



The Energy
Charter

Better Practice Social Licence Guideline

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

theenergycharter.com.au

#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.

Contents

About this Better Practice Guideline	4
Our social licence approach	7
Our research	10
Better Practice Guidance	13
CHAPTER 1: Landholder relationships and services	15
1.1 Community involvement in route planning	16
1.2 Engagement and communication	19
1.3 Tower placement and screening	22
1.4 Access	24
1.5 Compensation	27
1.6 Safety education	30
CHAPTER 2: Management of on-farm activities and infrastructure	33
2.1 Biosecurity	34
2.2 Use of materials and management practices	37
2.3 Farm infrastructure	39
CHAPTER 3: Community relationships and services	41
3.1 Mental health and services	42
3.2 Community benefit sharing	44
3.3 Community infrastructure	46
3.4 Community economic development	48
Appendices	51
Appendix A	52
Appendix B	55
Appendix C	56

About this Better Practice Guideline

Purpose

This Better Practice Guideline is the result of an Energy Charter #BetterTogether collaboration.

It was co-developed by landholder and community representatives and a group of electricity transmission businesses to:

- Build a shared understanding of the impacts and potential benefits associated with hosting energy transmission infrastructure for agricultural landholders
- Provide practical social licence to operate ('social licence') guidance to mitigate negative impacts and prioritise shared value through the energy transition.

Who was involved?

An essential part of developing this 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).

Collectively, we refer to ourselves as Collaborators.

Our COG included participants that provide state or national representation of agricultural landholders, communities and industry and whose insights are informed through direct engagement with affected and interested stakeholders. While we worked together to produce this Better Practice Guideline, we note that it is not intended to replace individual policies, or the ongoing advocacy work, of the organisations involved.

Every stage of this #BetterTogether initiative was a collaboration – from designing our landholder survey, to analysing the results and developing this Better Practice Guideline.

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.**

A special thank you to all COG members for their knowledge, insights and commitment to developing this Better Practice Guideline.

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

Our research partner was **KPMG Australia.**

Why does it matter?

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.

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 development of this Better Practice Guideline has been critical to developing a deeper understanding of:

- The ways electricity transmission infrastructure impacts agricultural landholders and their communities
- The principles that underpin how to build and maintain social licence for landholders and communities affected by transmission developments
- Practical opportunities to minimise impacts and deliver shared value during the planning, construction, operation and decommissioning of transmission infrastructure.

Who is it for?

By validating impacts and identifying opportunities to improve outcomes for agricultural landholders, this 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.

This 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.

The research that informed this Better Practice Guideline was specifically focussed on hearing directly from agricultural landholders hosting, or who have been approach to host, transmission infrastructure on their land. However, we recognise that landholders are also members of their broader communities and can provide insight into the impacts and opportunities relevant to their neighbours and at a community level. For this reason, these Better Practice Guidelines refer to better practice actions and opportunities for both agricultural landholders and their communities more broadly. For example, both compensation for landholders hosting transmission infrastructure and Community Benefit sharing are referenced in this Better Practice Guideline. For clarity each activity and opportunity listed, includes a description specifying who it is most relevant to.

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 also publishes an annual #BetterTogether disclosure, assessing how the #BetterTogether program is delivering outcomes for customers and communities.

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



Supporting resources

This 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.

As explanations around each activity are brief, a range of supporting resources on specific topics is available at on the **Better Practice Social Licence Guideline** webpage.

Together, we also recognise that there are other groups affected by transmission infrastructure, such as First Nations communities, who will have their own particular needs and interests. For guidance on better practice First Nations community engagement see the Energy Charter Better Practice First Nations Community Engagement Toolkit.

Our social licence approach

This 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.

The concept of a social licence to operate emerged in the late 1990s, as affected communities and governments required the mining industry to increase its focus on social obligations and corporate social responsibility programs.¹ It is now considered a key condition for many other industries, including in the energy sector.

Our social licence definition

This Better Practice Guideline is underpinned by the below definition of social licence.

In all instances in this document, the term 'social licence' refers to social licence to operate, recognising that 'licence' is a dynamic concept. It is neither a buyable commodity, nor something that exists in perpetuity.

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.

This definition was informed by the research and developed with Collaborators to bring consistency to the energy industry's understanding of how social licence is built and maintained. It draws from the definition used by the Australia Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA).²

1 Nina Hall, Justine Lacey, Simone Carr-Cornish, Anne-Maree Dowd. (2015) 'Social licence to operate: understanding how a concept has been translated into practice in energy industries', *Journal of Cleaner Production*, Volume 86, Pages 301-310.

2 ARENA. (2020) 'Establishing the social licence to operate large scale solar facilities in Australia: insights from social research for industry', p.3.

Our social licence principles

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 research³ 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.

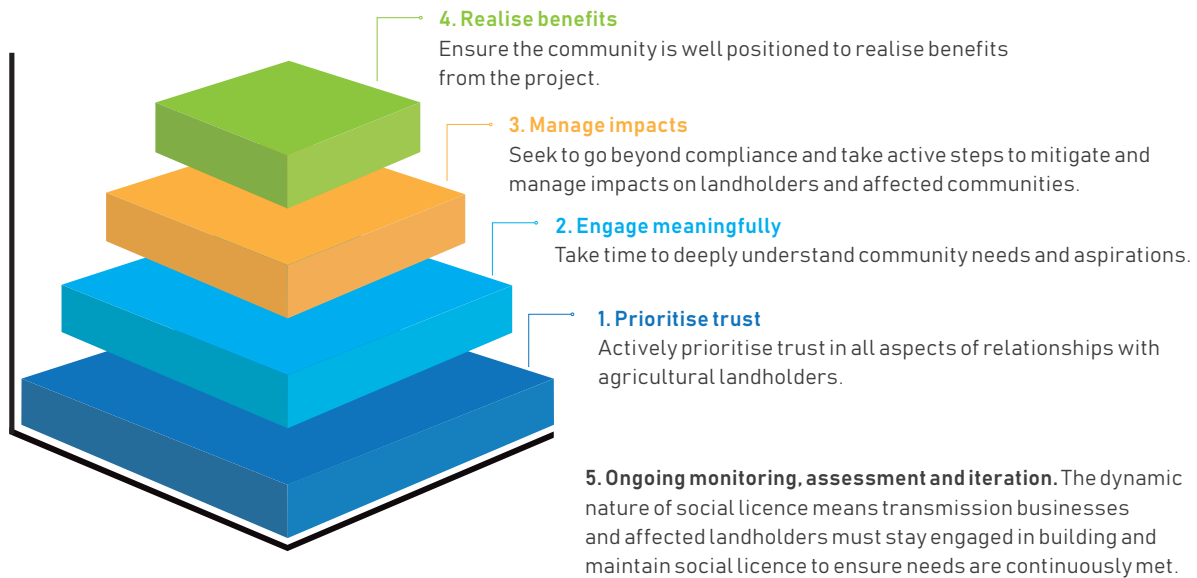
1. **Procedural fairness:** giving affected landholders and communities reasonable opportunity to engage with decision making that can, or will, impact their lives and livelihoods.
2. **Distributional fairness:** considering equity across tangible and intangible outcomes for affected landholders and 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.

3 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, Airon 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.

FIGURE 1: Building social licence for transmission infrastructure projects



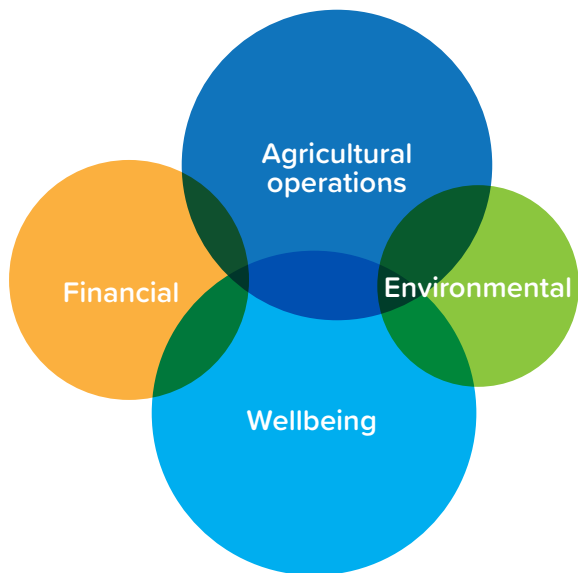
- 1. Prioritising trust:** recognising that relationships matter and need to be actively considered across all stages of a project lifecycle and in all areas of planning and decision-making related to transmission infrastructure projects. Trust underpins each of the other elements because it is the foundation of working in partnership with agricultural landholders to reduce negative impacts and achieve positive outcomes.
- 2. Engaging meaningfully with landholders and affected communities:** putting the principles of procedural fairness and partnership into practice. The Energy Charter has published a separate Better Practice Engagement Guideline to support Better Practice in this area.
- 3. Managing impacts:** responsible stewardship, where impacts are avoided, minimised and managed is central to meeting agricultural landholders' expectations of transmission companies. Managing impacts at all phases of a project lifecycle is a core focus of this guideline.
- 4. Realising benefits** is the other key element addressed within this guideline. The concept of benefit-sharing puts the principle of distributional fairness into practice, recognising that even if impacts are well managed, they can't be eliminated entirely. Receiving a fair share of the benefits then becomes key to ensuring equitable outcomes.
- 5. Ongoing monitoring, assessment and iteration** of transmission businesses' approach to building social licence should be a continuous endeavour. In practice this means adopting adaptive management approaches that adjust practices to ensure ongoing effectiveness. This continuous improvement approach can be supported by the Energy Charter's **Accountability framework**.

Our research

The research that informed this 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.

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



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

All impacts identified are addressed in this Better Practice Guideline.

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



Research snapshot: What we heard

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



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

What is it?

Landholder relationships and services refers to the way in which agricultural landholders are engaged, as well as the amenities and support they are offered to minimise impact and realise benefits.

There are six key themes for agricultural landholder relationships and services:

- **Landholder and community involvement in route planning:** Involvement in route planning and design wherever possible, supports minimising overall impact
- **Engagement and communication:** Early, ongoing and meaningful engagement and communication is critical to understanding and responding to impacts, as well as identifying opportunity to create benefit
- **Access:** Planning around seasonal activity is important to manage disturbance and impacts associated with accessing property all stages of a transmission project
- **Compensation:** Compensation arrangements can be enhanced to address landholders' concerns that compensation is inadequate for the level of impact and disturbance experienced
- **Tower placement and screening:** It is important to reduce visual and operational impacts as far as possible, including through tower placement and screening
- **Safety education:** There are opportunities to enhance approaches to education on safety around transmission lines.

1.1 Community involvement in route planning

What we heard

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. Some landholders also noted biodiversity impacts, which may diminish the natural features valued by the local community and aesthetics of the area.

“40% of the land will be unsuited for potato crops as a result [of the proposed route design].”

One landholder interviewed discussed the impact to agricultural operations from hosting multiple transmission towers. This landholder discussed having to adapt their farming operations, including changing land use practices to minimise the impact of restrictions on the use of irrigation equipment when infrastructure was put in decades ago. They are now required to re-adapt their operations for new lines, which have a larger footprint. The landholder is experiencing the cumulative impacts of uncertainty around the placement of new infrastructure, as well as the plans for decommissioning the old infrastructure, creating challenges for the management of their property.

Another interviewed landholder described a significant portion of their land being deemed unsustainable to farm, given the placement of the transmission route. Despite the potential personal impact of this situation, they were most concerned about the wider implications of this loss of productivity on food security around the country.

This farmer suggested that landholders should be more involved in the early planning to minimise impacts to high yield farmland.

Many regional communities and landholders have also publicly suggested undergrounding transmission lines to avoid visual impacts. In some instances, where undergrounding has not been progressed, communities have expressed that this option was not fully investigated or given adequate consideration.

Landholders also felt that the route planning process could be a significant source of tension and contribute to conflict in communities.

Our key take-aways

Early engagement with landholders and community in route planning is essential to ensuring that wherever possible, transmission routes are designed to minimise impacts.

It is essential that landholders are provided with detailed and factual information on what is proposed to be built and what activities can and cannot take place around transmission infrastructure. Involvement in route planning can also be a way of supporting landholders and communities to gain additional value from the location of easements and infrastructure. For example, well-designed easements on Crown Land could become a public asset, in the form of public space for recreational use (in accordance with relevant safety guidelines).

It is also critical that open and transparent consultation occurs throughout the planning and construction of transmission. Engagement on undergrounding should include adequate consideration of all options to reduce or compensate for visual – and other – impacts. Undergrounding transmission infrastructure can be comparatively more expensive and in some instances may equally compromise productive land

for landholders, due to vegetation clearing requirements for safety purposes. Undergrounding cables also reduces the expected technical service life of transmission infrastructure and cables can require longer repair times for unexpected electrical faults. The cumulative impact of land use, environmental, technical, operational and economic considerations can limit the viability of undergrounding as an option.

How can we do better?

PRIORITY ACTIONS CHECKLIST



Participation fees



As far as possible, offer 'participation fees' to landholders to engage in consultations and provide feedback on hosting new transmission on their land, particularly where engagement potentially disrupts income-producing activities.

These payments should be made available to potentially affected landholders in the design and approvals phase of a transmission development project, in recognition of their time and participation.

These payments are separate and in addition to, compensation paid to landholders for the acquisition of easements.



Consideration and communication around undergrounding



Consider undergrounding when it is a viable option as part of community and landholder consultation. Investigation reports and supporting analysis, including the challenges, benefits and impacts of overhead compared to underground transmission designs from a landholder, community, environmental, technical and cost perspective should be completed and made publicly available. In some instances, it may be preferable for research to be conducted by an independent party with appropriate expertise. It is also important that this information be well circulated with communities, this could include through direct community and landholder engagement and project newsletters.



Upgrades and maintenance activities in construction and operations



Facilitate upgrades and maintenance activities to remediate the physical impacts of construction to enable greater value to be gained by landholders.

This could include developing new access tracks, replacing, improving, or relocating fencing. It may also include post-construction landscaping that improves site amenity, or productivity, as part of construction and post-works rehabilitation commitments. These activities should be grounded in engagement with landholders on opportunities to create shared value from construction.



Addressing power imbalances between transmission businesses and landholders



Take steps to better recognise and address the power imbalances that may inhibit the building of trust and rapport with landholders. This includes providing services to mitigate this imbalance, for example, access to funds for professional advice, ensuring broad access to information on compensation (refer to section 1.5 Compensation) and improving the training provided to land liaison officers and complaints officers (refer to section 1.2 Engagement and Communication).

BETTER PRACTICE OPPORTUNITIES

Consideration of public amenity of easements

Engage with community members to understand needs and priorities and investigate opportunities to create valued public amenities within easements on public land (e.g. walking trails, public gardens). Opportunities to improve public amenity can also be considered when towers are being decommissioned and most likely require a community partnership approach.

In all instances, community safety around transmission towers and lines will dictate what is practical and feasible.



LIGHTHOUSE EXAMPLE: PROJECT PARTICIPATION AND ACCESS ALLOWANCE

Powerlink has established a **Project Participation and Access Allowance** to compensate affected landholders for their time and participation during the scope and construction phases of a project. The payments are available to eligible landholders who derive their primary income from the property and whose ability to conduct their income generating activities will be impacted by access and engagement on their land. The amount is not contingent on their property being selected for a transmission line route and not tied to any future compensation they may receive.

1.2 Engagement and communication

What we heard

Overall, landholders expressed disappointment and frustration with the methods and quality of engagement they had participated in.

Some landholders were particularly aggrieved, feeling that decisions that affected their core business were made without a site visit to their property.

“Get on the ground and learn about the region first...don’t just draw a line on a map.”

Others were frustrated at having to work with multiple land agents, or representatives, who they felt had limited knowledge of their specific context and concerns.

These experiences also had the impact of decreasing landholder confidence and trust in the ability of transmission businesses to minimise impacts. In addition, landholders felt that poor engagement impacted on community relationships and could lead to conflict.

“I feel disrespected. I just want to feel respected. This is my land and my home.”

On the other hand, one landholder who had a dedicated contact point had confidence that this person’s understanding of their specific biosecurity requirements would facilitate them to better support the management of biosecurity risks on his property.

On-farm engagement was seen as critical to truly understanding the impact of transmission lines and routes. One landholder spoke about how challenging it was to communicate how much of their land would be impacted by the ‘zig-zag pattern’ of the proposed transmission route without onsite engagement.

“If they get communication right, that will help them get towers up.”

Another landholder explained that although the agreed transmission route was not their preference, negotiating in person at their property supported them and the transmission business to ‘give and take’ during negotiations.

Landholders provided many suggestions for improving engagement to both minimise impacts and ultimately lead to better outcomes and increased trust.

Our key take-aways

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.

Key impacts including stress, financial impact and loss of amenity can be mitigated through improved engagement and communication.

It is also noted that communication and engagement are two-way processes and require participation from both parties. Transmission businesses have an opportunity to lift their practices and have a role to play in building trust and enabling engagement (for example, by offering participation payments) so that landholders are supported and incentivised to participate.

How can we do better?

PRIORITY ACTIONS CHECKLIST



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



- Provide a designated person, such as a 'land liaison officer' or 'land agent', for each landowner potentially impacted by hosting transmission infrastructure, that dedicates a portion of their engagement onsite
- Provide a 24/7 contact number throughout the project planning and construction phase, including post-construction to ensure there is a central contact point as landholders adjust to working around new infrastructure. This contact point should be equipped to provide information in relation to agreed access arrangements and safety protocols
- Provide a simple method for landholders to update their contact and property information.

Refer to section 1.4: Access for more land access and notification guidance.



Regional engagement teams



For major transmission development projects, have regional community engagement teams and/or regional coordination officers in place to ensure a local presence, familiar with the transmission project, the region and its community.

These teams are not to replace dedicated land agents for directly affected landholders, but to ensure neighbours and community who do not have direct access to a land agent are adequately consulted and supported through the process.

BETTER PRACTICE OPPORTUNITIES

Community engagement training for land agents and complaints officers

Extend stakeholder and community engagement training opportunities to land agents/ land liaison officers and other primary contacts for landholders.

This training can be supported by the Energy Charter's Better Practice Engagement Guideline.



Better understanding social factors

Undertake preliminary research to better understand the social, economic and environmental factors that shape regional priorities and community expectations to better inform engagement and communication approaches. This may include, for example, identifying and developing a practical understanding of the industries and types of agricultural production common to the region, as well as socio-political demographics. Understanding other developments in the region and the potential for cumulative impact is also critical – for example other energy projects occurring as part of Renewable Energy Zone (REZ), or major road, rail and telecommunications project in the region.



ElectraNet's virtual Community Engagement Room



LIGHTHOUSE EXAMPLE: NEW TOOLS FOR MAJOR PROJECT ENGAGEMENT

ElectraNet's Project EnergyConnect – a high voltage 330kV interconnector between South Australia and New South Wales – created a virtual Community Engagement Room to assist engaging with the local community and stakeholders. ElectraNet combined face-to-face meetings with digital communication tools to reach as many people as possible, including landholders, neighbours, Traditional Owners, Local, State and Commonwealth Governments and other interested parties.

This tool proved invaluable when Covid-19 restricted regional travel and face-to-face meetings, as it allowed communication to continue and ensured the community still had timely access to up-to-date information on the project. It also increased the accessibility of information for those unable to participate in other types of engagement (for example, those with low mobility, or limited access to transport).

In total, the virtual engagement room had 2,444 unique visitors, with 1,270 resources were downloaded.

1.3 Tower placement and screening

What we heard

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.

“The new towers are much more imposing than the older towers and much more intruding than I imagined they would be.”

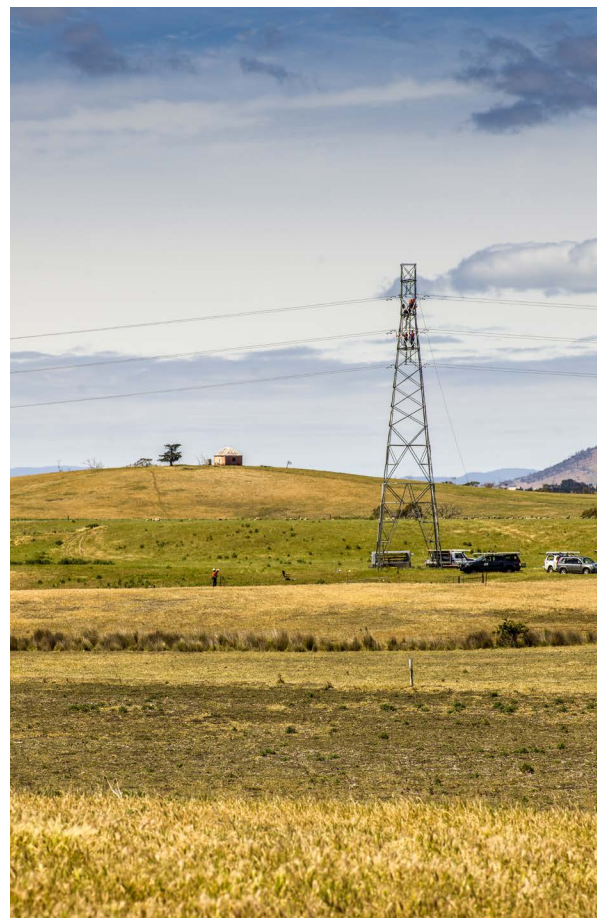
58% of surveyed landholders identified visual impacts as significant.

73% of surveyed landholders were supportive of using landscaping or vegetation screening to mitigate visual impact.

Our key take-away

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 is used. For example, this may include discussing irrigation needs, the location of key water sources, such as dams and bores, are how these are utilised in day-to-day operations.

There are also opportunities to proactively discuss screening options to ensure landholders and communities are adequately informed on viable options.



How can we do better?

PRIORITY ACTIONS CHECKLIST

Placement of towers to minimise impacts

Proactively discuss with landholders how the position or placement of towers could be adjusted to minimise impacts on operations and prioritise their preferences throughout the design process. Throughout this process, the feasibility of options should be made clear from the outset, so that landholders are clear on the parameters of what is possible. This should also include working with landholders to determine any visual mitigation techniques (e.g. targeted vegetation screening) to minimise impacts from key vantage points.

BETTER PRACTICE OPPORTUNITIES

Landscaping and screening options to reduce impact

Where substations or switching stations are in the view of roadways, or impact the visual amenity of an area, consult with the community on design, screening and landscaping options, including which plant species may be used to effectively screen the infrastructure.

It is important that all screening options are considered together with an assessment of security and bushfire risks.



LIGHTHOUSE EXAMPLE: LANDSCAPING TO MINIMISING VISUAL IMPACT

At the Staverton switching station site in North West Tasmania, where three high voltage transmission lines converge, TasNetworks has planted a 50m buffer strip, parallel to Staverton Road, to act as a vegetation cover. This buffer, as part of the site landscaping plan, will screen the site from view of the road in a relatively short time, aligned to the construction of the switching station.

This proactive approach will reduce the visual impact of the switching station from the main road for the community of Staverton.

1.4 Access

What we heard

56% of surveyed landholders reported disruptions to their ongoing farming operations and productivity due to construction and maintenance activities.

“They have recently done a helicopter inspection of their line right whilst I am lambing. I have significant mismothering issues because of it.”

78% of surveyed landholders were supportive of having input into the timing of construction and maintenance activities to reduce disruption to their farming operations. Landholders were also supportive of enhanced notification systems, to give them an opportunity to prepare, including moving livestock in advance of helicopter flyovers.

“Soil recovery is still being done on my land and could take 15 years to get back to original condition.”

Additionally, some landholders reported that they have had to undertake significant and costly works to restore or maintain their land, impacted as a result of hosting transmission infrastructure, or accept the poorer condition of land all together.

One landholder said impacts to soil structure were irreconcilable when construction occurred in the rainy season. They felt that the tight timeframes for project construction meant local landholders weren't listened to on what was best for their land and construction in the wet season meant soil structure was altered. The recovery from this event has had a long-term impact on the soil health of their land, impacting farming yields.

Another interviewed landholder was comfortable with the temporary intrusion of construction in principle but was concerned that the transmission business didn't understand the risks associated with weather conditions in their area. Their concern was that construction would commence then have to pause due to rain, extending the time he would be unable to use his prime land.

Our key take-aways

Many agricultural and farming operations, such as lambing and harvesting, are inherently tied to the seasons.

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.

While transmission companies may face some constraints in their ability to significantly change work schedules, it is essential the timing and way properties are accessed is managed in close consultation with landholders, as impacts can have significant implications for farming activities, revenue, wellbeing and biosecurity (refer to section 2.1, 'Biosecurity').

How can we do better?

PRIORITY ACTIONS CHECKLIST



Provide clear schedules, detailing requirements for access

For new transmission builds and upgrades provide landholders with a clear schedule of activity and access requirements ahead of time, including:

- the planned dates and times when access is sought and any variables that may affect proposed timing and how these will be communicated
- the types of activities to be conducted on the land during access
- the purpose of access (for example, surveys and physical investigations, or works)
- the nature of proposed investigations (for example, soil composition, groundwater, flora, fauna, indigenous sites)
- the specified area or areas of land which are requested to be accessed (if this can be reasonably identified prior to gaining physical access)
- the expected point or points of entry.

Proactively provide landholders with the opportunities to specify how each activity may impact operations and/or livestock and if impacts will be greater at certain times.

Take all reasonable and practicable steps to limit impact and disturbance. This may include adjusting schedules, access and onsite protocols to avoid certain times of year or limit access under specific weather conditions.

For maintenance activities, provide landholders with information regarding the frequency and format of inspections, including notification time periods.



Easy and timely access to records of access on request

In addition to taking all reasonable measures to minimise the impact of access on both landowners and the land itself, including by adhering to agreed access and management plans, landholders should be granted easy and timely access to records of access on request (in line with applicable privacy and records management legislation).

This includes:

- Records of communications regarding land access arrangements
- Records of entry for staff and contractors, including the time of access, areas accessed, reason for entry and activities conducted.

These records may be captured via QR codes for properties, where this is an option.



Clear steps and contacts for complaints

Publish clear steps to follow and relevant persons to contact to escalate complaints for people who have concerns, or are not satisfied with responses or actions taken by the transmission business in respect to land access and use.



BETTER PRACTICE OPPORTUNITIES

Management plan reviews

Ensure agreed access, land and easement management plans include a provision for review and that this includes the opportunity for landholders to:

- Provide feedback on the conduct and compliance of the transmission business and its contractors
- Make amendments to address any issues or concerns.



Financial support for landholder mitigation activities

For new transmission infrastructure, provide financial support (ahead of easement compensation payments) in lieu of time and fees associated with landholder mitigation activities, for example moving stock or paying agistment fees.



1.5 Compensation

What we heard

65% of surveyed landholders felt that the level of impact they have, or will, experience is not adequately compensated for.

“We are not compensated for replacement land at market rates, inhibiting our ability to maintain the productive capacity of the forest estate.”

67% of surveyed landholders were supportive of compensation being offered in multiple payments, rather than a one-off amount to better account for changes in value, land maintenance activities and overall more appropriately remediate the impacts experienced. This may be particularly attractive for intergenerational farming business, where it is intended that the property will be passed on the future generations, or for those who are concerned about the future sale of the land.

The availability of compensation payments can also contribute to community division, particularly during route selection phase. Some landholders expressed concern around transparency of compensation agreements due to confidentiality clauses.

Our key take-aways

Compensation is an important way to recognise and remediate the impacts of hosting of transmission infrastructure that cannot be otherwise mitigated.

Whilst 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.

From the perspective of procedural fairness, principles for determining compensation need to be transparent, understood by all parties from the outset and applied consistently. It is also critical that all offers of compensation include a rigorous assessment of the impacts specific to each property, so that costs and disturbances are fully understood.

It is also important to recognise that negotiations often occur:

- At time in the development process where the research has identified heightened levels of uncertainty and concern from landholders regarding proposed developments
- Within the broader context of compounding impacts from multiple infrastructure projects, for example renewable energy developments being progressed at the same time as transmission lines.

Since our research was conducted, there have been significant announcements from both the NSW and Victorian Governments on new payments for landholders hosting high-voltage powerlines on their properties. Importantly, these payments are on top of the existing compensation payments being offered directly by transmission businesses for the acquisition of easements. In these jurisdictions, these additional payments may go some way to addressing the issues of adequacy raised by landholders.

How can we do better?

PRIORITY ACTIONS CHECKLIST



Transparent, plain English information regarding compensation



Ensure detailed and plain English information on compensation is made publicly available and provided directly to landholders early in the consultation process.

All landholders potentially impacted by transmission infrastructure should be provided with information on:

- The circumstances in which compensation is available
- When compensation will be negotiated and the process for negotiating
- How compensation is calculated and what is considered when making an offer
- When and how compensation is paid (e.g. partial, one-off or annualised payments)
- Support available to assist landholders with the negotiation process – for example the payment of professional costs
- The availability of other payments made before compensation is negotiated, for example access and participation fees and information on when and how these can be accessed.



Annualised compensation



Wherever possible, provide the option for compensation to be annualised.

It is noted the parameters around compensation differ from state to state, depending on state-based legislation, payment schemes and funding models.



Easy and timely access to compensation for professional costs



Provide landholders easy and timely access to compensation for professional costs incurred. This may include the compensation of legal, financial and taxation advice for those negotiating the payment of large lump sum compensation, or the reimbursement of costs associated with obtaining an independent valuation, advice on land use impacts, land registration and mortgagees consent fees. In all cases compensation should reflect the actual cost to the landholder to access professional services.



LIGHTHOUSE EXAMPLE: SERVICE PAYMENTS

Powerlink offers eligible landholders an upfront, capped payment to landholders to cover reasonable professional costs associated with financial, legal, valuation and agronomist advice. There is no requirement for the landholder to have their choice of service provider pre-approved by Powerlink, or a requirement to submit invoices and other documentation afterwards, reducing any unnecessary administrative burden of reimbursement models, ensuring easy and timely access to funds for professional services. Upfront payments also provide the option for landholders to freely procure the services that are most relevant to their needs, which may extend to farm management, real estate and other agricultural consulting services directly related to the process.

CASE STUDY: EIRGRID COMMUNITY GAIN MEASURES, IRELAND

In response to community opposition to transmission infrastructure, Irish state-owned transmission operator EirGrid, developed a 'community gain' package to strengthen community benefits in new transmission developments. The package contained two elements:

- Community payments: flexible grants provided to communities closest to energy transmission infrastructure to be used for projects of local value.
- Proximity payments: payments provided to homeowners whose occupied building is within 200m of the centreline or new pylon, with the amount dependent on the voltage of line.

The community payments act as community benefit funds, with communities self-determining how funds should be spent in line with local goals. Smaller grants are managed by existing local authorities, such as councils, whereas larger grants are managed by the Community Foundation for Ireland, an NGO.

The proximity payments are provided in instalments, with 20% provided when construction begins and the remaining 80% provided when the line is energised. The payments are only made once the line is finalised, with homeowners able to either accept or reject the offer of payment.

1.6 Safety education

What we heard

There are varying levels of understanding amongst landholders on safety requirements surrounding transmission infrastructure.

Landholders described a reduction in the sense of personal and community safety around transmission lines, as well as vulnerability to lightning from storms and bushfire events as key impacts.

Some landholders were also often unsure of what safety precautions were required around infrastructure.

Our key take-aways

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.

How can we do better?

PRIORITY ACTIONS CHECKLIST



Proactive, tailored education programs on safety

Transition from largely passive, digital communication approaches to proactive, tailored education programs that specifically consider the risks and activities commonly undertaken in agricultural and farming settings. The frequency, relevance and impact of safety education for landholders living with existing infrastructure should also be considered, acknowledging that although safety is inherent in the design of the infrastructure, changes in surrounding land use and complacency as a result of familiarity over time, can increase the risk of an accident occurring.



BETTER PRACTICE OPPORTUNITIES

Collaborate with emergency service agencies



Collaborate with state, rural and country fire and emergency services to better inform communities around bushfire risks, mitigations and responses associated with transmission infrastructure. This could include answering common questions such as:

- How the presence of overhead transmission lines may affect firefighting operations, including aerial bombing
- How transmission infrastructure is protected during a bushfire event and what impact this may have on hosts
- The effectiveness of easements as fire breaks
- The effectiveness of electrical protection schemes, clearances, location and remote monitoring technology in reducing risks
- The difference between distribution poles and wires and transmission infrastructure in relation to bushfire risk, management and response.

Where possible, transmission companies should seek to align their safety standards with state authority safety standards. Consistency is important to ensure clear and effective communication about safety.



LIGHTHOUSE EXAMPLE: PEACE OF MIND FOR THE SAFE USE OF FARM EQUIPMENT

In addition to providing landholders with guidance on living with and working around easements, AusNet has an individual assessment process for landholders hosting new transmission, where farming equipment is assessed and can be certified to operate in an easement through a 'test and tag' approach. This ensures the landholders have equipment-specific safety knowledge and peace of mind to operate machinery safely within transmission easements.



LIGHTHOUSE EXAMPLE: CREATIVE SAFETY CAMPAIGNS

Transgrid's Look up and Live campaign included vehicle air fresheners with QR Codes that directly link to safety information. The air fresheners are being used as a key tool within a broader communications campaign, as they can be hung within the cabs of tractors and other farm machinery and accessed in situ when information is needed most.





CHAPTER 2: Management of on-farm activities and infrastructure

What is it?

Management of on-farm activities and infrastructure refers to landholders' ability to normally operate their farm and associated infrastructure. There are three key areas of focus relating to management of on-farm activities and infrastructure:

- **Biosecurity:** Maintaining biosecurity standards is central to agricultural practices for landholders
- **Use of materials and proactive management practices:** Materials and management can be used to mitigate impacts on soil
- **Farm infrastructure:** Skilled crews and materials can be leveraged to improve farm infrastructure, such as fences and roads.

Impacts to on-farm activities and infrastructure occur throughout the lifecycle, typically peaking in the construction phase.

Key decisions during the planning phase can help to reduce impacts in later phases and ensure impact on landholders' farm operations are minimised.

2.1 Biosecurity

What we heard

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.

Threats to biosecurity may come in the form of the spread of diseases, pests and/or weeds that enter the property via equipment, construction and maintenance vehicles, or staff. Additionally, some landholders have concerns about the commercial impact of the use of substances on their land without their knowledge or consent, interrupting their ability to sell livestock that adheres to certain standards, or maintain land as 'never ever land' as per existing commercial arrangements.

“Huge biosecurity risk to our farming operations and potential to lose everything.”

One landholder explained that they spend more than \$100,000 a year managing weeds, irrespective of hosting electricity transmission infrastructure. They explained their concern with the increased risk of invasive species being spread on their property. This landholder also explained the importance of negotiating individual biosecurity plans with landholders, specific to their weed tolerances.

Our key take-aways

The maintenance of biosecurity standards is essential to many landholders' use and enjoyment of their land.

Transmission businesses maintain land access protocols and guidelines, including specific biosecurity management plans, which often include giving contractors mobile clean kits, using wash and clean down facilities and a commitment to the 'come clean, go clean' principle. However, landholder sentiment suggests that many landholders lack confidence in the effectiveness of current management approaches, including the consistency in which biosecurity plans are implemented.

While some landholders with established biosecurity plans are positive about their ability to mitigate the risks when plans are followed by all involved, many others highlighted biosecurity risk as a key concern.

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.

How can we do better?

PRIORITY ACTIONS CHECKLIST



Strong, tailored biosecurity management plans

Take all reasonable actions to ensure that in accessing land, weeds, pests or pathogens are not spread and the land standards maintained by landholders are not compromised.



This should be defined through biosecurity management plans, that are developed and rolled out with a commitment to:

- A “whole-of-life” and “whole-of-business” approach to ensure consistent protection across:
 - investigations for potential new transmission lines, substations or communication sites
 - the construction of new transmission lines, substations, or communication sites
 - the operation, maintenance or replacement of existing transmission infrastructure.
- Actively consulting with landowners to understand property-specific needs (including biosecurity plans already in place)
- Actively providing information to landholders on the details of the business’ own environmental and biosecurity policies and plans
- Ensuring that anyone who engages with landowners from, or on behalf of the business, holds the necessary qualifications and/or completes training to carry out their activities in line with biosecurity risk management practices
- Having processes in place to actively check for biosecurity incidents or outbreaks in an area prior to accessing a property
- Maintaining a clear record of who has accessed land and how
- Taking action to reduce the likelihood of any breaches, including erecting signs or fencing.

BETTER PRACTICE OPPORTUNITIES

Proactive biosecurity audits

Conduct regional biosecurity audits pre-construction to identify if or where new facilities may be needed to protect biosecurity during the construction phase of a project.

Once biosecurity needs are understood, explore opportunities to partner with landholders to install wash or clean down facilities, ensuring facilities are readily available in remote and high control areas.

Leave any new wash or clean down facilities that enhance biosecurity protections in the region in place following construction.



LIGHTHOUSE EXAMPLE: PROACTIVE BIOSECURITY AUDITS

TasNetworks recently conducted a biosecurity audit in relation to the North West Transmission Developments. This audit has resulted in the decision to invest in enhancing regional biosecurity infrastructure by constructing new wash-down facilities. This infrastructure will be in addition to mobile wash-down kits provided to each Landowner Relations Advisor working on the project.



2.2 Use of materials and management practices

What we heard



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.

Our key takeaways

Soil condition is a vital component of many agricultural operations, making it critical to engage with landholders on their specific soil requirements and how any impacts can be best managed or mitigated.

How can we do better?

PRIORITY ACTIONS CHECKLIST	
<input type="checkbox"/> Engage with landholders on soil requirements Engage with landholders on their specific soil requirements and standards prior to the start of any phase of construction and maintenance work and to understand potential impacts and management options.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Protect soil from compaction, erosion, or other damage Take reasonable measures to protect soil from compaction, erosion, or other damage. This may include using specific machinery, geo-fabric, bog mats or similar materials to protect soil during construction, temporary fencing, or limiting access to specific conditions (i.e. dry weather access only).	



2.3 Farm infrastructure

What we heard

Through the research landholders identified they would value:

- Upgrades to farm infrastructure such as fences, roads, gates, as well as fire breaks to improve safety
- 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.

“Scrap materials and services would be a benefit... it’s one of the things that made a positive difference.”

One farmer spoke about successfully negotiating with contractors for the use of 44 gallon drums following the construction of a transmission line on their property, which were repurposed to be used as rubbish bins.

Our key take-aways

The skilled crews and materials used in the construction of transmission infrastructure could be leveraged to benefit landholders.

How can we do better?

BETTER PRACTICE OPPORTUNITIES

Engage with landholders regarding use of scrap materials and equipment



There is an opportunity to engage with impacted landholders prior to and during, construction to determine if any scrap materials or equipment would be of value. There is also an opportunity to see if materials left following the decommissioning of infrastructure, for example scrap steel, could be of use.

These arrangements have the potential to create a ‘win-win’ situation, where landholders benefit from free materials and businesses receive a cost benefit, for example, by reducing disposal costs.

This could also include providing the temporary worker accommodation, or resources used in construction to the community for use.

In all instances any health, safety and environmental risks should be considered, assessed and discussed with the landholder or communities involved.

Provide labour and equipment in-kind



To support landholders with farm infrastructure upgrades and maintenance, consider committing to providing labour and equipment in-kind as part of an employee volunteering program.





CHAPTER 3: Community relationships and services

What is it?

Community relationships and services refers to the impact of transmission infrastructure on community wellbeing, relationships, amenities and infrastructure. As with landholder relationships and services, it is critical that transmission businesses implement better practice engagement approaches to understand impacts and potential benefits. This will enable the development of appropriate services and infrastructure for the community.

There are four key areas relating to neighbours and local community relationships and services:

- **Mental health and services:** Mental health impacts could be mitigated by enhanced engagement and services
- **Community benefit sharing:** Community benefit sharing provides a way to integrate new energy developments into communities in ways that are positive, rewarding and beneficial for both transmission businesses and host communities
- **Community infrastructure:** Improvements to transport, energy or telecommunications infrastructure is a potential benefit of hosting transmission lines that was seen as an important initiative by agricultural landholders
- **Community economic development:** Local economic development can be a particularly important way to minimise the impacts of transmission infrastructure on local businesses and to create shared value.

3.1 Mental health and services

What we heard

Impacts on mental health and wellbeing were reported by a significant proportion of landholders, particularly those being approached to potentially host new transmission developments.

Further, landholders often described a feeling of emotional loss due to reduced natural amenity, change in landscape and/or loss of serenity caused by new transmission infrastructure.

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. This difference in experience by landholders currently hosting infrastructure to those in the planning phase suggests that these stressors may reduce to some extent over time.

Our key take-aways

Transmission developments can create additional stressors for landholders regardless of the size of the project, level of disruption, quality of consultation or commitment to limit impacts.

Stress associated with transmission infrastructure can be cumulative, being in addition to impacts associated with other types of infrastructure on agricultural lands, including rail, road and renewable energy generation developments such as solar and wind farms.

Any additional mental health stressors must be taken seriously given that issues related to social isolation and stress resulting from rising input costs and the impacts of natural disasters contribute to high suicide rates among farmers. The suicide rate for farmers in Australia⁴ is 94% higher than non-farmers and is a significant community concern.

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.

4 National Rural Health Alliance. (2021) 'First national study of farmer suicide rates using coronial data', National Rural Health Alliance. <https://www.ruralhealth.org.au/news/first-national-study-farmer-suicide-rates-using-coronial-data>.

How can we do better?

BETTER PRACTICE OPPORTUNITIES

Reduce barriers to accessing counselling and mental health support

Reduce barriers to accessing counselling and mental health support services to assist landholders impacted by new transmission developments and experiencing cumulative impacts of multiple stressors. This might include:

- Extending internal employee assistance programs to impacted landholders to ensure free, confidential counselling is accessible
- Partnering with regional mental health support services to increase their capacity to support the local community and reduce stigma around seeking help
- Ensuring land agents and community engagement teams always have information on hand to assist in connecting landholders and other community members to mental health support services.



CASE STUDY – TASNETWORKS PARTNERSHIP WITH RURAL ALIVE & WELL

Rural Alive & Well (RAW) is a not-for-profit organisation that provides free counselling and support services to individuals and communities in regional Tasmania. RAW's aim is to address situational stressors and increase protective factors to minimise the risk of suicide. TasNetworks' Landowner Relations Advisors working on the North West Transmission Developments are equipped to proactively provide information and assist landholders to connect with RAW for mental health support. The North West Transmission Developments engagement team also has information on hand when engaging with community members at local events.

3.2 Community benefit sharing

What we heard

Most surveyed landholders (67%) felt that the development of community-level benefit sharing agreements was important to local communities living with transmission infrastructure. However, only 37% surveyed landholders currently hosting infrastructure had experienced a benefit of infrastructure providing investment back into the community.

Community benefit sharing also provides a way for transmission businesses to address the impact of transmission infrastructure on community relations. One of the most significant landholder concerns raised is the conflict caused by differences in compensation and perceived benefits provided to neighbouring landholders and hosts of infrastructure.

Our key take-aways

Community benefit sharing provides a way to integrate new energy developments into communities in ways that are positive, rewarding and beneficial for host communities.

Community benefit sharing can take many forms, such as investment in community services and amenities, employee volunteering, sponsorship and grants and neighbourhood benefit programs.

Community benefit sharing schemes can also provide a way to distribute benefits with specific regard to proximity, level of change and disturbance experienced by near neighbours and address current concerns.

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.

How can we do better?

PRIORITY ACTION AREAS



Develop Community Benefit Sharing programs



Develop Community Benefit Sharing programs to maximise the positive local impacts for host communities that:

- Are tailored to the local context and co-designed with community
- Prioritise shared value and equitable sharing of benefits within host communities
- Contribute to solving issues central to the broader energy ecosystem, including energy affordability and reliability
- Are focused on creating long-term social value, rather than short term impact.

BETTER PRACTICE OPPORTUNITIES

Prioritise access to affordable, reliable energy for hosts



Investigate options to prioritise access to reliable and affordable energy for landholders and their communities.

This may include working with individual landholders to develop back up electricity generation capabilities, install solar panels to power on-site residence, or funding free energy consultations to support the landholders to secure more affordable energy contracts.

It could also include contributing to the upgrade of local energy infrastructure, including community solar and batteries.

In some case, this may include partnering across the supply chain to investigate options for supporting the long-term reduction of future electricity costs for host communities.

Prioritise impact-aware Community Benefit Sharing



Design Community Benefit Sharing programs that include direct and tangible benefits for close neighbours and prioritise the sharing of benefits with specific regard to proximity, level of change and disturbance experienced by near neighbours.

Community Benefit Sharing programs should be designed to distribute benefits more evenly to impacted communities to remediate impacts felt, including in relation to the broader community who are not included in compensation agreements.



CASE STUDY – YACKANDANDAH COMMUNITY AND INDUSTRY IN PARTNERSHIP



In 2016 Mondo began a partnership with a volunteer community group, Totally Renewable Yackandandah (TRY), to explore energy solutions in order to help the community achieve its goal of powering the town with 100 per cent renewable energy by 2022.

This unique partnership led to the Yackandandah Community Mini Grid project, which includes 14 houses benefiting from integrated solar, batteries and energy management systems. Through Mondo®, the successes from Yackandandah can now be repeated for businesses and communities in Australia and beyond.



3.3 Community infrastructure

What we heard

57% of landholders surveyed noted that building social infrastructure was an important initiative for local communities living with transmission infrastructure.

However, almost half of those surveyed reported no improvement to transport, energy or telecommunications infrastructure as a result of the hosting transmission infrastructure.

Only 7% and 12% of landholders surveyed who currently host transmission infrastructure reported infrastructure upgrades in their local community in the form of road upgrades and telecommunications respectively.

Our key take-aways

Investing in physical upgrades and maintenance of community infrastructure, such as telecommunications equipment and roads are an important way to create shared value.

While it is possible that upgrades have occurred in the past, the research indicated there is an opportunity to enhance efforts to upgrade community infrastructure, as well as consult with communities on upgrades as part of the planning process for 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. This activity should occur on an appropriate scale, relative to project size and impact and not duplicate or replace the work of responsible parties, including Government. It is also noted that parameters around investment in non-transmission infrastructure may also differ from state to state, depending on the legislation in place, as well as regulatory approval processes and company financing rules.

How can we do better?

BETTER PRACTICE OPPORTUNITIES

Consultation on community infrastructure needs



Engage with affected communities during development and delivery processes for proposed new transmission lines to understand community infrastructure needs.

Look for opportunities to integrate community requirements into construction activities to facilitate the uplift of community infrastructure. For example, there may be opportunities to upgrade telecommunications infrastructure or regional road infrastructure in alignment with construction needs.

Assistance in negotiating power purchasing agreements



Support communities to negotiate power purchasing agreements to lower the cost of energy used in business operations by landholders. This may include transmission businesses acting as a go-between with electricity generators, or in some states where the entities are the same, negotiating directly with impacted communities, to support communities to navigate 'Behind the Grid' approval processes.

Increase regional coordination and collaboration



Collaborate with other energy companies across the supply chain (including renewable energy developers), Local and State Governments and others to ensure the development of social infrastructure is co-ordinated, sustainable and aligned to the roles, responsibilities and resources of each party.



3.4 Community economic development

What we heard

Agricultural landholders agree that community economic development could be a potential benefit of hosting transmission infrastructure. 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. However, almost half of all landholders surveyed who are currently hosting or proposed to host transmission infrastructure said that they did not experience, or did not expect to experience, direct or community-wide economic benefit from the hosting of transmission infrastructure.

Our key take-aways

Local economic development can be a particularly important way to minimise the impacts of transmission infrastructure and to create shared value.

How can we do better?

PRIORITY ACTIONS CHECKLIST



Preference procurement from local suppliers

Preference procurement from local suppliers to support construction and maintenance activities to assist local business and supply chains (within a reasonable cost margin).

This may require investment in job and training opportunities to ensure the local workforce has the required qualifications and capabilities.



Social and environmental criteria in procurement decision-making

Leverage procurement expenditure towards socially and environmentally valuable outcomes. This includes the inclusion of specific social and environmental criteria in procurement decision-making.



BETTER PRACTICE OPPORTUNITIES

Agreements with local businesses for local goods and services



Develop agreements with local businesses to use local goods and services (e.g. local hotels, pubs and cafes). This can be operationalised through providing employee vouchers for local businesses.



LIGHTHOUSE EXAMPLE: LOCAL INDUSTRY PARTICIPATION

ElectraNet's EPLink Project rebuilt 200km of transmission line between Whyalla and Port Lincoln on South Australia's Eyre Peninsula. A local industry participation scoping study determined what services may be able to be provided by local contractors and how to support them to access the work. Opportunities were found for civil contractors, local food suppliers, fencing contractor and weed management.

The decision to locate one of two construction camps in the township of Tumby Bay at the local airport had benefits for the workers who were able to integrate into the community and for the local community with workers supporting the local economy. Additional benefit has been gained by the township of Tumby Bay though further investment in their waste-water system and hard-stands are being retained at the airport for future community use.

CASE STUDY – OCTOPUS INVESTMENTS DARLINGTON POINT SOLAR, NSW

Octopus Investments, in partnership with Edify Energy, Signal Energy and Canadian Solar have established Australia's largest solar energy generator in the Riverina district of NSW, building community benefits into the design of the project from day one. Octopus Investments engaged with the community early through careers fairs and local council meetings to understand what the community wanted to get out of the project. This engagement led to the delivery of local benefits including:

- Employment of 125 locals in the construction of the farm, totalling around 10% of the town's total population
- Financial support for the renovation of local housing to be rented to workers during construction
- Developing rooftop solar projects for housing and the local school to improve energy security and affordability
- Smart watering systems to water local parks and gardens to reduce the water usage and spending of local councils
- Improving WiFi infrastructure to increase the connectivity of the local area
- Using local suppliers such as restaurants and cafes to provide catering to the construction workers.

The project has shown that early engagement can and should be designed into major infrastructure project to deliver economic and social benefits that are responsive to the needs of affected communities.





Appendices

- Appendix A - Impacts
- Appendix B - Priority Actions Checklist
- Appendix C - Better Practice Opportunities

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.
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.

IMPACT	DEFINITION
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 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.

IMPACT	DEFINITION
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 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.
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.

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

Appendix B

















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	
<input type="checkbox"/>	A designated person, 24/7 contact number and facilitated engagement	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Regional engagement teams	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Placement of towers to minimise impacts	
<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	
<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	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Proactive, tailored education programs on safety	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Strong, tailored biosecurity management plans	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Engage with landholders on soil requirements	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Protect soil from compaction, erosion, or other damage	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Develop Community Benefit Sharing programs	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Preference procurement from local suppliers	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Social and environmental criteria in procurement decision-making	

Appendix C

Better Practice Opportunities

These are the actions and activities transmission businesses can progress, align to and build on, to deliver shared value. They are not ordered by priority.

Consideration of public amenity of easements	
Community engagement training for land agents and complaints officers	
Better understanding social factors	
Landscaping and screening options to reduce impact	
Management plan reviews	
Financial support for landholder mitigation activities	
Collaborate with emergency service agencies	
Proactive biosecurity audits	
Engage with landholders regarding use of scrap materials and equipment	
Provide labour and equipment in-kind	
Reduce barriers to accessing counselling and mental health support	
Prioritise access to affordable, reliable energy for hosts	
Prioritise impact-aware Community Benefit Sharing	
Consultation on community infrastructure needs.	
Assistance in negotiating power purchasing agreements	
Increase regional coordination and collaboration	
Agreements with local businesses for local goods and services	