RMCG

VNI West CRG meeting #8 Chair's summary

Meeting: 25 February 2025

The VNI West Community Reference Group (CRG) met for its eighth session on 25 February 2025, online. Representatives from Transmission Company Victoria (TCV) provided updates on key project developments including recent engagement efforts, interactive mapping tools and community pop-ups, as well as progress on the transmission licence, tender evaluations, social value strategy, and workforce accommodation planning. TCV also introduced an online portal for CRG members to access project information.

CRG community members raised questions and concerns about project impacts, particularly around land access, infrastructure placement, and consultation processes. While TCV has been consulting about tower locations, CRG members said that there is a need for clearer communication and better recognition of landholder concerns.

CRG members said that they don't want landholders to be left to manage the complexities of energy infrastructure on their properties without sufficient support, particularly regarding insurance coverage and operational requirements under power lines.

TCV hosted a discussion on compensation and benefits, seeking CRG member input into principles for each. The CRG recommended principles including that Compensation should be fair and attractive, it should account for ongoing and future impacts, and that landholders should not bear decommissioning costs. In relation to community benefits, some CRG members said that they should not come at the expense of benefits to the landholders who host the infrastructure. CRG members also recommended principles including that the energy companies profiting from the project should be responsible for funding the benefits, that benefits should not replace existing government responsibilities, and that benefits should not be tokenistic. Some CRG members raised concerns that gestures, such as covering local power bills, would not be viewed as meaningful benefits, saying that any efforts to create "mutual benefit" must be backed by substantial, long-term commitments.

Finally, a VicGrid observer submitted an update that during March, VicGrid be having conversations with Councils likely to be in the Draft proposed Renewable Energy Zones (REZs) ahead of the Draft VTP being published in April.

The next meeting of the CRG will be held in early April.

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This report has been prepared by:

RM Consulting Group Pty Ltd trading as RMCG

135 Mollison Street, Bendigo Victoria 3550

(03) 5441 4821 — rmcg.com.au — ABN 73 613 135 247

Offices in Victoria, Tasmania and NSW

Key RMCG contact

Claire Flanagan-Smith

0427 679 044 — clairef@rmcg.com.au

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