

Meeting Notes

VNI West Draft Route Report



Locations	Moulamein	Deniliquin	Jerilderie
Dates	Wed 7 Feb 2024 4pm-6pm	Thurs 8 Feb 2024 12noon – 2pm	Fri 9 Feb 2024 11am – 1pm
Attendees	Approx 100	Approx 15	Approx 10

Purpose

1. Share information on the draft preferred route for VNI West in NSW, and outline the assessment contained in the [Draft Route Report](#).
2. Seek feedback on the draft preferred route and assessment contained in the Draft Route Report.

Transgrid presentation: Summary

Agenda item	Notes
1	A recap on the objectives, the need for and national context of the VNI West project
2	An overview of the route selection process and the considerations and priorities when selecting a preferred route
3	How VNI West route options were developed and assessed under a hierarchy of constraints (avoid high constraints – minimise impact on medium and low constraints – look for opportunities)
4	Why Transgrid's Option C was selected as the preferred route
5	Summary of the key features of the preferred route
6	Land access and acquisition: an overview of Transgrid's land access requirements, acquisition process, compensation for directly affected landowners that would host the transmission line easement.

What we heard: Community feedback

The following notes summarise the key themes / feedback tabled by attendees and Transgrid's comments on each of the key themes raised.

Community Investment and Benefit	
Community comments	Concerns raised that the transmission line will have no benefit for power supply to local communities directly impacted by the project.
	Concerns raised about the impact on local infrastructure with request to upgrade ahead of construction.
	Interest to understand percentage of project funds allocated to managing operational impacts on farming operations.

Community Investment and Benefit	
	Request to set aside project funding for community benefit and managing commercial impacts.
	Suggestions for large scale legacy projects in the region: improving telecommunications; improving local roads with more bitumen surfaces; increased resources for bushfire fighting and management; biodiversity management.
	Concerns raised that the transmission line will have no benefit for power supply to local communities directly impacted by the project.
Transgrid response	<p>Transgrid is seeking input on initiatives that provide a direct benefit or legacy to the local communities along the project corridor.</p> <p>We welcome suggestions from the community regarding this, and some discussion has already been held with the VNI West Community Consultative Group.</p> <p>Investments into community benefits and legacy initiatives will be factored into the projects funding application.</p> <p>Transgrid also advised that infrastructure to be upgraded would be identified and assessed as part of the project's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Transgrid will have greater clarity on which infrastructure requires upgrading once the preferred route is determined and the EIS.</p> <p>To understand the nature of information being assessed in the EIS process, please refer to the NSW Planning website to search for major projects in NSW. You may also refer to EnergyConnect's Eastern Section EIS to read about a specific transmission line project.</p>

Consultation	
Community comments	<p>Questioned how Transgrid can genuinely consider all of the submissions they are likely to receive and publish the final route report by late March.</p> <p>Concern was noted that the route is a predetermined outcome, and that the consultation is a "waste of time".</p> <p>Requested clarity on when they have opportunity for formally provide feedback on the project.</p> <p>Attendees encouraged the community to submit feedback on the Draft Route Report.</p> <p>Sentiment expressed that the project is solving a 'city' issue, and that generational farmers and pristine landscape across the region are being affected by political solutions.</p> <p>Concern expressed that while VNI West is assessed separately to other renewable energy projects, there does not appear to be a consolidated, coordinated approach between relevant parties involved.</p> <p>There is a level of frustration expressed that the communities hosting the transmission line won't gain access to the electricity on VNI West or get benefits from hosting the line despite being the renewable energy generation hub in the region.</p>
Transgrid Comments	<p>The current consultation period (until 4 March 2024) is seeking feedback on the Draft Route Report.</p> <p>Engagement with the community and landowners will continue beyond this point. Transgrid will continue to engage with all stakeholders throughout the project including one on one meetings with impacted landowners as the route is further refined as well as through the EIS and delivery phases of the project.</p>

Border crossing	
Community Comment	Residents are seeking further specific information relating to the border crossing the Murray River (NSW/VIC border).
Transgrid Comment	Transgrid is working in consultation with Transmission Company Victoria (TCV), which is planning the Victorian section of VNI West. This is to ensure alignment on both sides of the border regarding the proposed location of transmission infrastructure. More information will follow as work on this section progresses.

Proximity to homes	
Community comments	Residents called on Transgrid to ensure that the distance between the proposed transmission line and residential dwellings is maximised.
	Support to increase buffer zone around communities.
Transgrid Response	<p>In designing a transmission line, Transgrid uses the industry guidance from the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner that recommends a minimum distance of 300 metres between a dwelling and the transmission line. The Draft Route Report outlines that the 1km route option selected by Transgrid has the fewest number of existing dwellings within the 1km wide route.</p> <p>Transgrid will continue to work with landowners as the route is further refined down to its final location with the objective of maximising distance to dwellings.</p>

Tower resilience	
Community Comment	Transgrid must consider weather impacts (flooding, storms, wind) in any transmission line design to ensure impacts are mitigated.
	Attendees are concerned about the stability of transmission towers, given the impacts observed at Pyramid Hill, Victoria in 2010.
Transgrid Comments	Transgrid's structures will be designed, constructed and maintained in accordance with current industry guidelines and standards for a 500kV transmission line.

Proximity to Moulamein	
Community Comment	Explanation sought on the exclusion zone around Moulamein, as this was shown earlier as 5 kilometres.
	Minimise or avoid creek crossings – Billabong Creek and Delta Creek were both noted as sensitive areas that require further investigation to identify opportunities that avoid creek crossings.
	Noted a vulnerability in the eastern end of the VNI West project area, as the region aims to balance maintaining productive agricultural lands, biodiversity protection, and potential for renewable energy developments.
	<p>Requested Transgrid further investigate the proposed route near Moulamein. The line is too close to the township and needs to move further away.</p> <p>Further comments called out that Moulamein is taking the brunt of the project, as no other town has the transmission line as close as Moulamein; and that Moulamein has its own unique charm, its own tourism events, its agriculture and its close-knit community in what is a 'great little town'.</p>

Proximity to Moulamein	
	<p>A follow up question related to the community putting forward ideas on where the transmission line could be located to pass around Moulamein.</p> <p>Minimise or avoid creek crossings – Billabong Creek and Delta Creek were both noted as sensitive areas that require further investigation to identify opportunities that avoid creek crossings.</p>
Transgrid Comment	<p>During the Draft Corridor Report engagement period Murray River Council confirmed that the Moulamein Airport had been decommissioned and was no longer in use.</p> <p>As a result the 5km “high level” constraint was removed from around the former airport site and the corridor expanded north of Moulamein allowing for the assessment of potential routes north of the town and out of the higher intensity irrigated agricultural land use area.</p> <p>Following initial consultation of the Draft Route Report Transgrid is now considering alternate routes that would increase the distance from Moulamein town centre.</p>

Realignment north of Moulamein	
Community Comment	<p>There needs to be consideration of running the transmission route further north adjacent to or connecting into the EnergyConnect currently under construction.</p>
Transgrid Comments	<p>Transgrid advised VNI West would not be connecting in with EnergyConnect. EnergyConnect will be built as a 330kV transmission line from Dinawan to the west (to Buronga and South Australia). VNI West will be built as a 500kV line from Dinawan to Kerang.</p> <p>EnergyConnect is already under construction and is targeting completion in 2026, VNI West is on a timeline for completion in 2028. They are two separate projects and cannot be connected without significant time and cost delays and managing a connection between a 330kV line and a 500kV line which would require another substation.</p> <p>In addition, parallelling VNI West and Energy Connect from north of Moulamein to Dinawan introduces an additional network security risk.</p>

Health	
Community Comments	<p>Residents noted concern of the effects of a long-term exposure to a 500kV transmission line.</p>
Transgrid Comments	<p>Transgrid advised that the transmission line would be designed and operated within the minimum safe range as set out in standards maintained by the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Science Agency (ARPANSA) and the World Health Organisation (WHO).</p> <p>On its website, ARPANSA notes that “scientific evidence does not establish that exposure to the electric and magnetic fields found around the home, the office or near powerlines causes health effects.”</p> <p>References: ARPANSA – Electricity and Health and ARPANSA – Extremely low frequency electric and magnetic fields</p>

Community	
Community comment	<p>There is a general interest in potential location for worker accommodation camps, and how the community can access benefits from influx of workforce</p>
Transgrid Comment	<p>The project team does not currently have any locations selected for worker accommodation camps. When the preferred route is determined, Transgrid can start to look at options. It is a detailed exercise, as it needs to consider people, construction</p>

Community	
	<p>activity such as concrete batching, while having the ability to minimise transport issues on local areas.</p> <p>Worker accommodation camp locations will also be included as part of the Environmental Assessment to be submitted for project approval.</p>

Property	
Community Comment	<p>Seeking advice on how registered flood levee plans on properties are compensated.</p> <p>Clarity to be provided on compensation payments and its effect on taxable income / capital gains tax.</p>
Transgrid Comment	<p>Transgrid advised that once the route is finalised it will meet with directly impacted landowners to work through the specific impacts on their property and to develop a compensation offer.</p> <p>This may have tax implications however every landowner would need to seek independent advice based on their personal circumstances.</p>

Underground	
Community Comment	<p>Question tabled regarding option for undergrounding the transmission line.</p>
Transgrid Comment	<p>Transgrid has published a fact sheet on undergrounding.</p> <p>Transgrid advised that undergrounding a transmission line would require different technical solutions compared to an overhead transmission line, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing and accounting for ground conditions • Potential greater impact on the land from construction activity (trenching) • Trenches require thermally stabilised backfill to manage temperatures (up to 85C) generated by transmission cables. • Underground transmission lines require joint bays installed approximately every one kilometre (a joint bay is a large pit in the ground where transmission cables are joined) and would require more frequent inspections. <p>If a transmission line operating in AC (alternating current) were underground, it would also require additional infrastructure on the surface every 20 kilometres to manage magnetic fields in the electricity transmission. [Note that VNI West is proposed to operate in AC so that it may allow electricity to flow in both directions to meet electricity demand in NSW and VIC].</p>

Transgrid's responses

Some questions tabled during these sessions were accepted on notice, and a commitment made to respond further in due course (likely in the Final Route Report to be published late March 2024).

Thank you to everyone who attended a town hall. The project team welcome the feedback received and will respond in more detail in the Final route report.

If you believe there is key information discussed during a town hall that you attended that is not captured in the above document please contact us via email at vniw@transgrid.com.au or phone 1800 955 588.