

**To:**

Dr Kris Funston  
Executive General Manager, Network Regulation  
Australian Energy Regulator  
Email: [resetcoord@aer.gov.au](mailto:resetcoord@aer.gov.au)

**From:**

Gippsland Climate Change Network (GCCN)  
[www.gccn.org.au](http://www.gccn.org.au)

17 April 2025

**Subject:** Submission on Marinus Link Stage 1, Part B (Construction Costs) – emphasising the importance of genuine community engagement and social impact management

**Introduction and support for the Project**

The Gippsland Climate Change Network (GCCN) welcomes the opportunity to support the consultation process for the Marinus Link Stage 1, Part B (Construction Costs) proposal. As an independent not-for-profit organisation working across Gippsland to support climate-positive initiatives, GCCN strongly supports the Marinus Link project for its long-term value to Australia's clean energy transition. The project will play a vital role in leveraging Tasmania's renewable energy potential and enhancing Victoria's access to firming capacity.

This will improve the resilience of the grid, support national decarbonisation targets, and enable significant new investment in wind and hydro resources across both states. Once complete, Marinus Link will deliver wide-reaching social, environmental, and economic benefits, including regional job creation, improved energy security, and cleaner electricity generation, especially for Tasmania and Gippsland. However, these benefits depend on the project meeting the expectations of the communities it passes through.

While the Issues Paper invites responses to a range of important questions, this submission focuses specifically on consumer and community engagement. As a community-based not-for-profit organisation, the Gippsland Climate Change Network is particularly concerned with how large infrastructure projects like Marinus Link engage with and respond to the needs and voices of local communities.

**Question: In what ways has MLPL's engagement on key elements of the proposal been genuine?**

The Gippsland Climate Change Network (GCCN) believes that Marinus Link Pty Ltd (MLPL) has made a genuine effort to engage on key elements of the proposal, and that this engagement has shown sincerity, responsiveness, and a willingness to incorporate feedback—while also acknowledging there are opportunities to broaden and deepen this approach as the project progresses.

We commend MLPL for the early steps taken to establish transparent and structured engagement processes, including the formation of a Consumer Advisory Panel and engagement with Traditional Owners, landholders, and local groups. These actions represent an intent to ground the project in community awareness from the outset.

We also acknowledge the concerns raised in the Issues Paper regarding whether community engagement has had sufficient influence on the proposal to date. The suggestion that engagement has not clearly shaped decisions such as construction cost proposals is important, and we support the call for MLPL to more explicitly demonstrate how stakeholder input is reflected in revised plans.

However, from our experience, MLPL's engagement has not been tokenistic. It has shown multiple signs of being genuine:

- **Visible Regional Presence:** MLPL has attended many regional forums and events, including the annual Gippsland New Energy Conference, where it has participated in panel discussions, delivered keynote presentations, and maintained an active presence through dedicated Expo stalls. These events provided the community with multiple, informal opportunities to raise concerns, ask questions, and understand the project in depth.
- **Accessible Staff and Open Dialogue:** The Marinus team has consistently been available to speak with stakeholders and local residents, including through drop-in sessions and ad hoc conversations. Their approachability and transparency has helped demystify aspects of the project and encouraged honest dialogue.
- **Consumer Advisory Panel:** As a member of a Marinus Consumer Advisory Panel, I can personally attest to the seriousness with which MLPL has approached community input. Committee members have provided feedback on key elements of the proposal, and MLPL has demonstrated a willingness to respond and adapt based on those discussions.

We believe that the engagement has been genuine—but like all major infrastructure projects, it must evolve. Engagement must now move beyond structured panels to reach a broader cross-section of the public, particularly underrepresented voices along the transmission corridor. These include renters, younger people, digitally excluded residents, regional First Nations groups, and farming families.

#### **Recommendation:**

MLPL should extend its engagement efforts through community forums, pop-up information stalls, non-digital outreach, and co-designed sessions with local councils—approaches used successfully by projects like EnergyCo's Central-West Orana REZ. This will help ensure that engagement is not only genuine, but also inclusive and impactful.

#### **Conclusion:**

Genuine engagement requires listening, adapting, and being present—and in our view, MLPL has demonstrated these values. As the project enters more disruptive phases, the continuation and expansion of this approach will be key to maintaining trust and securing long-term social licence.

**Question: To what extent do you consider consumers were able to influence the topics MLPL engaged on?**

Gippsland Climate Change Network believes that consumers and key stakeholders have had meaningful opportunities to influence the topics that Marinus Link Pty Ltd (MLPL) has engaged on, particularly through structured mechanisms and industry engagement forums.

Customers and major stakeholders, including local governments, have played a role in shaping the location and methodology of the proposed transmission corridor. The Consumer Advisory Panel provided a valuable platform for in-depth discussion on key matters such as the proposed capital expenditure and the Capital Expenditure Sharing Scheme (CESS). These discussions reflected a strong representation of voices from both Victoria and Tasmania, and we observed that feedback from the panel influenced the evolving direction of the proposal. The conversations were robust, balanced, and reflected a genuine willingness by MLPL to incorporate stakeholder perspectives into decision-making.

In addition, we witnessed strong engagement with local suppliers, who were given the opportunity to connect with Tier One contractors and explore ways to deliver local value through the project. This emphasis on regional benefit demonstrates MLPL's openness to ensuring that transmission works create opportunities for local industry participation and economic growth. We commend Marinus Link for this approach and encourage continued and expanded opportunities for local businesses and industry to be engaged meaningfully throughout project delivery.

**Question: What key themes would you like to see MLPL engage on?**

As the Marinus Link project moves closer to implementation, the Gippsland Climate Change Network believes that several key engagement themes will be vital to ensuring the project maintains social licence and delivers positive, long-term outcomes for communities.

**1. Ongoing, Transparent Communication**

We strongly encourage MLPL to maintain clear and accessible communication throughout the entire project lifecycle—not just during early planning stages. This is particularly important during construction, when disruption is most likely. Communities need timely updates on road access, land clearing, noise, and other impacts, alongside accessible feedback and complaint mechanisms with transparent response times.

MLPL could strengthen this by adopting approaches like Tasmania's RECFIT initiative, which promoted tailored community engagement based on local social context, and by creating an online dashboard for regular project updates, similar to Western Power's approach in WA.

**Recommendation:**

MLPL should release regional social context snapshots prior to construction and maintain a live, public-facing dashboard tracking project progress, community engagement outcomes, and responses to concerns.

**2. Locally Designed Benefit-Sharing Mechanisms**

While we welcome MLPL's development of a community benefit-sharing program, we urge that local communities be meaningfully involved in shaping the design. Benefit-sharing must be community-led wherever possible to reflect real local priorities—whether they relate to skills training, housing, environmental restoration, or cultural events.

Drawing on examples like Powerlink Queensland's benefit partnerships and global best practice from the Hydropower Sustainability Alliance, MLPL can embed inclusive and flexible engagement that delivers genuine outcomes and manages community expectations appropriately.

**Recommendation:**

Establish community-led benefit-sharing panels in both Gippsland and Tasmania, with flexible program options and clearly communicated processes.

**3. Social Impact Monitoring and Adaptation**

Social impacts will shift over time and must be tracked and responded to throughout the life of the project. A dynamic and transparent social impact monitoring framework can help MLPL adapt in real time, strengthening community trust and responsiveness.

**Recommendation:**

Develop a live social impact monitoring tool to track both objective and subjective indicators such as land use changes, workforce impact, housing pressure, and community sentiment.

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**Conclusion**

While this submission focuses specifically on consumer and community engagement—reflecting our role as a community-based not-for-profit—we believe that Marinus Link has shown genuine intent in its engagement to date. Through participation in regional forums like the Gippsland New Energy Conference, hosting stalls and keynotes, and remaining available for community dialogue, MLPL has made a sincere effort to build trust and transparency.

Consumers and stakeholders have influenced key aspects of the proposal, including elements of the transmission corridor and capital expenditure discussions. MLPL has also taken important steps to include local suppliers, and industry in project planning, something we strongly commend and encourage to continue through the delivery phase.

To build on this foundation, we recommend that MLPL expand its engagement efforts to include more inclusive, ongoing, and localised approaches—particularly around transparency during construction, benefit-sharing design, and tracking of social impacts. Doing so will ensure that the project continues to meet not only its technical and economic goals but also community expectations and regional needs.

GCCN remains supportive of the Marinus Link project and welcomes its potential to contribute to the renewable transition and economic resilience of Gippsland and beyond.

Warm regards,

Darren McCubbin  
CEO

**On behalf of the Gippsland Climate Change Network**

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