruption to biodiversity	Works causing the migration or deterioration of native flora and fauna, especially threatened species and the impact on the natural habitat.
Costs associated with hiring independent advisors	Services and skills landholders employ to assist in the negotiation and planning of transmission line routes, having a negative effect on the landholders' financial position, for example to pay for additional legal advice.
Land maintenance activities	Additional activities landholders must undertake to restore or maintain their land, impacted as a result of planning, construction or maintenance of transmission infrastructure e.g. repairing farm infrastructure from construction impacts.
Restrictions on type of land use	Impact on the type of trees that can be planted on the property due to restrictions on tree heights within a transmission line easement.

IMPACT	DEFINITION
Impact on local businesses	Disruption and/or reduction in local business productivity and output, including local tourism operations, due to the planning, maintenance, or existence of transmission infrastructure, e.g. restrictions on flight paths and landing zones for hot air balloons/helicopters.
Impact on what can be stored or built on land	Inability to erect and maintain structures and/or storage facilities due to the position or transmission infrastructure, e.g. sheds, garages, fences, due to restrictions on activities within a transmission line easement.
Noise disturbances	Audible operations of transmission infrastructure disturbing residents' normal enjoyment of their land.
Reduction in the health and wellbeing of local residents	Mental health impacts related to the planning, construction or existence of transmission infrastructure.
Increase in insurance costs due to risks associated with electricity transmission infrastructure	Overall risk of transmission lines on properties and the impact of this risk on the cost and coverage of insurance available to landholders.
Reduction in land supply available or attractive for new housing developments	Existence or planned existence of transmission infrastructure making future housing developments unattractive for developers by virtue of reduced land supply.
Reduction in productivity having a flow on impact on the local economy	Reduction in on-farm productivity impacting the local economy due to reduction in value-add operations such as eco-tourism and overall reduction in money spent at local businesses.
Restriction on domestic activities	Disturbance to individuals' and communities' normal enjoyment and use of land, e.g. amenity of local parks, inability to construct swimming pools etc. close to easements.
Impact on bulk water supply	Positioning of transmission infrastructure impacting the available bulk water supply available to landholders.
Findings of the environmental and cultural heritage assessments impact what activities can be conducted on my land	Disruption to the use and planned use of land due to the findings of environmental and cultural heritage assessments restricting activities.
Safety*	Reduction in the sense of personal safety enjoyed by landholders, including community safety around transmission lines, as well as vulnerability to lightening and bushfire events on land due to electricity transmission in forests and/or low grassland areas.
Reduced ability to respond to disasters*	Perceived impact on the ability for land and properties to be defended in the event of bushfires.
Land maintenance activities*	Additional activities landholders must undertake to restore or maintains their land, impacted as a result of planning, construction or maintenance of transmission infrastructure e.g. repairing farm infrastructure from construction impacts.

*Additional impacts identified by landholders via open text responses in the survey.



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