



Summary of Engagement October-December 2019

Marinus Link and North West Tasmania transmission developments

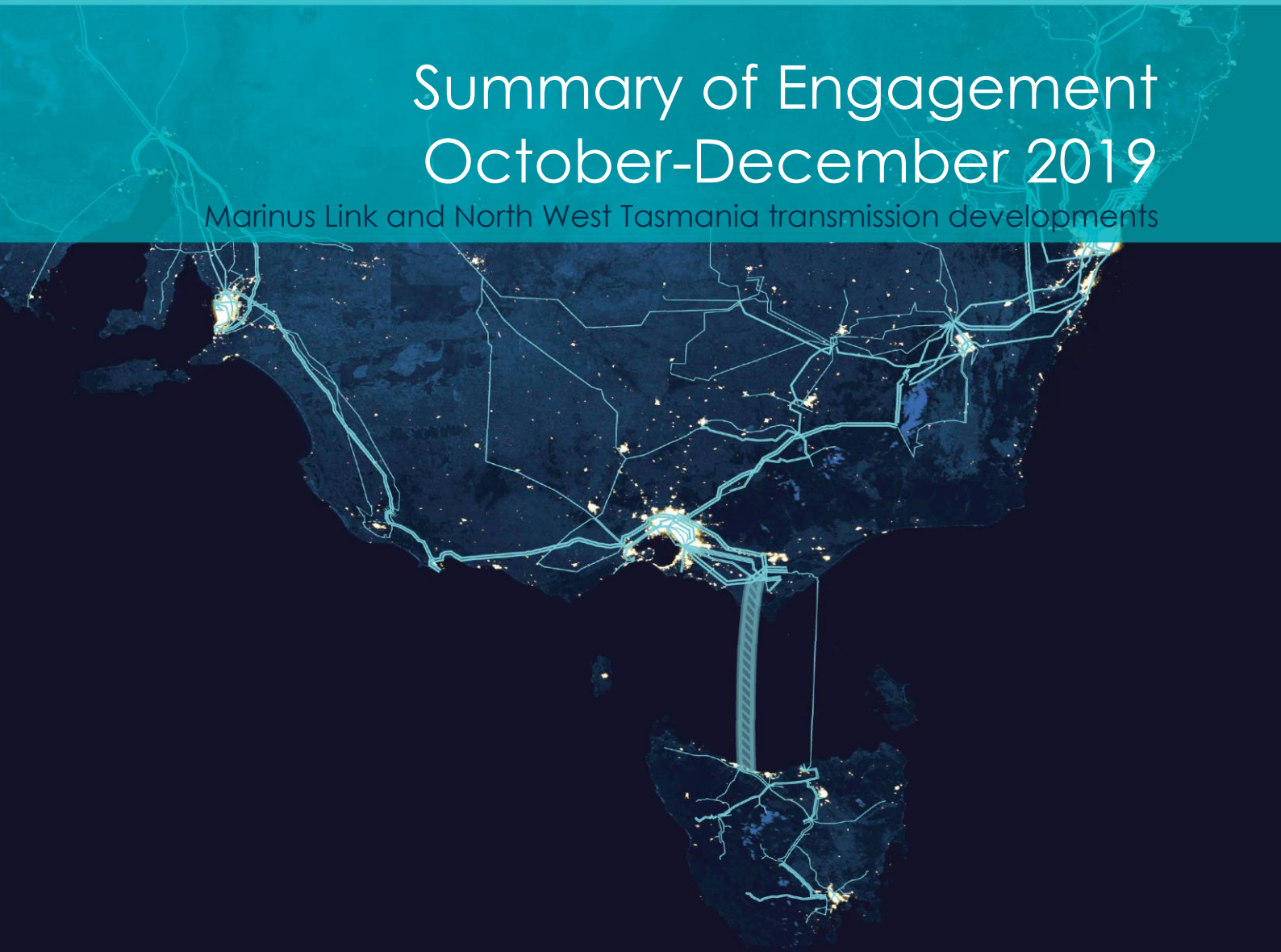


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1 Introduction

In late 2019, TasNetworks announced the proposed transmission route between Hampshire and Staverton in North West Tasmania as part of the Marinus Link and North West Tasmania transmission developments.

This summary provides an overview of discussions and community feedback collected during four community workshops and two online surveys between October and December 2019.

1.1 Engagement activities

In October 2019, TasNetworks commenced public consultation to inform the Marinus Link and North West Tasmania transmission updates. This marked the first of multiple rounds of consultation with interested and affected communities in Tasmania and Victoria that will take place during planning and development of the project design and approvals.

1.1.1 Online engagement

Consultation commenced with two online surveys hosted on the Engage.MarinusLink website. Engage.MarinusLink is a dedicated engagement website (<https://engage.marinuslink.com.au/>) where people can find out about current and upcoming engagement events, register to receive project updates, leave feedback and find contact details for general project enquiries. To date, Engage.MarinusLink has received 1,280 site visits since it was launched in late October 2019 including 37 registered site users.

The surveys sought feedback separately for the Marinus Link Project and the North West Tasmania Transmission Upgrades. Both asked participants about benefits they think the projects would bring, what their concerns are and what they would like to know more about.

Further information about the project is available on the TasNetworks *Marinus Link and North West Transmission Upgrades* webpage (<https://www.tasnetworks.com.au/poles-and-wires/planning-and-developments/marinus-link-and-north-west-transmission-upgrades>), including maps, project factsheets and links to technical reports such as the Business Case and Feasibility Report.

1.1.2 Community workshops

Face-to-face consultation activities held in November and December 2019 focussed specifically on the North West Tasmania Transmission Upgrades, particularly the preferred route for the new 220kV transmission line between Hampshire and Staverton. The preferred route was publicly released in late November and consultation was conducted through four community workshops held in townships near the proposed route, as listed in Table 1.

Table 1 Community workshop details

Saturday 30 November 2019	Saturday 7 December 2019
Ulverstone Workshop Ulverstone Sport and Leisure Centre 1 Flora Street, West Ulverstone 10am-12pm Gunns Plains Workshop Gunns Plains Hall 957 Gunns Plains Rd 2pm-4pm	Burnie Cradle Coast Future Energy Hub 1-3 Spring St, Burnie 10am-12pm Sheffield Workshop Sheffield Town Hall High Street, Sheffield 2pm-4pm

During the workshops, participants were provided with a project overview, and presented with the preferred route and the process that was used to determine it.

They were then able to discuss the route and provide feedback about what they value about the area and whether they thought the route was sensitive to the things that were important to them. Participants could speak with project personnel and technical specialists to ask questions and provide feedback for consideration in the ongoing investigations and route refinement process.

Workshops were promoted through eNews updates, local print media, social media, the project website and Engage.MarinusLink engagement hub.

2 Who did we speak to?

This stage of engagement provided various opportunities for people to find out about the project and to provide feedback. Engagement activities are guided by a Stakeholder and Community Engagement Plan which is currently being reviewed.

This report summarises the feedback received through four face-to-face community workshops and two online surveys.

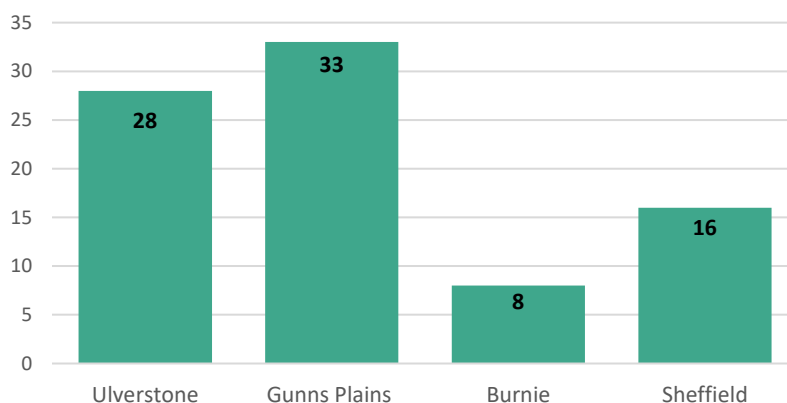
Public engagement activities were advertised through local media, project website and eNews updates, pop-up events in local areas, letter box drops and targeted notifications for directly affected stakeholders.

While participants in these activities may have included impacted landowners, this summary does not include the content of targeted discussions with individual landowners.

2.1 Community workshops

In total, 85 people participated across the four workshops. The Ulverstone and Gunns Plains workshops attracted the most participants. Some individuals attended workshops in a more than one location.

Figure 1 **Number of workshop attendees**



Workshop participants included local land and business owners, representatives of prominent community groups and state and federal parliamentarians. Groups identified by workshops participants included:

- Cradle to Coast Tourism
- Nietta Action Group
- Electricity industry
- Friends of the Leven
- Gunns Plains Community Centre Association
- Gunns Plains Community Hall
- Sustainable Timber Tasmania
- Wildcare Friends of the Penguin Cradle Trail

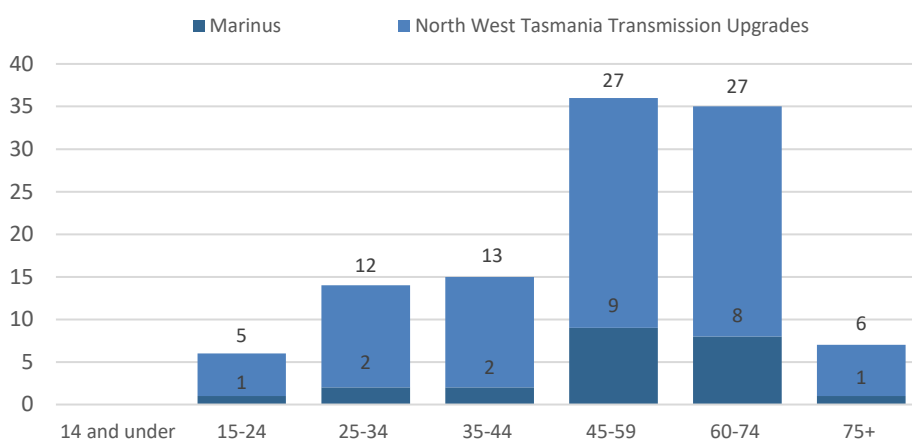
2.1.1 Surveys

In total, 113 surveys were completed including 23 surveys about Marius Link and 90 surveys about North West Tasmania Transmission Upgrades. As well as providing feedback about the projects, participants were also provided some information about themselves to help us understand who we have heard from.

Figure 2 shows that most survey respondents were aged 45 to 74 years. This broadly reflects the population of the Cradle Coast region which is older than the Tasmanian average.

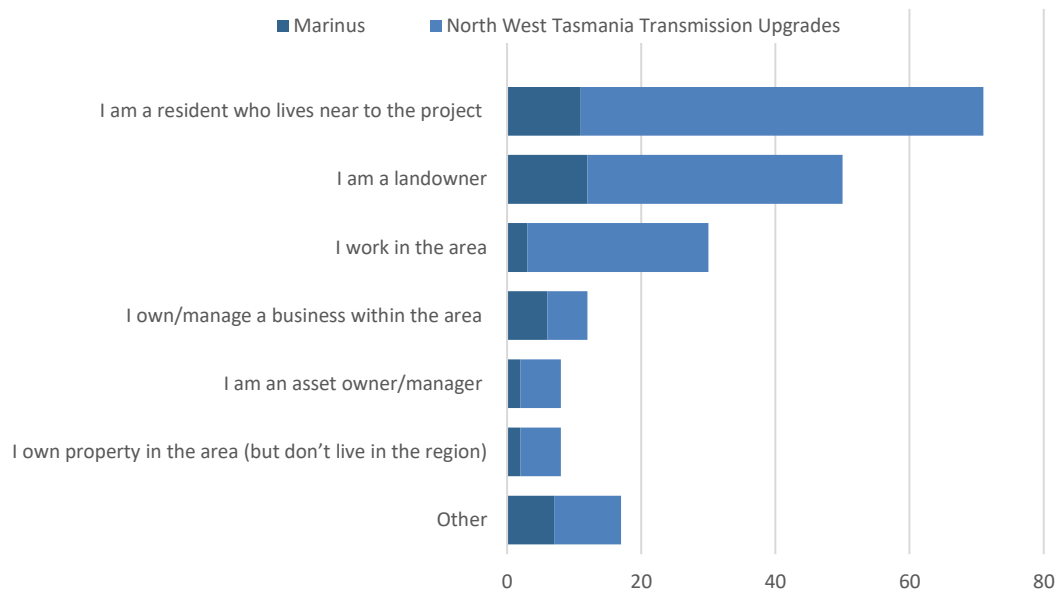
A large proportion of surveys were also completed as part of the four community pop-up events which were advertised in local newspapers, e-newsletters, social media and the website. Key objectives for the pop-up events were to grow and build on existing awareness of the projects, provide project information, gain insight into community concerns, identify how communities would like to engage moving forward and build database of contacts for project updates.

Figure 2 **Age of survey respondents (years)**



Participants were also asked about their relationship to the project area. Most survey respondents identified themselves as a resident who lives near to the project, a landowner or somebody who works in the area. As participants were able to select more than one answer to this question, this suggests that many residents are owner-occupiers, which reflected the participant profile of the face-to-face workshops.

Figure 3 Participants' relationship to the area



People who selected 'other' included interested residents or businesses from other areas in Tasmania, future businesses or investors, and people interested in employment pathways and opportunities.

3 What did we hear?

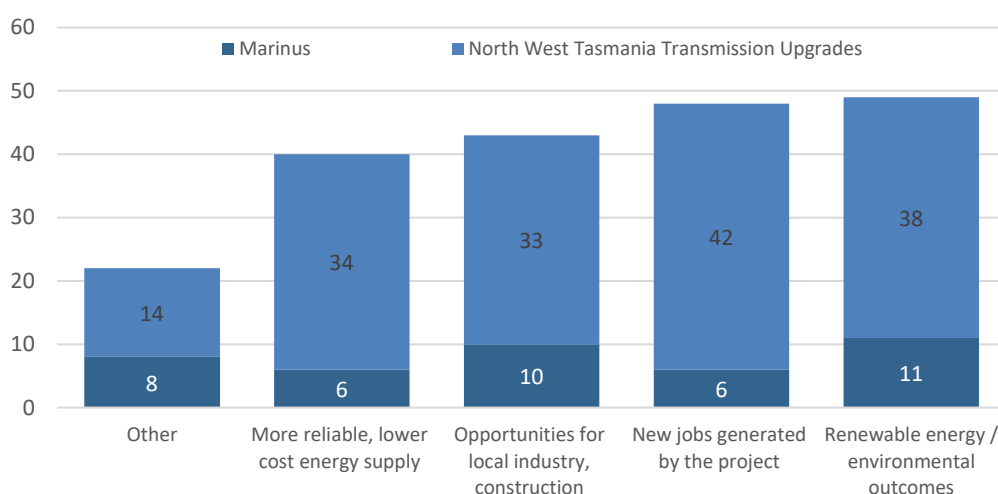
This section summarises the feedback received through workshops and online surveys. It provides a qualitative overview of the major themes and issues raised during this round of consultation.

Detailed feedback has also been provided to technical specialists and project team members to inform ongoing investigations, refinement of the route design and measure to avoid, minimise and manage impacts to properties, businesses and places of interest.

3.1 Overall benefits and concerns

The online surveys asked participants to select from a list, the benefits that the project could bring, as well as their most pressing concerns.

Figure 4 Benefits or opportunities for the local area or wider community



The most frequent project benefits identified by survey participants was increased renewable energy and improved environmental outcomes, and as new jobs and local economic opportunities generated by the projects. Survey respondents also noted additional opportunities for training and education opportunities.

"I'd love for the project owners to think about the potential to work longer term with locals (including local schools and TAFEs) about providing a career pathway for people in regional Tasmania. Even better if there were commitments in terms of goals to engage disadvantaged communities and stakeholders into employment."

- Survey Respondent

However, while in supportive of employment and economic benefit, some respondents were concerned that cost savings may not be passed on to the Tasmanian end consumer or that new job opportunities would be limited to the short-term. Some also questioned how economic benefits would be balanced against environmental sustainability. This was also raised as a concern by workshop participants.

"As a staunch supporter of renewables, I believe the benefit should be designed for the long term. Harsh and damaging environmental impacts should be avoided at all costs..."

- Survey respondent

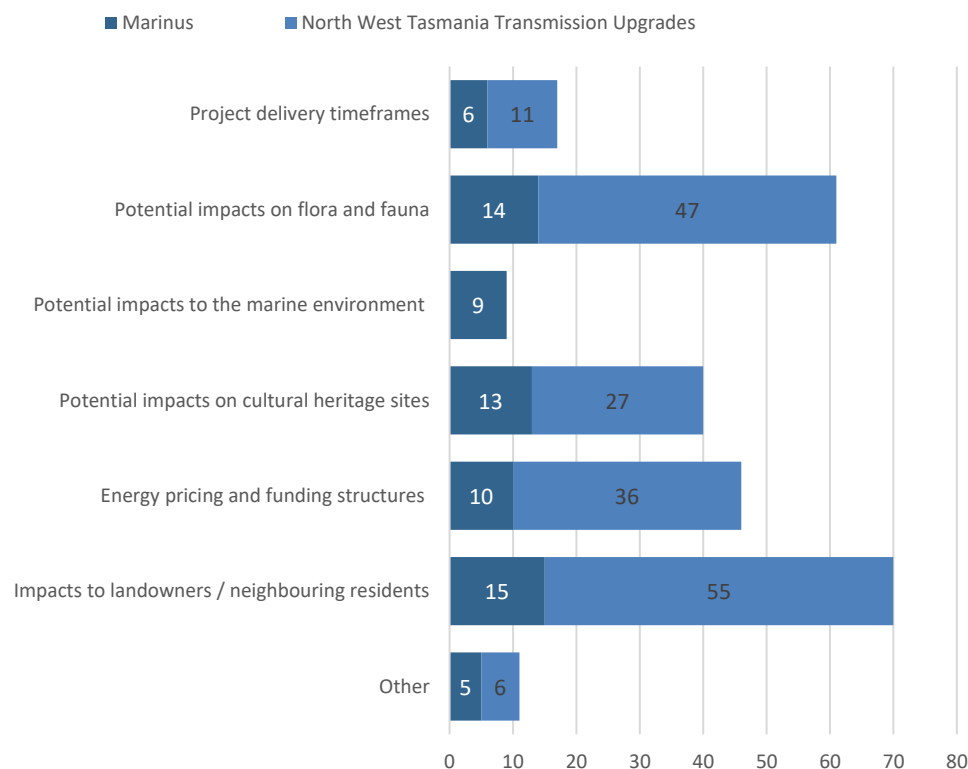
“... yes, we need renewables, but we must also protect biodiversity and act on the concerns of local communities.” - Survey respondent

Overall, survey participants focussed more on concerns or challenges than benefits. This was particularly true of local landowners. Some respondents questioned the value of the project for the communities that were most directly affected.

“...please consider other options when Tasmanian families are impacted on their properties.” - Survey respondent

“... making Tasmanian Communities suffer hardships in the name of anyone getting power ... is not right ... and that there are alternatives.” - Survey respondent

Figure 5 Concerns or challenges about the project



These concerns identified through the surveys were generally reflected through workshop discussions, where local residents placed significant value in the natural environment and were concerned about disruptions from transmission lines and towers.

The following sections provide further detail about some of the issues identified above.

3.2 Project objectives and governance

Some contributions questioned the need for the project overall, particularly regarding the distribution of costs against benefit.

“Tasmania is pure and pristine and perfectly fine. Victoria and other mainland states need to sort out their own shortages..” – Survey respondent

“What’s in it for Tasmania?” - Workshop participant

Occasionally, participants queried why a decentralised network was not being considered, the possibility of alternative transmission routes, or whether lines could be placed underground to minimise impacts.

“Can we consider a decentralised system, rather than centralised?”

- Workshop participant

“Is there an alternative to transmission lines? Can they go underground?”

- Workshop participant

3.3 Route selection and methodology

Many participants in both face-to-face workshops and online surveys were residents of the areas along the proposed Hampshire to Staverton route. They sought more information about the route selection process, including cost comparisons and the information considered in early investigations.

“The strategic assessment of feasible corridors ... is a black box. The community want to see details how the result of the criteria assessment was derived.” – Workshop participant

“Can you please clarify status of route selection in overall project/time line? Is there opportunity to reconsider and revisit central corridor or are you only wanting or able to optimise the preferred route..? Can you release the decision matrix on selection of central corridor?” – Workshop participant

Specifically, many residents sought more information about a non-preferred route which passes through the Vale of Belvoir, and why this option was eliminated. Participants noted opportunities to use existing infrastructure corridors along the Vale of Belvoir route to avoid impacts to the Loongana Valley.

“..will residents be avoided and transmission towers/lines follow existing Vale of Belvoir transmission to Sheffield?” – Survey respondent

In response to this feedback, more detail was provided regarding the route selection process during workshop presentations and more detailed maps were provided in workshops and online.

3.4 Impact assessment and approval

Workshop participants received a presentation outlining the process for technical investigation, impact assessment and project approvals. This outlined the various technical specialities providing input into the assessment process including ecological assessment, visual and noise impacts and social and business impacts assessment.

Overall, workshop participants were eager to hear details of how assessment would be undertaken, how community input would be considered and how impacts would be mitigated, managed or compensated.

“What scope is there for TasNetworks to off-set social and environmental impacts through one-off and/or ongoing projects? How would such off-sets be developed, negotiated or implemented?” - Workshop participant

3.4.1 Ecological

The assessment and management of impacts to native flora and fauna was a significant concern for survey respondents and workshop participants.

“There’s more conservation value in Loongana Valley route - even if it’s not on map” – Workshop participant

Many contributors noted the high environmental value of the Loongana Valley and a number of threatened or protected species that this there including eagles.

“..the proposed placement of this line goes through several high and moderate raptor habitat zones” – Survey respondent

“Wildlife is already marginalised here because of Forestry practices. We have healthy populations of devils, wombats and quolls. Now is not the time to mess with the environment.” – Survey respondent

The potential for contamination of natural environments was also raised as a concern. In particular, the risk of introduced weeds through construction and increased traffic during maintenance.

“The introduction of weeds ... Having worked on weed eradication for asset owners, I’m aware of the blatant disregard for weed control big business have. Once particular weeds become established” – Survey respondent

3.4.2 Visual

Visual impacts were of concern to many residents and local communities. The natural environment was identified as a valuable asset and core to the character of the area.

Many contributors were concerned that transmission lines, towers and clearing corridors for construction activity and access would significantly and adversely impact the visual amenity of the place for residents and visitors.

“The environmental impact of the extreme ugliness of these proposed towers, following the northern coast under water would be ideal. People do not live nor visit this beautiful island state to see ugliness.” – Survey respondent

“Visual impact - Coast to Canyon, Taylors Flats, Level Canyon Lookout looking south, Black Bluff” – Workshop participant

The potential for transmission infrastructure to generate noise was also raised as a concern by some workshop participants.

3.4.3 Landowner impacts

Impacts to landowners in the project area was a significant concern for many contributors. Given the high proportion of local landowners and residents in the workshops, this was a central theme of discussion across all locations.

While every attempt was made to contact landowners identified as being directly impacted prior to consultation, many neighbouring landowners were anxious to find out about impacts they may experience, particularly with respect to visual amenity, property prices and access.

“I live about 1 km from proposed link from Hampshire to Staverton line and I’m very concerned about having 60m towers so close to my property. It’s going to massively lower property rates, which are already low with so much plantation forestry in the area.” – Survey respondent

“The ‘upgrade’ ... will impose huge externalities on the regional community if done badly. It stands to impact livelihoods, investment security, sense of place and general wellbeing of the regional community.” – Survey respondent

The process for compensation was frequently raised by landowners during the four workshops. Where requested, TasNetworks arranged follow-up meeting with landowners to understand their specific concerns.

Workshop participants were eager to hear about the process and methodology for the Social Impact Assessment being undertaken as part of the project investigations and how this would measure impacts on the local community.

3.4.4 Business and tourism

Impacts on local business, particularly in the tourism sector, was raised by workshop participants and survey respondents. Visual impacts were the most common concern raised regarding businesses.

"Impact for tourists, already they see kilometres of bare farmed plantation timber, they will be replanted, but the towers, once installed, will be there forever.."

- Survey respondent

"Impact to local businesses. Eco tourism future business investment ... Tourists come to NOT SEE power." – Workshop participant

Workshop participants requested more information about how the Economic Impact Assessment will be conducted and how it will measure impacts to the local tourism sector.

3.4.5 Safety and security

Safety and security were concerns were raised by contributors across both surveys and workshops.

Concerns generally related to the impact of electro-magnetic radiation on human health, and the dangers resulting from uncontrolled access to public and private land.

"EMF effects on humans indicates the close proximity of the transmission tower will impact my health negatively." – Survey respondent

A number of local landowners noted that access tracks can result in higher rates of vehicle trespass on private land including motorbikes. New access tracks were also identified as a hazard as they can encourage dumping grounds for cars and rubbish. Both were considered a security and fire risk and a danger to public health.

"..assets require permanent access tracks to every tower, meaning more tracks, roads. How will the extra tracks you create prevent unauthorised access to landowners' properties where your towers are near, on, or within their boundaries? The amount of wood-cutting theft and burglaries in the area has increased over time, thanks to the encroaching plantation and people's disregard of landowners' signage to not trespass." – Survey respondent

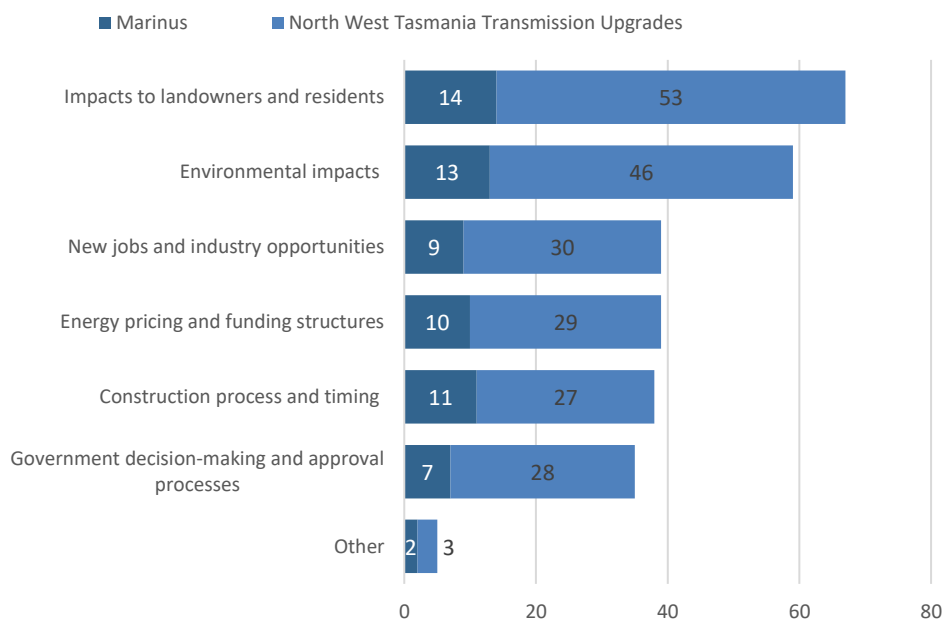
"How are you going to mitigate motorbikes/fire risk in this area after the tracks are established? ... Who is responsible for the security of the easement and stopping its recreational use?"- Workshop participant

3.5 Consultation

Overall, participants were pleased to have an opportunity to provide input to the project. In particular, workshop attendees appreciated the opportunity to speak directly with members of the project team and ask questions of technical specialists. Participants also reiterated the need for transparent and genuine engagement.

Through both online and face-to-face engagement, it was clear that communities sought more information about impacts to landowners and residents and environmental impacts.

Figure 6 What would survey participants like to know about?



Following feedback from workshops in Ulverstone and Gunns Plains, we amended our maps and presentations to include extra detail, including aerial imagery, property boundaries and places of interest. This helped participants navigate the maps and provide more specific feedback about the local area.

“Not enough detail to comment or have input into environmental impact locally using local knowledge and social impacts, or to know if a land owner is directly affected.” – Workshop participant

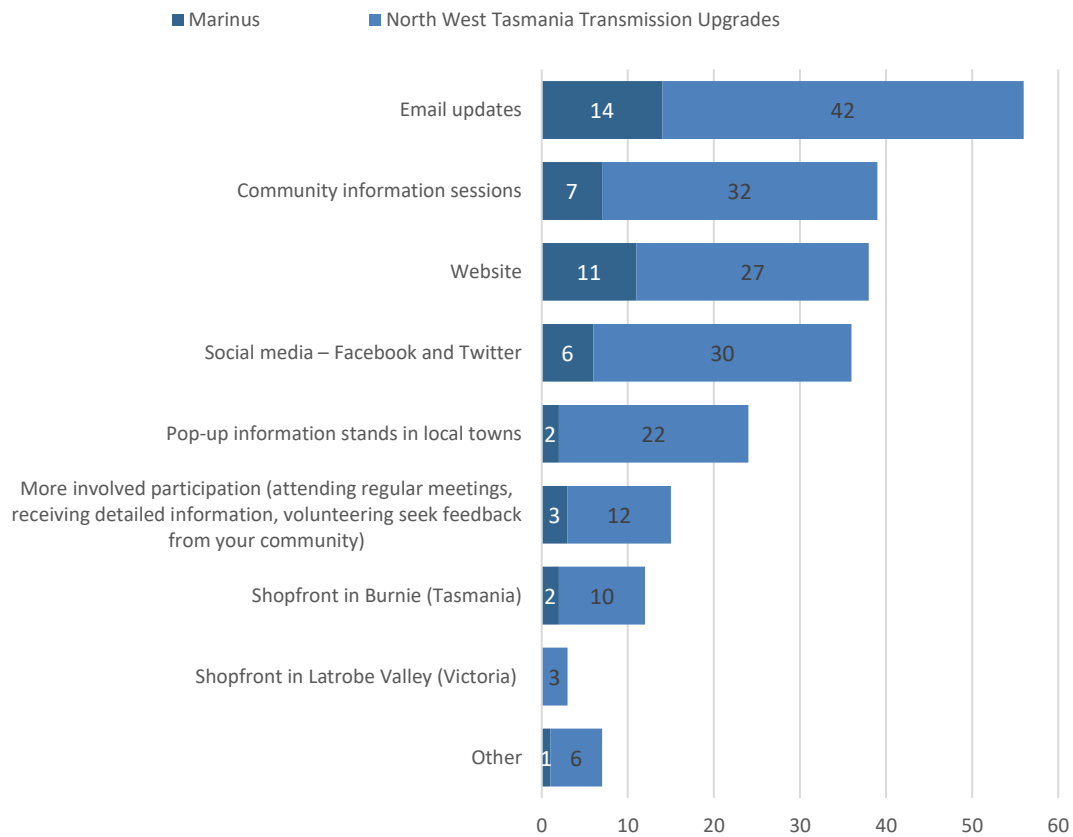
We also heard that while face-to-face engagement with directly impacted landowners was ongoing, nearby residents and businesses would experience significant visual impacts and following the workshops a number of one-on-one meetings were arranged with neighbouring residents.

Survey respondents and workshop participants were keen to receive email updates about the project and upcoming opportunities to be involved. We also heard that people would like more notification and promotion of events, including local media sources.

“Can we include more media and be actively included in the next meeting? I found out by accident.” – Workshop participant

Community information sessions and project website information were the preferred methods of engagement behind email updates.

Figure 7 **How would survey participants like to stay involved?**



4 What's next?

We have collected the feedback provided through face-to-face and online engagement in late 2019. This has been provided to the project team and technical specialists to inform their investigations. Further investigations focus on visual and social impact and alternate route options.

We are now in the process of planning the next round of engagement in Tasmania.

4.1 Learnings from consultation so far

At the end of each round of consultation, a review of activities is conducted to understand what worked and how the approach could be improved. Feedback received in this most recent round of consultation demonstrated that local communities have a strong connection to their local environment and seek reassurance that consultation and technical investigations are thorough and transparent. It is evident that some project communities have had poor experiences with infrastructure projects in the past and are suspicious of the process.

Clear negotiables and non-negotiables for the route need to be identified and communicated to stakeholders as soon as possible. This will ensure that they understand how their contribution may influence decisions and will assist TasNetworks in managing their expectations. It will also continually reinforce the process and methodology that TasNetworks is using in the route selection process and alleviate any potential for misunderstanding during the final stages of the project.

Providing timely, clear and detailed information is vitally important to fostering trusting relationships with the communities in which we work. The revised workshop presentation and more detailed maps allowed people to better engage and provide feedback, lent legitimacy to the process, and mitigated the spread of inaccurate information.

Responding to feedback and committing to broad promotion of future events, activities and project updates demonstrates a transparent process and encourages ongoing engagement with project communities.