

# MINUTES

## COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUP MEETING #31

Chair	Ian Gibson	Time	4 pm – 6 pm
Minutes	Jason Pickering	Date	2025-02-05
Location	Morwell Innovation Centre, Board Room (1.17)		

## Attendees

Guests / CAG Members	CAG Members	Project Team	Apologies
Ryan Walsh (VicGrid)	Harry Mitchelson	Erin Coldham	Darren McCubbin
Helen O'Brien (VicGrid)	Peter Mooney	Paul Johnson	Glen McColl
Cr Geoff Wells (Wellington Shire Council)	Julianne Peavey	Jason Pickering	Nicki Jennings
Ian Gibson	Anne Roussac-Hoyne	Will Ryan	Allan Rogers
Nick Dudley	Jack Winterbottom		Tony Cantwell
Ken Fraser	Wendy Farmer		Jenny Smith
Deb Lucas	Glenn Stagg		
Jonathon Pintus	Tony Wolfe		
	Travis Dillow		

## Key discussion points

Item	Outline
1	<b>Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country</b>
2	<b>Standing items and actions from previous meeting</b>
	<b>What's happening on the project</b>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– <a href="#">Refer to presentation for key updates</a></li></ul> Paul spoke of recent events and presentations delivered by the project team.
	<b>What's happening in the community</b>
4	Community updates, open to all members. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Geoff suggested that following the election of new Councillors across local government it might be timely for Southerly Ten to provide each council with a project update.</li></ul>

Paul responded that a full-day session has been planned for March 26 where councillors from South Gippsland Shire Council and Wellington Shire Council will receive an offshore wind update. Latrobe City Council has also been offered a councillor briefing.

Ken added this session will also prove valuable as South Gippsland Shire Council undertake a redevelopment of their Council Plan.

- Harry mentioned that he has heard from a contact in Vietnam that noise generated from driving turbine foundations into the seabed during construction was excessive.

Erin responded it's a risk we've identified, and we are carefully exploring mitigations for, adding that Southerly Ten through its global connections has access to latest insights about managing such impacts, such as double bubble curtains which help with noise diffusion. It's also worth noting that piling noise is something that is highly dependent on a range of contributing factors including turbine diameter, the installation method, the soil condition, and the water depth to name a few. Each site is quite specific, but Southerly Ten is committed to using the best mitigations available globally to avoid harm or disruptions to sea life.

Details about the expected underwater noise impacts for the Star of the South project and proposed mitigations will be publicly available when we submit our environmental approvals later this year.

The North American offshore wind industry has probably adopted some of the strongest regulations to date, and they've developed a strong framework of mitigation measures and Southerly Ten is applying these learnings in Australia.

Southerly Ten also understands that the Australian Government is working on underwater noise guidelines to assist policy interpretation. It is anticipated these guidelines will be available later this year.

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**Brief focus topic: 2024 CAG member survey**

- 5
- [Refer to presentation for key updates](#)

Paul provided an overview of our annual member survey, and the group feedback shared with the project team.

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6 **Break**

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**Focus topic: VicGrid Gippsland transmission study area update**

- [Refer to presentation for key updates](#)

Ryan Walsh, Senior Project Manager, and Helen O'Brien, Regional Engagement Manager - Gippsland, provided a VicGrid briefing on their planned development of a shared transmission line to connect offshore wind energy generated off the Gippsland coast to the grid.

- Ian asked how selecting 500 kV transmission technology more effectively contributes to longer term planning. Ryan answered based on VicGrid's preliminary investigations; to achieve the future offshore wind transmission targets it's anticipated a second transmission corridor will also be required, and ultimately those two corridors will need to be linked into a loop to provide the required capacity.

Selecting the 500 kV technology allows you to maximise the ultimate power transfer required through this eventual loop.

If the 330 kV technology was selected, it would also require double the amount of transmission towers, meaning two sets of towers for each corridor. Despite 330 kV utilising smaller towers, it would require a larger easement to accommodate the two rows within each corridor. A larger easement results in larger impacts to landowners, environment, etc.

- Geoff asked what the typical width of a 500 kV easement is. Ryan answered it's typically 70-100 metres at maximum width however the width may alter depending on what is encountered along its route.
- Nick asked with respect to the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) not supporting transmission lines located too close to each other, is that defined in a geographical sense or through established parameters? Ryan explained there aren't defined parameters, instead it is assessed holistically by AEMO. There are also many contributing factors including the where within the grid the transmission lines are located and what the biggest failure contingency you might need to account for. It's not as simple as having a pre-defined distance.

- Tony shared that there is some community confusion regarding the roles of VicGrid and AusNet Services who started this process. Tony asked whether VicGrid is using the work completed by AusNet Services when designing the Gippsland transmission system? Ryan explained that under the national electricity rules, AusNet Services, as a transmission network service provider, planned their Gippsland Renewable Energy Zone (GREZ) transmission solution as a project to develop. This was prior to VicGrid taking over the responsibility of building transmission to support offshore wind energy generation. As a result, AusNet Services have essentially paused their GREZ work but remain in discussions with VicGrid about the project.

As part of our procurement process, VicGrid is exploring partnering with other transmission network service providers who will help develop and deliver this project - AusNet Services is one entity among a range of providers.

- Peter asked does the VicGrid transmission project require a new switchyard to connect to the national energy grid. Ryan answered the plan is to connect into the existing switchyard at Loy Yang, but a new connection hub is required at the coastal end, so a refinement process is underway to determine where this is ideally located. The coastal connection hub is where proposed offshore wind energy projects would connect their generated energy.
- Tony asked if the current study area investigated by VicGrid could host both lines of a looped transmission solution, or would you be required to replicate this same process for the second corridor. Ryan answered referencing the earlier discussion around the AEMO geographical separation requirement, VicGrid anticipates another study area will be required for any additional transmission lines. Ryan anticipates there may potentially be some overlap of the study areas in some points. Further detail will be available within VicGrid's soon to be released 'Victorian Transmission Plan', which looks at future augmentations in Victoria and will help identify future connection points and inform future projects.
- Peter asked if there was clarity yet on what type of 500 kV transmission tower VicGrid is proposing, as there are different styles and refinements available to minimise visual and wind noise impacts. Ryan explained tower design will be informed as part of the VicGrid procurement process. The competitive nature of this process will drive proponents to offer innovative solutions which will be assessed in relation to our own design requirements and the final route when determined. It's also important to recognise that it is not always the same tower used throughout a route as there can be other influencing factors such as inconsistent geotechnical or topographical conditions or how much line strain needs to be applied at certain points.

Helen provided an overview of VicGrid's new community hub in Rosedale and of ongoing and evolving community and landholder engagement strategies for VicGrid to hear all feedback before the next round of project refinement.

- Peter asked how many landholders VicGrid are working with. Helen responded it's around 100 individual landholders, including a lot of family groups and ownership within family trusts. VicGrid is currently working with landholders throughout the entire study area, and with future corridor refinements the number directly affected by an easement would decrease.
- Wendy asked whether the VicGrid decision to deliver an above ground transmission solution as opposed to underground been communicated effectively throughout the community. Helen explained that following extensive consultation with transmission experts, VicGrid released the 60-page 'Options Assessment Report' in March 2024, explaining VicGrid's decision to construct above ground transmission infrastructure. This Report may be difficult for non-technical community members to interpret. This highlights the need for our face-to-face conversations at the presentations and events and the important role of VicGrid's community hub in Rosedale.

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#### 8 Other business

- Next meeting – CAG #32, Thursday 3 April 2025

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#### 9 Meeting close

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## Actions

No.	Action	Owner	Due
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## Questions taken on notice

No.	Action	Owner	Due
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