



# Agriculture & Energy Social Licence Roundtable - Supporting Landowner and Community Advocacy

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# Landowner and Community Advocate – establishment & objectives

- In late 2020 Transgrid created the Office of the Landowner & Community Advocate to assist the organisation to implement best possible landowner and community engagement practices on all its major transmission projects
- These principles were encapsulated in the Charter which we prepared and which Transgrid endorsed



## 5. General organisation

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The Office of the Advocate is a small independent entity comprising:

- the Landholder and Community Advocate – a person with extensive experience in consumer engagement and protection
- a Deputy Advocate – with similar experience
- administrative support.

## 6. Reporting arrangements

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- The Landowner and Community Advocate is an independent entity reporting directly to the Chair of the Transgrid Board of Directors and the Chief Executive Officer.
- The Office of the Advocate will provide the Chair and the Chief Executive Officer with a report on its operations each year.
- The role of the Advocate will be reviewed 12 months from the date of its establishment.



## Office of the Landowner and Community Advocate

Charter

### 1. Purpose

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The Office of the Landowner and Community Advocate has been established to assist Transgrid to implement the best possible landowner and community engagement practices on all of its major transmission projects.

### 2. Environment

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Transgrid continually undertakes large projects to ensure New South Wales' energy supply into the future. This requires the construction of new electrical infrastructure across publicly and privately owned land. Transgrid is committed to adopting best practice community engagement processes in its dealings with impacted landowners and communities.

### 3. Guiding principles

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1. Landowners and community representatives are entitled to be treated fairly and with respect when dealing with Transgrid.
2. Transgrid processes that relate to impacted landowners and communities will be open and transparent.
3. Outcomes achieved by Transgrid will balance the interests of all parties.
4. The Advocate's Office will operate independently of other Transgrid operations and will be adequately resourced, having access to all relevant Transgrid staff, records and data.
5. Disputes between landowners and Transgrid which cannot be resolved by Transgrid are best dealt with by the NSW Energy and Water Ombudsman and the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner.

### 4. Role of the Advocate

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The Advocate will:

- be the pre-eminent source of advice to Transgrid's Chair, CEO and Executive and Board on all aspects of best practice community engagement and stakeholder consultation
- be consulted by Transgrid regarding communication plans and specific documentation about projects that impact landowners and communities
- contribute to and critically review all Transgrid's policies, strategies, processes and procedures for engagement with communities and landowners
- communicate with Transgrid staff, landowners, communities and the media to understand issues and concerns
- assist Transgrid to be accountable for its undertakings and commitments to landowners and communities
- facilitate the voice of landowners and the broader community in identifying opportunities and alternatives.

The Advocate will not be an arbiter in disputes between landowners and Transgrid and will not determine the location of new transmission infrastructure.

# Landowner and Community Advocate – recommendations

11. *utilises its website more to provide a 'source of truth' for responses to questions that arise and to share presentations that are given to one group of landowners with all the affected landowners so that all are aware of the same information;*
12. *considers the use of a newsletter to provide progress reports on the consultation process;*

13. *upload revised project maps, reflecting appropriate information provided by landowners, at relevant intervals;*
14. *a Q and A be prepared on the question "Why doesn't the information I provided about my property and/or surrounds now appear on the map?"*
15. *staff, in individual discussions with potentially impacted landowners, have regard to feedback received about the specific property and explain why landowner requests can/cannot be acceded to;*
16. *formally respond to the matters raised by Kyeamba landowners at the meeting of 31 March 2021;*
17. *advise affected landowners of its intended response to the Advocate's recommendations;*
18. *consider making a limited EAPS like service available to potentially impacted landowners who might be experiencing anxiety during the route selection process;*
19. *TransGrid consider the use of a landowner from a previous project to speak with the landowners who are potentially affected by Humelink; and*
20. *consider the establishment of one or more reference groups to provide input into the consultation process for the Humelink project.*

## 2.4 List of recommendations

*It is recommended that TransGrid:*

1. *"re-set" landowner and community consultation by holding a meeting with all potentially impacted parties to:*
  - a. *examine all proposed transmission route options (including those proposed by landowners) with detailed advice as to feasibility and reasons for exclusion;*
  - b. *have experts available to discuss all aspects of the project;*
  - c. *provide advice on how TransGrid is using international best practice infrastructure technology in transmission line project; and*
  - d. *provide advice on the remaining steps in the consultation process and how they will be conducted;*
2. *review the mid-year time frame for disclosure of the proposed transmission route and advise landowners;*
3. *conduct a general information session with each regional group along the corridor prior to the commencement of each new stage of the consultation process, such as the commencement of on-site visits. This should explain the process, what it aims to achieve, how it will be conducted and what will be required of them. This should be supported by a fact sheet on the website at the same time;*
4. *review the number of staff required to conduct the consultation on this major project using a best practice model;*
5. *review the list of landowners it is consulting with to ensure that all appropriate landowners are included;*
6. *review the capacity, skills and suitability of staff and contractors involved in landowner and community engagement activities;*
7. *provide appropriate training to all engagement staff focusing on empathy and customer centrality in business operations;*
8. *require all TransGrid staff involved in landowner engagement activities to:*
  - a. *comply with TransGrid guidelines for property visits i.e. provide accurate information about the identity and number of staff/consultants attending the property. Any variation to the originally agreed arrangements should be renegotiated with the property owner;*
  - b. *generally ensure the number of TransGrid staff/consultants attending a property does not significantly exceed the number of owners present at the property. ( e.g. a ratio of five TransGrid staff to one property owner would normally not be considered desirable.); and*
  - e. *ensure that all landowner feedback/communication is responded to in a timely manner and comply with commitments to provide advice by a specific timeframe;*
9. *re-examine how it represents key features on the maps it provides to landowners so as to explain how data is sourced;*
10. *review its consultation documents to remove excessive irrelevant images and marketing material and to provide a less clinical and impersonal tone;*

# Landowner and Community Advocate – further 12 month review

- In the second half of last year Transgrid requested the Advocate revisit community engagement on the HumeLink project and to provide observations on the impact of the previous review's recommendations, as well as any learnings that might have application across the board
- Using a similar methodology to the earlier review, we concluded that there was general stakeholder acknowledgment and appreciation of the additional resources that Transgrid had committed
- We observed that there continued to be concerns over how some engagement initiatives had been executed. As a consequence, we made a number of further recommendations

## 1.7. Consolidated list of recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. the proposed community engagement training package be approved as soon as possible for implementation;
2. the position titles be standardised across the project and training package; and
3. a position be identified within community engagement team and the land acquisition team to be responsible for the recording and monitoring of relevant training for all members of those teams, including contractors.
4. arrangements are put in place for the CCG presentations to be posted on the day after the CCG meetings are held; and
5. urgent steps be taken to reduce the response time for correspondence.
6. a simple monthly project newsletter/update be re-instated;
7. a senior HumeLink officer, preferably the Project Director, be available at all community information sessions;
8. consideration be given to a 'landowner portal' platform on the webpage;
9. clear agreed statements and FAQs be developed and publicised on the roles and responsibilities of Transgrid, NSW RFS and the landowner in relation to both the prevention and management of bushfires in the vicinity of transmission lines;
10. where a landowner wants to discuss an alternative route across their property technical experts from the project with the ability to consider minor route changes across the property walks the line to understand its impact on the landowner and the community.
11. a review of the CCGs be conducted to determine:
  - a. the number of CCGs required for the HumeLink project based on geographic spread; and
  - b. the appropriate CCG structure for the management of both individual Transgrid projects and overall project impacts on the community of Wagga Wagga;
  - c. timing of meetings to enable greater participation by landowners;
  - d. appropriateness of the current terms of reference; and
  - e. access and usage of the register of CCG questions and answers; and
  - f. the protocols for business, including the agenda setting and meeting frequency processes.
12. place managers actively encourage affected and interested landowners to nominate for membership or to attend meetings as observers.
13. CCG agendas be planned well in advance and be aligned with the project activities rather than being at set time intervals. This would allow upcoming project activities such as compensation offers or surveys to be discussed with the group prior to the action being taken.
14. CCG meeting packages, be emailed at least seven days before the meeting, and include briefing papers on each of the agenda items to enable members to consider the items and send the secretariat questions before the meeting and provide informed input to the meeting discussion.

# Landowner and Community Advocate – noted improvements

- General landowner observation that Transgrid's engagement had improved considerably
- Significant increase in staffing resources
- Development of landowner-centric training packages, including the e-module (corporate induction)
- Establishment of Community Consultative Groups
- Improved systems for managing correspondence
- Improved information on the HumeLink webpage
- Significant improvement in the interactive maps of the proposed transmission line route
- Establishment of an Engagement Management team
- Development of a detailed easement acquisition package and other document templates/ procedures



Questions?

