

Meeting Network Planning Requirements at George Town (PADR)

Public Stakeholder Forum - Summary

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Public

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TasNetworks acknowledges the palawa (Tasmanian Aboriginal community) as the original owners and custodians of lutruwita (Tasmania). TasNetworks, acknowledges the palawa have maintained their spiritual and cultural connection to the land and water. We pay respect to Elders past and present and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

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Summary

The webinar provided stakeholders with an update on TasNetworks' Regulatory Investment Test for Transmission (RIT-T) relating to potential network upgrades in the George Town and Bell Bay region. TasNetworks explained the need for future network investment, presented the preferred solution identified in the Project Assessment Draft Report (PADR), shared the draft economic assessment and sought stakeholder feedback before finalising the process.

The assessment is driven by potential new industrial electricity demand from emerging projects such as hydrogen production, green fuels and data centres. TasNetworks emphasised that no investment decision has been made and that any future works remain subject to further consultation, regulatory approval and commitment from prospective customers.

Webinar date: Monday 29th June 2026 – Hosted by TasNetworks [2pm – 3pm]

Event Registrations: 39

On the day attendance: 30

Overview of the RIT-T Process

Presenter: Matt Clarke

Matt explained the RIT-T process and where the project currently sits. The Project Specification Consultation Report (PSCR) was completed in 2024, the PADR was published in 2026, and a final Project Assessment Conclusions Report (PACR) is planned later in the year. Stakeholders were encouraged to review the PADR and provide formal feedback.

Questions and Answers

Q: Is the Firmus AI infrastructure considered a committed load?

A: No, it is not currently treated as a committed load.

Q: Would a large proponent pay for these upgrades?

A: Response: Proponents pay for connection assets, while upgrades to the shared transmission network are TasNetworks' responsibility and are assessed through the RIT-T process.

Background on the George Town Network

Presenter: Nils Blichfeldt

Nils described the strategic importance of the George Town transmission network. The area forms part of Tasmania's Northern Triangle transmission system and supports major industrial loads, Basslink flows and statewide electricity reliability. George Town currently hosts around 400 megawatts (MW) of relatively constant industrial demand.

Questions and Answers

Q: Is the proposed Musselroe to Bell Bay transmission line still being considered?

A: Long-term transmission options remain under consideration, although the original concept was primarily a dedicated connection asset.

Q: Could the line eventually benefit Bell Bay and become a shared asset?

A: It would more likely be classified as a Designated Network Asset, with future development dependent on the location and timing of new projects.

Identified Need

Presenter: Nils Blichfeldt

TasNetworks has identified voltage stability risks if significant new industrial demand connects in the George Town area. Additional load increases pressure on the network and can reduce the ability to export through Basslink without constraints. Approximately 210 MW of additional load is currently identified as the point at which network intervention becomes necessary.

Questions and Answers

- No specific questions were raised during this section.

Proposed Solution

Presenter: Matt Clarke

TasNetworks presented a preferred solution involving approximately 550 Megavolt-Ampere reactive (MVar) of reactive power support through capacitor banks and static synchronous compensator (STATCOM) technology. The solution would also require modifications to the George Town Substation and potentially a new nearby substation footprint. The estimated cost is approximately \$370 million including contingency allowances.

Questions and Answers

- No specific questions were raised during this section.

Draft Economic Assessment

Presenter: Matt Clarke

TasNetworks completed electricity market modelling using the Australian Energy Market Operator's Integrated System Plan scenarios. The analysis compared a base case where Basslink exports are constrained against a case where the proposed upgrade is implemented. The draft assessment indicated a positive weighted net present value of approximately \$234 million. Benefits mainly arise from avoiding generation investment and fuel costs elsewhere in the National Electricity Market.

Questions and Answers

Q: Would charging large grid-forming batteries count as load?

A: Not necessarily. Batteries operate differently from traditional industrial loads and may provide system-support benefits that alter their impact on the network.

Next Steps and recap

Presenter: Matt Clarke

Stakeholder submissions are open until 21 August 2026. TasNetworks will review submissions and prepare the final PACR. Any future investment would still require the commitment of new load and approval by the Australian Energy Regulator.

Matt summarised that new industrial demand could trigger investment driven by network planning requirements, that a preferred reactive support solution had been identified, and that the draft assessment currently shows positive net economic benefits. Stakeholder feedback remains an important part of the process.

Questions and Answers

- No specific questions were raised during this section.

Open Q&A session

Presenter: Andrew Mansfield

Question: If 210 MW is the trigger point, what is the next hurdle requiring investment?

Response: Further growth beyond the initial tranche may require additional reactive support and potentially transmission reinforcement of the Sheffield–George Town corridor. Future investments will depend on the scale, location and timing of new load and generation developments.



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