

HTP REGIONAL REFERENCE GROUP

Monday 14 October 2024

Via Teams

Chaired by: Bob Pynsent – Independent Chair

Attendees

Online	In person	Apology	Name	Represents
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bob Pynsent	Independent Chair
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sue Moore (SM)	Mayor Singleton Council
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Daniel Watton	Mayor Cessnock City Council
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	TBA	Lake Macquarie City Council
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	John Sullivan (JFS)	Singleton community
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Phillip O’Neill (PO)	Cessnock community
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Diane Crosdale (DC)	Lake Macquarie community
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Craig Anderson (CA)	Regional Environment
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Samantha Martin-Williams (SMW)	Regional Business
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Nathan Towney (NT)	Regional Aboriginal
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Katie Brassil (KB)	RRG Secretariat
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Alana Kosklin (AK)	RRG Secretariat

Visitors

	NAME	POSITION
Online	John Ottaway	NSW EnergyCo HTP Property Acquisition Manager
Online	Rodney Groves	NSW EnergyCo HTP Community Team

Declarations of interest

Nil to declare.

Agenda item discussion and actions

Item 1. Welcome and Acknowledgement

The Chair delivered an Acknowledgement of Country and welcomed members to the October extraordinary meeting of the RRG.

The Chair extended a warm welcome to Daniel Watton the recently elected Mayor of Cessnock City Council.

SMW asked the Chair is additional time could be allocated to items currently in the general business section as they were important project issues that warranted time for discussion.

Item 2. Chair's meeting with EnergyCo 14 August:

The Chair advised the RRG that he had met with the HTP Project Director and Deputy Project Directors, Andrew Power and Jess Ireland respectively, to discuss the following items:

1. Request that EnergyCo make provision to cover the cost for additional engineering support for Councils.

In relation to additional engineering support for Councils there is precedence of this being the case for the CWO REZ. This issue is progressing as a priority and has been approved as an initiative for the project team to implement by the SteerCo. The team are just working through the detail of how it will work for HTP including the amount for each council area.

2. Support 'in principle' Hunter Wildlife Rescue's proposals.

The HTP project have committed to providing funding to re-establish a soft release pen. The remaining proposals will be considered in the EIS process.

3. Convey feedback and common themes expressed by presenters re: community consultation and engagement from those who attended both Singleton and Cessnock RRG meetings.

The Chair advised the HTP project leaders of the frustrations being expressed by landowners due to the length of time it was taking to gain information about the project

and its impacts. The HTP Project Directors were receptive and attentive and made a commitment to action a number of items. They also extended an invitation for the RRG Chair to meet and provide feedback on the HTP to the SteerCo.

In response to the request for engineering 'ground truthing' activities members of the HTP Technical Team were on site with members of the Pokolbin Mountains Road Residents, Landholders and Users Group at 10am on 14/10.

SMW - noted the positive responses as a result of the Chair meeting with project leadership and suggested it continue as a regular feedback and communication activity.

PO – expressed frustration with EnergyCo not providing a timely response to the request for independent engineering support for those impacted by construction. The delay will impact the ability of stakeholders to maximise their response/ engage through the EIS process.

Discussion re: the issuing of opening letters providing certainty by clearly outlining the impacts of the transmission infrastructure or potential road easement. This has also seen an increase in property owners entering into access agreements to facilitate necessary survey work.

Item 2. Property Acquisition Update:

Presented by Property Acquisitions Manager – John Ottaway

Issuing of opening letters has commenced. This process should be completed by end of November. Valuers have already started the process with some offers due soon.

The opening letters are being issued to both landowners impacted by the transmission easement and road easement eg. Pokolbin Mountains Road straightening of corners to facilitate construction traffic.

Chair – asked to explain 4-year construction lease for road widening (duration construction and will be acquired if ongoing need, or returned to owner after 4 years)

PO – asked the number of impacted landowners.

The RRG were advised less than 25 transmission impacted landowners and less than 20 road access landowners.

4. Industry Briefing Overview and Feedback

Rodney introduced himself and thanked JFS (Singleton) and SMW (Newcastle) for attending the August industry sessions. Over 100 companies have since registered with ICN Gateway.

Presentation slides attached

Item 5. EIS Consultation and Engagement

- Aboriginal Focus Group (RAPS) – three sessions in the past week in consultation with EMM who are delivering the Aboriginal cultural heritage assessment. Community has walked most of the line and been providing feedback on areas of interest and concern. Community wants next steps regarding mitigations and compensation for impacts.
- All three groups are aiming to work together on fieldwork to ensure there has been maximum coverage and to deliver best outcomes
- Community consultation/engagement activities – pop up sessions in the communities along proposed construction haulage routes.
- Almost 900 people currently receive the monthly electronic direct mail update. The industry briefings boosted this number by around 130 which is a positive reflection on the industry engagement sessions.
- It has been almost 12 months since community team conducted the very first HTP community information sessions.
- ‘Refining the HTP’ will be the next publication produced to provide an update on the HTP’s progress.
- To broaden the engagement and consultation there will be a bulk mail out, introducing the HTP and asking people to select areas they’d like more information about, to those who live along the proposed construction haulage roads. Those within 5km of the transmission corridor will also receive the bulk mail out as part of ongoing engagement.
- Technical briefings open to stakeholders who have registered an interest through the bulk mailout and/or via a call out in the monthly electronic direct mail update eg. Biodiversity, traffic, Aboriginal cultural heritage
- Continuing to work with special interest groups

PO asked the RRG be provided the maps with the proposed construction haulage routes.

RG advised they were still in draft form and when finalised they will be shared with the RGG and community.

Presentation slides attached

Item 6. General Business

Hearing from business

SMW commended the industry briefing but asked for clarification about how businesses can engage with the project.

The RRG were advised the industry briefings were a proactive activity ensuring local Hunter businesses were aware of the project and promoting the avenue via ICN Gateway to register their interest in the project. It was explained a contract would be awarded for the design and construct of the HTP and the purpose of using ICN Gateway was to ensure a prepopulated list of local Hunter suppliers was available to the successful contractor and the various sub-contractors.

There was a discussion around the benefits for industry as distinct from the need to push for the Hunter first benefit sharing package which had been discussed since consultation commenced with community.

Strategic Biodiversity Offsets

CA spoke about the benefits a strategic biodiversity offset strategy could deliver to the region particularly because the HTP was a critical state infrastructure project which allows for a level of flexibility when developing an offset strategy. He explained the benefits that could flow to the region and the need to maximise biodiversity benefits on a regional basis.

CA requested access to biodiversity data/ reports to review the impacts and explore strategically how the region could benefit.

DC expressed very strong support for sentiment that had been expressed by both SMW and CA about the importance of biodiversity offsets and Hunter First Benefit Sharing.

Hunter First Benefit Sharing

Reinforced and underpinned by the 'Hunter First' project principle the RRG agreed they needed to focus their efforts on delivering outcomes for the region via a strategic biodiversity offset and a Hunter first benefit sharing package.

SMW suggested a meeting with the SteerCo was an ideal opportunity to raise these important issues with EnergyCo.

Action: It was agreed the RRG Chair seek to meet with both the HTP Project Team Directors and EnergyCo's SteerCo, prior to the end of the year, to provide regional feedback on the project. Additionally, the RRG seek commitments from EnergyCo to deliver on a regionally beneficial biodiversity strategy and benefit sharing package.

The Chair noted the Hunter was hosting a critical state infrastructure project for the benefit of the entire state and benefit sharing has been integral to all early consultation and the purpose of the RRG.

Other Business

It was noted David Kitto, who had been NSW EnergyCo's Strategic Lead for Environment and Community on the HTP, has finished on the project. The EIS process is now being led by Carolyn McCallig.

PO asked for information about who was leading the EIS and the various technical studies.

There being no further business the Chair thanked members for their attendance and closed the meeting at 3:05pm

Actions

Action	Responsible	Status
<ul style="list-style-type: none">The RRG Chair seek to meet with both the HTP Project Team Directors and EnergyCo's SteerCo, prior to the end of the year, to provide regional feedback on the project. Additionally, the RRG seek commitments from EnergyCo to deliver on a regionally beneficial biodiversity strategy and benefit sharing package.	Chair /Secretariat	ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Provide information to the RRG re: who is leading the EIS and the various technical studiesrequested access to biodiversity data/ reports	Chair/ Secretariat	ongoing

Upcoming meetings

The next ordinary meeting of the HTP RRG will be:

Date: Monday 4 November 2024

Time: 2:00 – 4:00pm

Place: LMCC (tbc)

Industry briefing sessions – overview

August 26-30



EnergyCo

150+ people attended across 5 sessions

Location	Number of attendees
Singleton, 26 August	10
Cessnock, 27 August	21
Toronto, 28 August	23
Newcastle, 29 August	> 40
Online, 30 August	> 60



Industry briefing sessions – themes and feedback



EnergyCo

- Support for the project's early engagement with local industry
- Support for the project's Hunter-first commitment
- Requests to contractually ensure the use of local suppliers by the design and construct contractor
- >75 businesses to date registered on the ICN Gateway



EIS engagement



EnergyCo

Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) engagement

- Feedback

Community consultation/engagement activities

- Pop-up community information stalls in each zone eg. Singleton Square, Cessnock Village, Avondale Shopping Village (Cooranbong)
- Community drop-in sessions late November
- Bulk mailout inviting people to select topics of interest to receive targeted updates
- Sensitive receiver engagement

Technical Sessions

- For stakeholders who have registered an interest through the bulk mailout and/or via a call out in the monthly EDM eg. Biodiversity, traffic, Aboriginal cultural heritage