



VNI West Community Consultative Group

**Meeting 7 – 27 November 2024
Deniliquin**

Acknowledgement of Country

We would like to acknowledge the Wiradjuri, Wamba Wamba, Perrepa Perrepa and Yorta Yorta people as the custodians of the lands and waters on which we meet today.

We pay respect to Elders past and present.



Agenda

Time	Agenda item	Time allocated	Presenter
9:45 – 10:00	Morning tea	15 mins	
10:00 – 10:10	Welcome Acknowledgement of Country Introductions Housekeeping and review of previous minutes	10 mins	Brendan Blakeley
10:10 – 11:10	What are you hearing? Roads – Bruce Rollinson	60 mins	Brendan Blakeley
11:10 – 11:30	Transgrid Update <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 200m Transmission Line Corridor – Nathan Menser • CCG Recruitment – Reem Nasr • Property update – Ben Doran • Community benefits update – Nathan Menser 	20 mins	Colin Mayer
11:30 – 12:50	Environmental Impact Statement – Update <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement activities – Nathan Menser • Studies – Jarryd Barton and Damian Williams 	80 Mins	Nathan Menser Jarryd Barton and Damian Williams
12:50 - 1:00pm	Wrap up and close <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milestones for first half of next year • Meeting dates 2025 	10 Mins	Brendan Blakeley

Review of Meeting 6 minutes and action items



Action items

Agenda item	Description	Person responsible	Status
2. What are you hearing?	ACTION: Letter to be drafted on behalf of group outlining issues and requesting coordination of activities. Chair to draft letter, Draft to be circulated to group by Secretary	Chair	
3. Project Director's update	ACTION: Distribute Energy Networks Australia – Guidelines for wind turbines proximity to electricity transmission lines	Secretary	Copies printed and available for distribution
	ACTION: Link to CSSI Declaration	Secretary	Completed and included with minutes

What are you hearing?

Brendan Blakeley

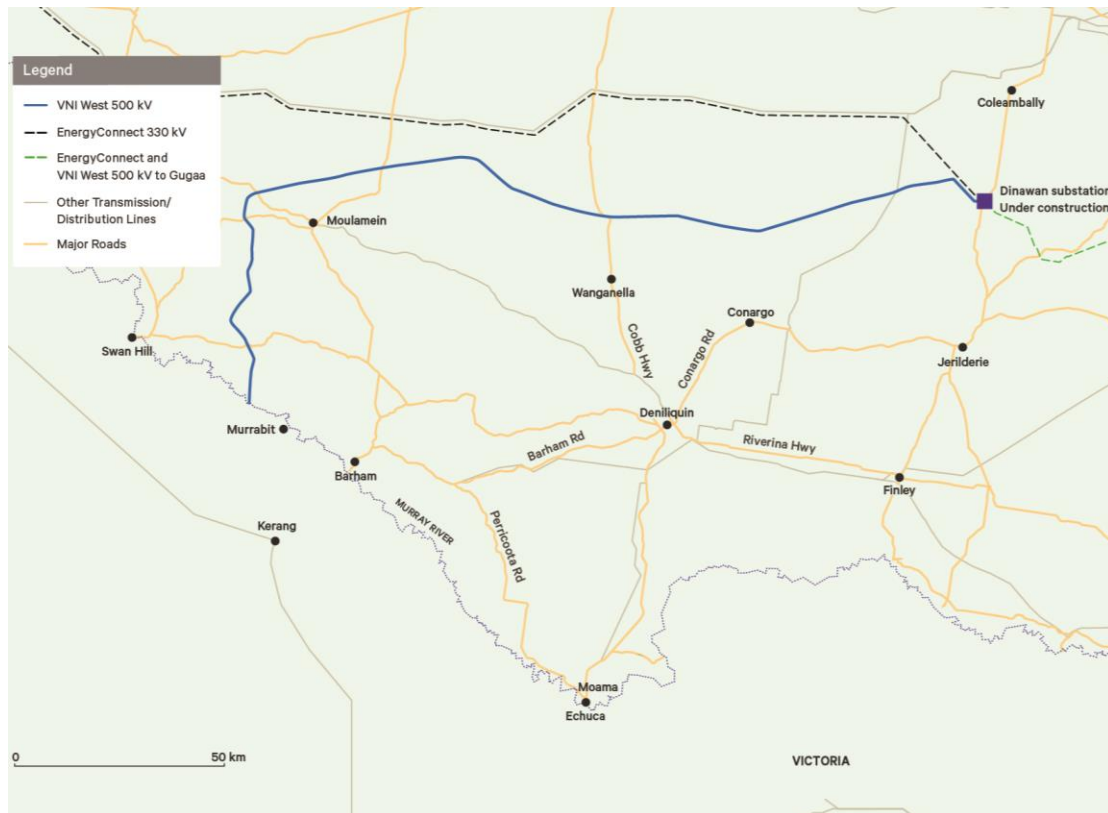


Project Director's update

Colin Mayer



Transgrid update



30 October 2024:
200-metre-wide transmission line corridor announced.

- 30 directly affected landowners (Dinawan to Border)
- 13 directly affected landowners (Wagga to Gugaa)



31 October 2024:
Presented to EnergyCo's Council Briefing:

- Project coordination
- Community benefits



Photo credit: EnergyCo via LinkedIn

Stock image

In progress:
Preparing information to go to market on construction packages to select delivery partner.

Market engagement will inform opportunities for local workforce development and procurement.

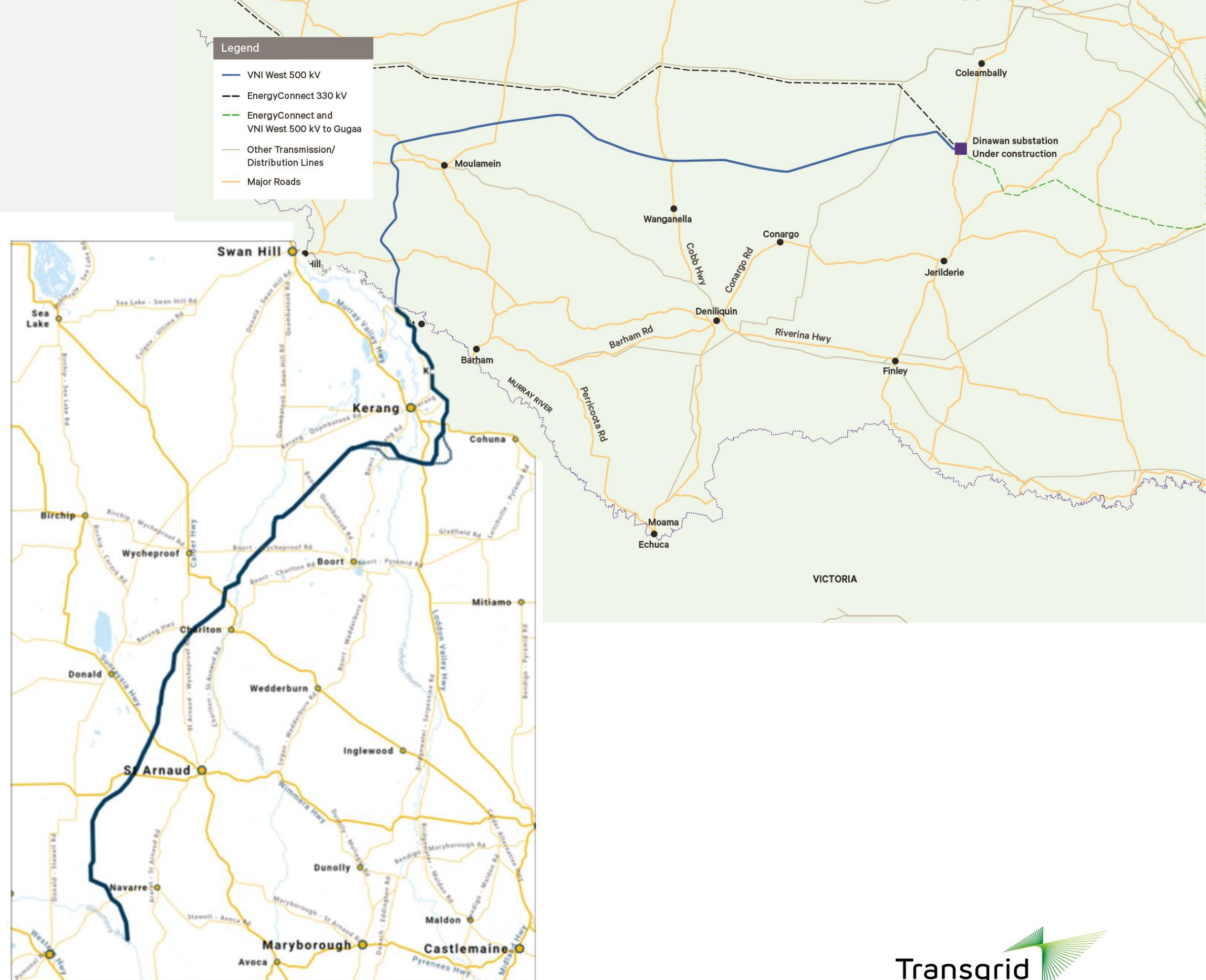
VNI West project

30 October 2024:

Transgrid announced 200m-wide transmission line corridor for NSW.

Transmission Company Victoria announced 70m-wide project easement for VNIW in VIC.

Information presented at a joint Transgrid-TCV presentation at Murrabit on 29 October 2024.



Property

- Undertaking property valuations with directly affected landowners (commenced August 2024).
- Encouraging landowners to seek their own valuations independent of Transgrid's valuation.
- Property team engaging with directly affected landowners to discuss Property Management Plans (PMP) and access tracks
 - *Property specific information on how each property is used*
 - *Access requirements and timings*
 - *Biosecurity protocols*
 - *PMP forms part of Option Deed (and informs construction team).*
- Working towards issuing **offer letters** (Section 10A – compensation offer, option deed) in Q1, 2025.
- Key change: **Clearance height**
Operational farming machinery of up to 5 metres in height will be able to operate in the VNI West easement.



Community investment & benefits

Recap: What we have heard so far (key themes)



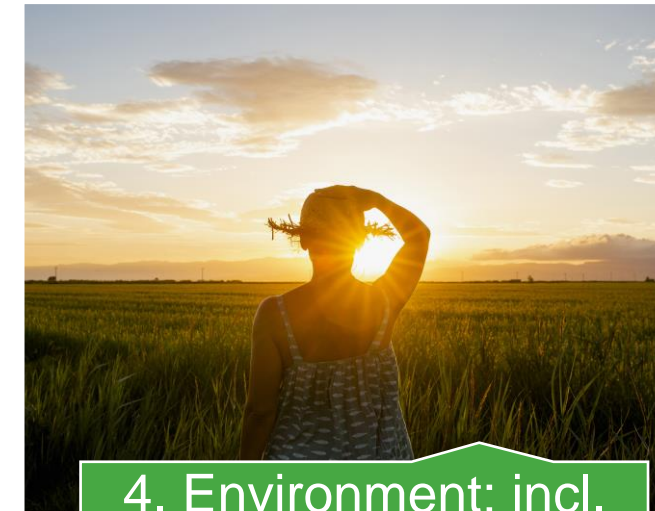
1. Connectivity & improving telecommunications



2. Improving infrastructure (including roads)



3. Access to services: Health, Mental health Housing, Childcare



4. Environment; incl. bushfire preparedness and management



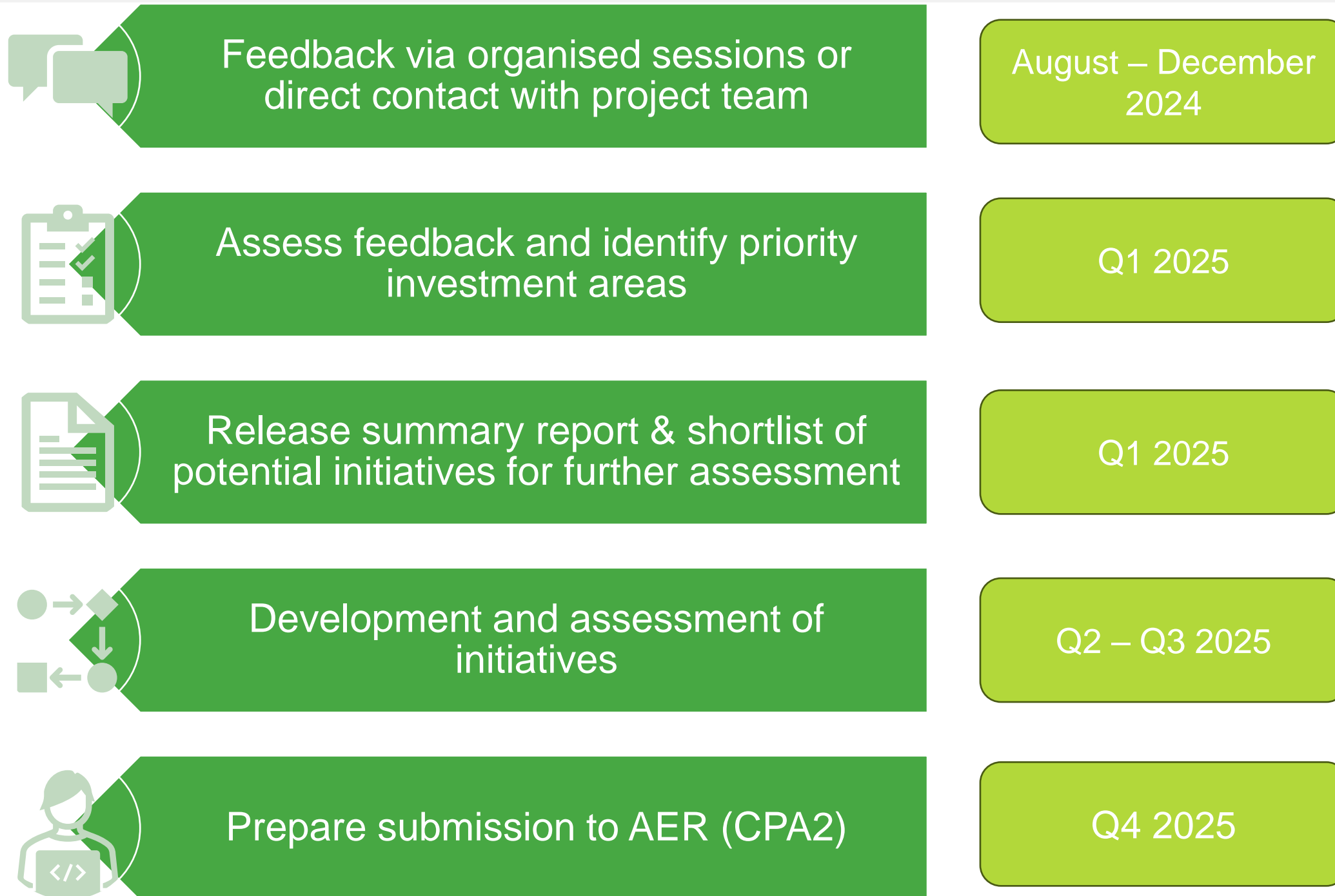
5. Community Projects (eg Conargo Community precinct upgrade)



6. Education and Training (eg Education hubs, Scholarships)

**Establish
Community
Foundation
Models**

Community Benefits & Investment Submission Timeline



Community Survey

Extended to
12 December 2024

Informs
Community Investment & Benefits
and
Social Impact Assessment (EIS)



CCG Recruitment

- We're planning to increase representation on CCG from across the project footprint
- Engagement
 - Newspaper advertising
 - Project email
 - CCG members – your networks / recommendations
 - Directly affected landowners
- Timeline
 - Promote in early 2025 (around next round of engagement)
 - Application process close end of February 2025
 - Appoint new members to attend second meeting in 2025

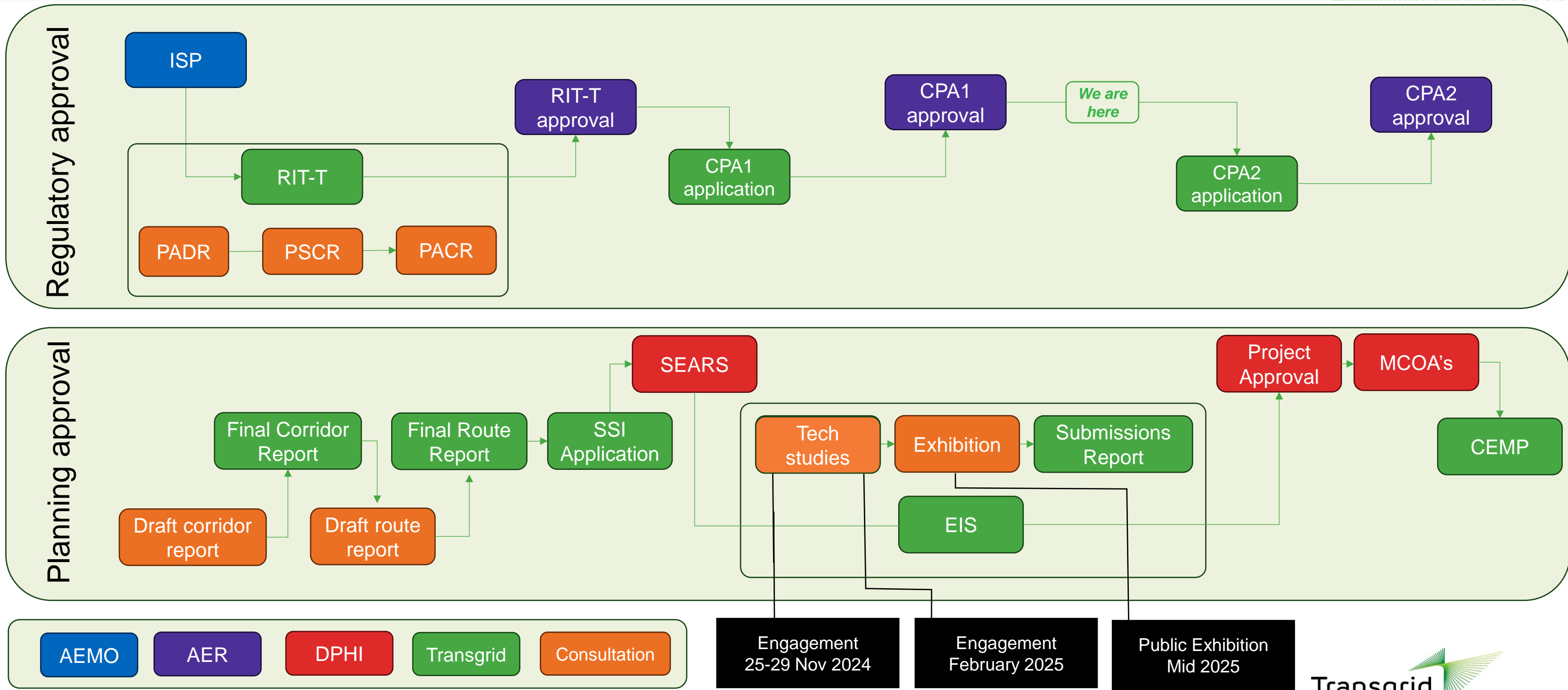


VNI West (NSW) EIS & specialist studies update

Introduction



Engagement during EIS development



EIS process & development update

WSP



Planning and approvals

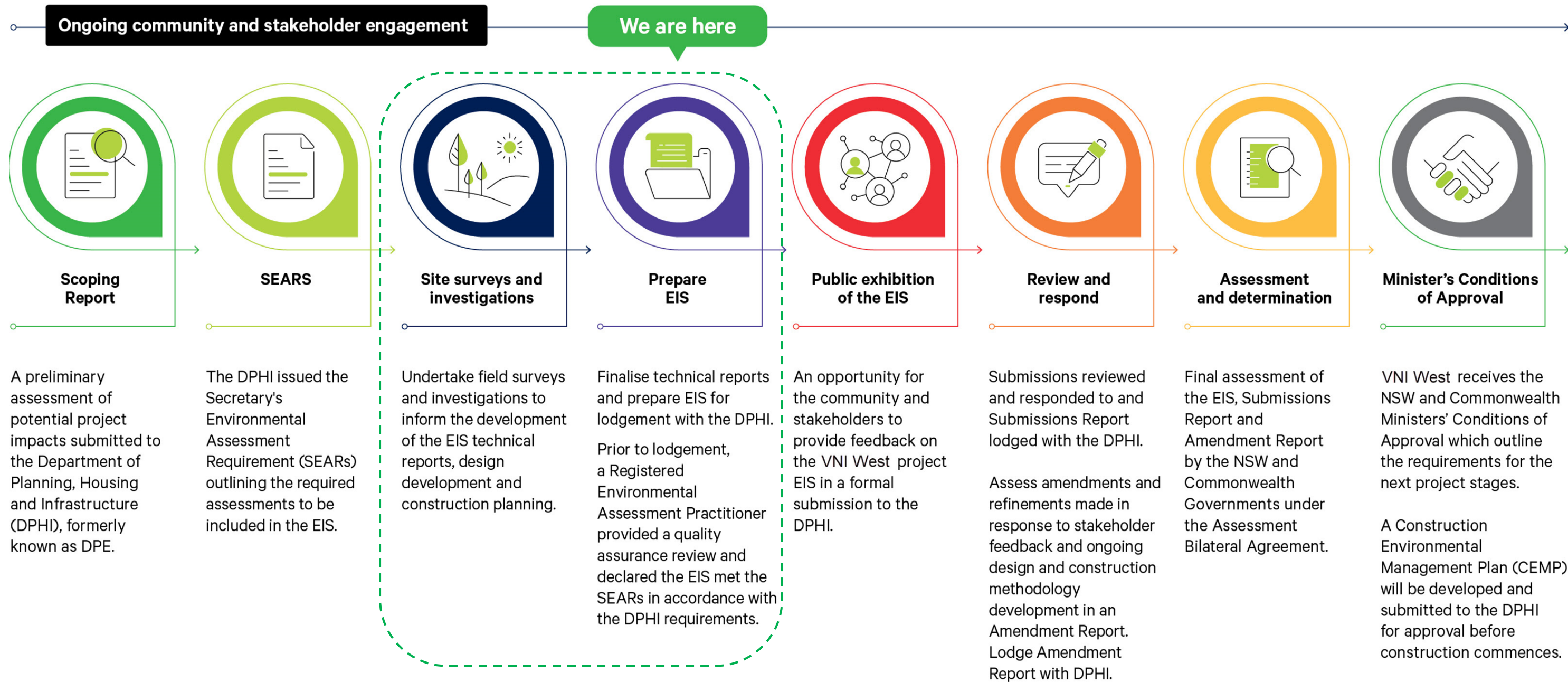
State process

- The NSW Government deemed VNI West as Critical State Significant Infrastructure (CSSI) on 3 July 2024
- The final Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) for the project were issued on 4 October 2024
- This EIS is now been prepared to address the SEARs.

Federal process

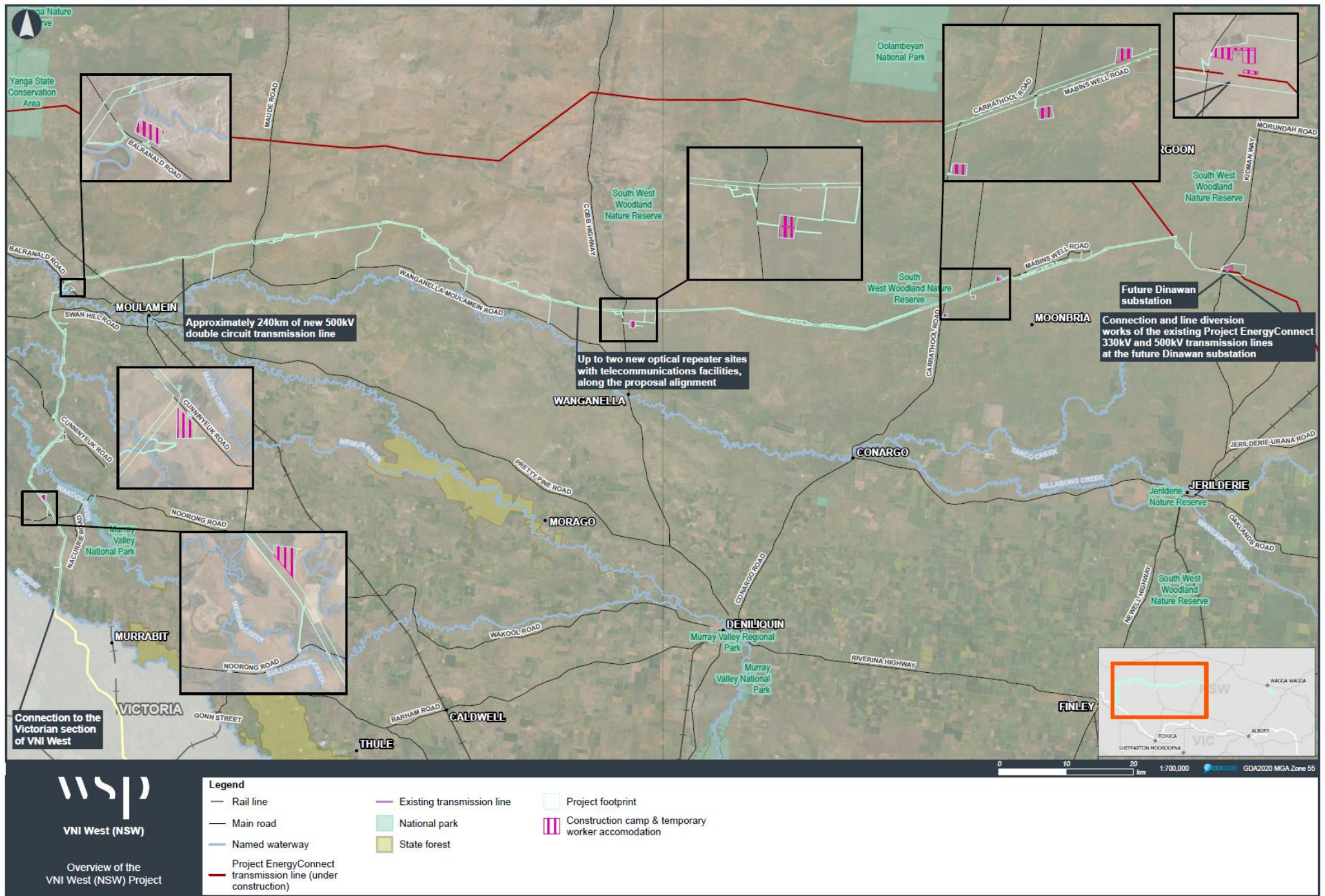
- The project was also declared a 'controlled action' on 4 September 2024 (EPBC Act 2024/09871) by the (Commonwealth) Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) and as such also requires a separate approval under the (Commonwealth) *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act)
- As a result of the need for Commonwealth approval, the project would be subject to the bilateral assessment process that has been established between the Australian and NSW governments.

VNI West (NSW) EIS – Planning approval pathway



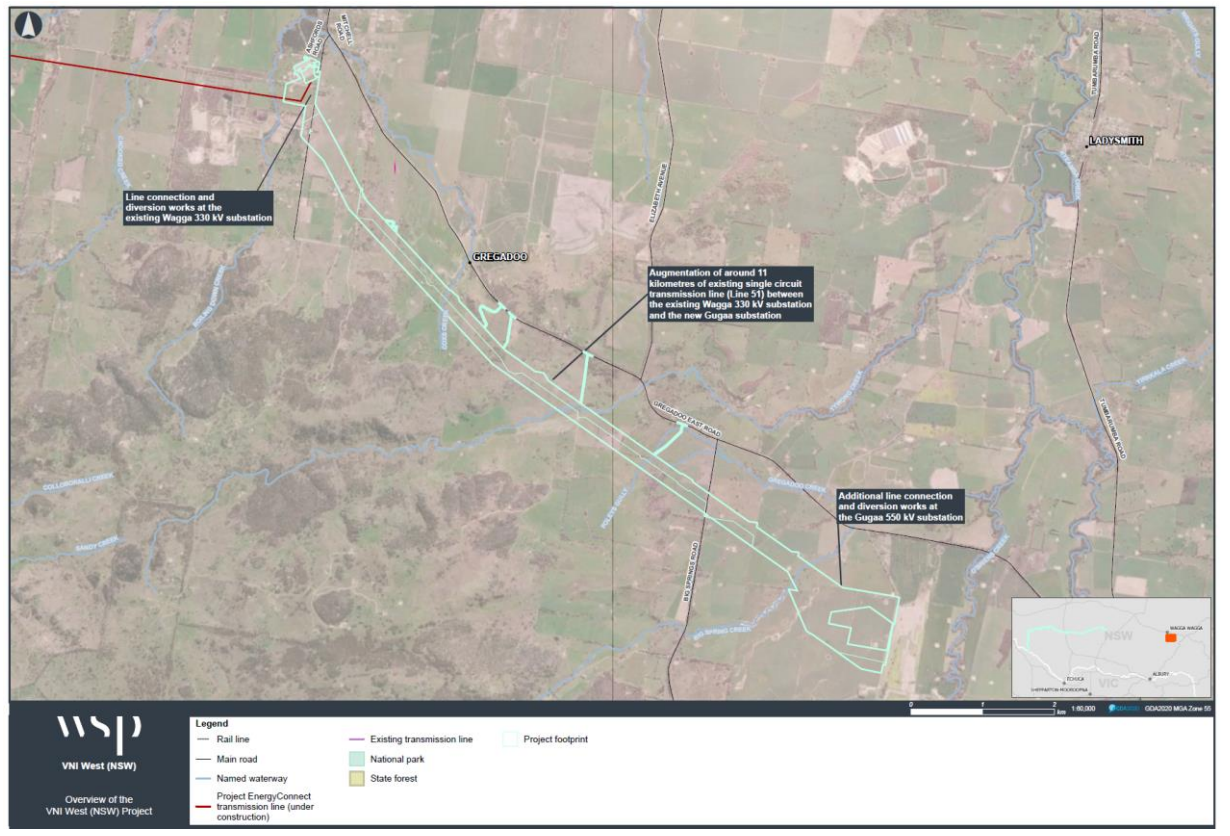
Refinement of the project impact assessment area

Project footprint – Indicative 200m corridor and border crossing point – October 2024



Dinawan to NSW-VIC border


Wagga to Gugaa



EIS topics



EIS impact assessment topics

 Aboriginal heritage	 Agricultural land	 Air quality	 Aviation safety	 Biodiversity
 Bushfire risk	 Greenhouse gas and climate change risk	 Soils, geology and contamination	 Economic	 Electric and magnetic fields
 Hydrology and flooding	 Historic heritage	 Landscape character and visual amenity	 Land use and property	 Noise and vibration
 Social	 Surface water and groundwater	 Traffic and transport	 Sustainability	

 Overview presented today

Biodiversity



EIS overview – Biodiversity

Purpose of the assessment

To evaluate the potential impacts to biodiversity from construction and operation of the project.

The assessment of potential biodiversity impacts was undertaken in accordance with the SEARs reflecting both State and Commonwealth government requirements.

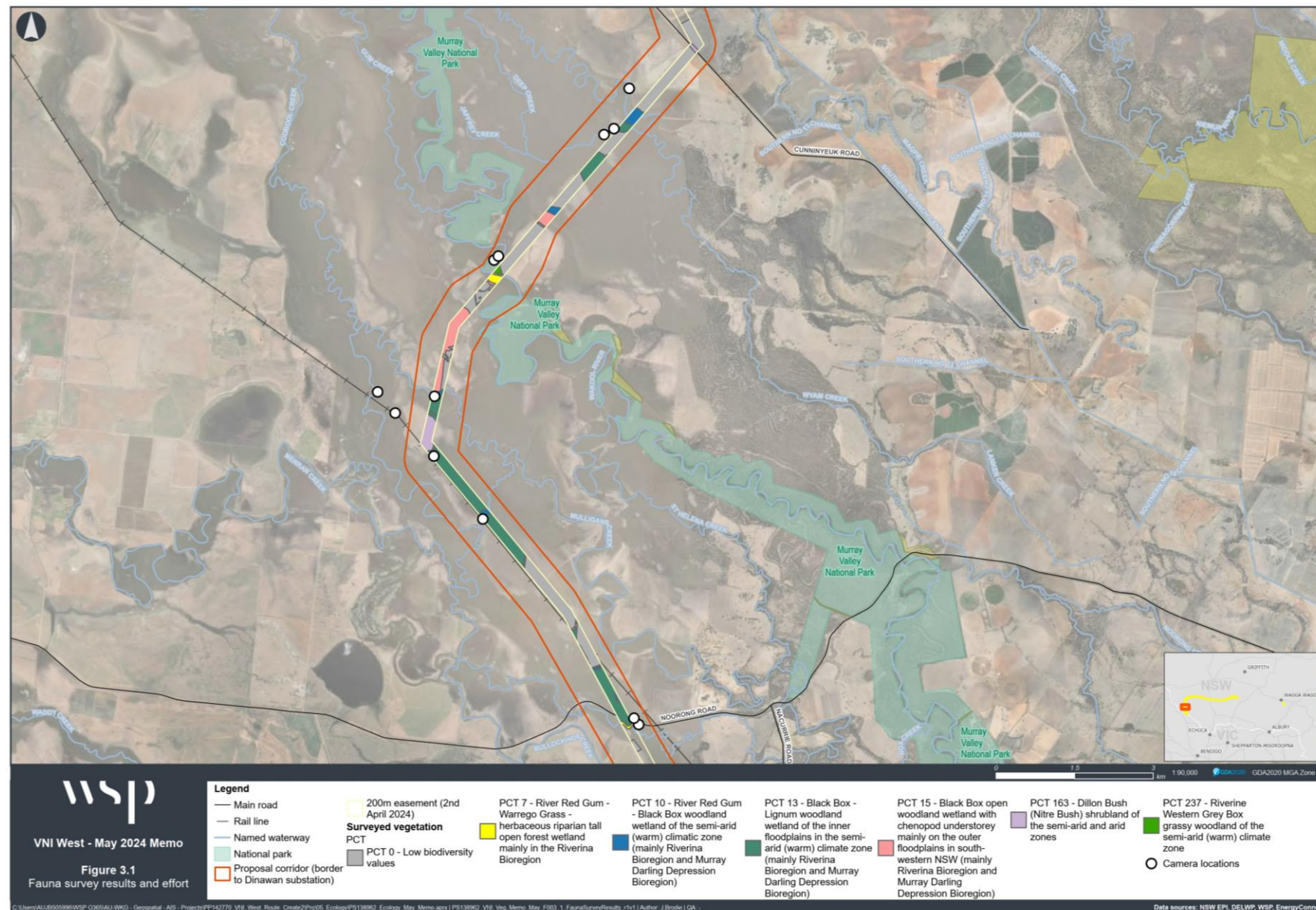
The Biodiversity Assessment Method (BAM) 2020 prescribes how the assessment should be undertaken:

- key principle of avoiding or minimising impacts
- for impacts that cannot be avoided, biodiversity offsets are required



Plains wanderer (Pedionomus torquatus)

EIS overview – Biodiversity



Study area

Assessment area:

- Project footprint plus a 500m buffer looking at native vegetation present.

Project locality:

- Project footprint plus a 10km buffer for threatened entity searches.

Indicative disturbance footprint:

- Indicative area of land that would be temporarily or permanently impacted for the project.

EIS overview – Biodiversity

Assessment methodology

- desktop review of existing data and reports
- defining the study area and the indicative disturbance footprint
- seasonal field surveys for threatened species
- assessing impacts in accordance with BAM and EPBC requirements
- identifying mitigation measures to minimise potential impacts
- determining offset requirements for residual impacts.



*Above Austral Pillwort
(Pilularia novae-hollandiae)*



*Left: Chariot Wheels
(Maireana cheelii)*

EIS overview – Biodiversity threatened ecological communities

Threatened Ecological Communities include:

PCT ID	PCT Name	BC Act	SAII	EPBC Act
23	Yarran tall open shrubland of the sandplains and plains of the semi-arid (warm) and arid climate zones	Potentially occurs - Acacia melvillei Shrubland in the Riverina and Murray-Darling Depression bioregions – Endangered	No	Not Listed
26	Weeping Myall open woodland of the Riverina Bioregion and NSW Southwestern Slopes Bioregion	Potentially occurs - Myall Woodland in the Darling Riverine Plains, Brigalow Belt South, Cobar Peneplain, Murray-Darling Depression, Riverina and NSW Southwestern Slopes bioregions - Endangered	No	Potentially occurs - Weeping Myall Woodlands (listed as Endangered)
28	White Cypress Pine open woodland of sand plains, prior streams and dunes mainly of the semi-arid (warm) climate zone	Potentially occurs - Sandhill Pine Woodland in the Riverina, Murray-Darling Depression and NSW Southwestern Slopes bioregions - Endangered	No	Nominated for EPBC Listing.
44	Forb-rich Spear grass – Windmill Grass – White Top grassland of the Riverina Bioregion	Not Listed	No	Potentially occurs - Natural Grasslands of the Murray Valley Plains – Critically Endangered
45	Plains Grass grassland on alluvial mainly clay soils in the Riverina Bioregion and NSW Southwestern Slopes Bioregion	Not Listed	No	Potentially occurs -Natural Grasslands of the Murray Valley Plains – Critically Endangered
46	Curly Windmill Grass – spear grass – wallaby grass grassland on alluvial clay and loam on the Hay Plain, Riverina Bioregion	Not Listed	No	Potentially occurs -Natural Grasslands of the Murray Valley Plains – Critically Endangered



Myall Woodlands (PCT 26)

EIS overview – Biodiversity threatened flora

Survey effort

- Threatened flora surveys completed in September and October
- Plant Community Types mapped and recorded to determine vegetation condition

Threatened Flora recorded

Scientific name	Common name	BC Act	SAIL	EPBC Act
<i>Brachyscome papillosa</i>	Mossgiel Daisy	V	No	V
<i>Eleocharis obicis</i>	Spike-Rush	V	No	V
<i>Eucalyptus leucoxydon subsp. pruinosa</i>	Yellow Gum	V	No	-
<i>Lepidium monoplocoides</i>	Winged Peppercross	E	No	E
<i>Maireana cheelii</i>	Chariot Wheels	V	No	V
<i>Pilularia novae-hollandiae</i>	Austral Pillwort	E	No	-
<i>Swainsona murrayana</i>	Slender Darling Pea	V	No	V



Slender Darling-pea (*Swainsona murrayana*)

EIS overview – Biodiversity threatened fauna

Threatened fauna survey effort

- Nocturnal birds including Owls, Bush Stone-curlew
- Mammals including Squirrel Glider and Brush-tailed Phascogale and Southern Myotis
- Diurnal Bird survey
- Amphibian surveys

Threatened Fauna recorded

Scientific name	Common name	BC Act	SAIL	EPBC Act
<i>Falco subniger</i>	Black Falcon	V	No	-
<i>Neophema chrysostoma</i>	Blue-winged Parrot	V	No	V
<i>Climacteris picumnus victoriae</i>	Brown Treecreeper (eastern subspecies)	V	No	V
<i>Pomatostomus temporalis temporalis</i>	Grey-crowned Babbler (eastern subspecies)	V	No	-
<i>Litoria raniformis</i>	Southern Bell Frog	E	No	V
<i>Hieraaetus morphnoides</i>	Little Eagle	V	No	-
<i>Merops ornatus</i>	Rainbow Bee-eater	-	-	M
<i>Aphelocephala leucopsis</i>	Southern Whiteface	V	No	V
<i>Circus assimilis</i>	Spotted Harrier	V	-	-
<i>Epthianura albifrons</i>	White-fronted Chat	V	No	-



Southern Bell Frog (*Litoria raniformis*)

EIS overview – Biodiversity threatened fauna

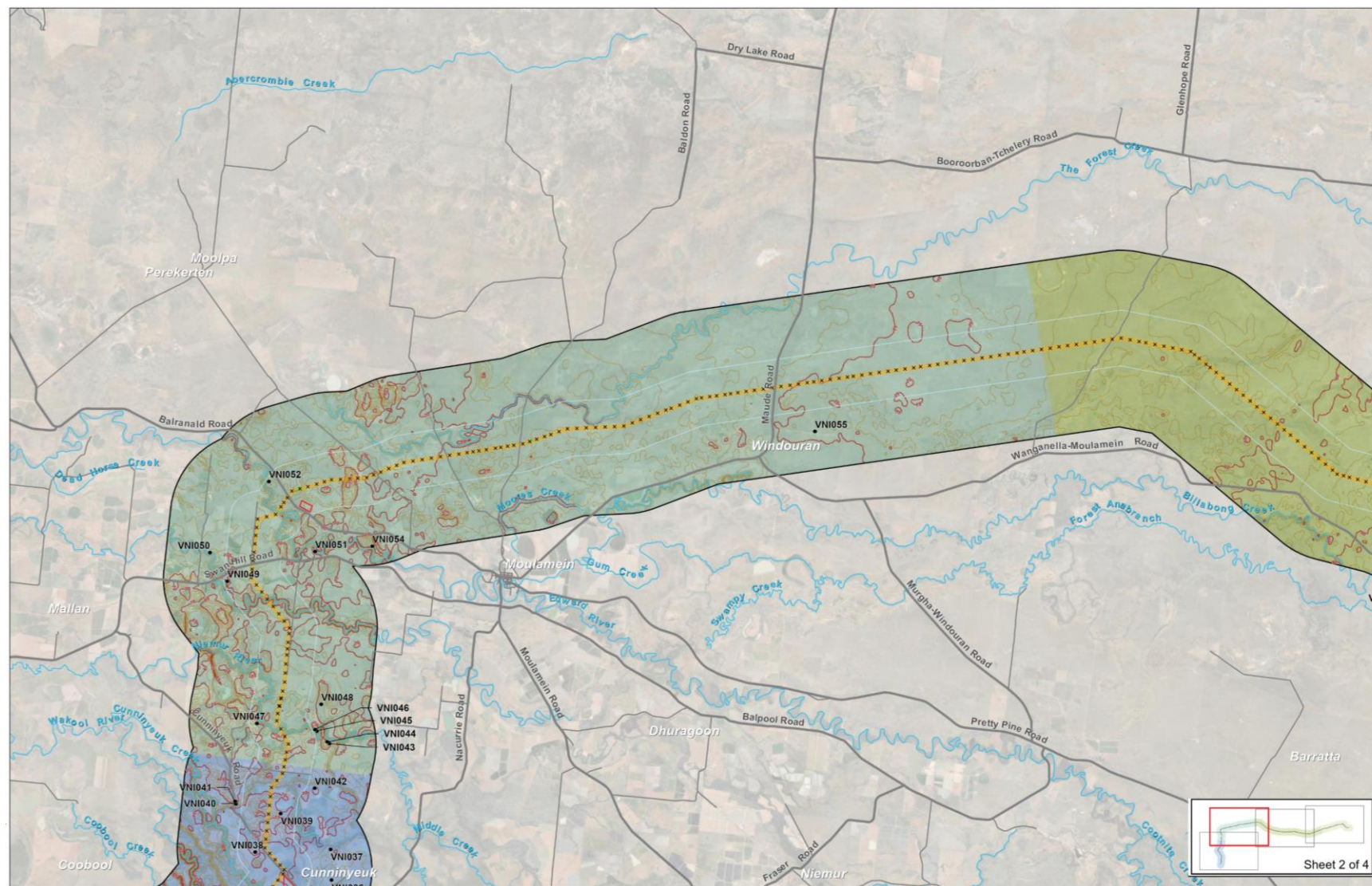
Next steps through to EIS exhibition

- Upcoming surveys for summer species to meet seasonal surveys requirements
- Plains Wanderer survey – November 2024
- Further consultation with State and Federal Agencies (BCS, DCCEEW)
- Preparation of the BDAR including the impact calculations to determine the offset requirements based on direct impacts.
- Further steps to minimise impacts on biodiversity through mitigation considering prescribed, indirect and cumulative impacts.

Landscape character and visual impact



EIS overview – Landscape character and visual impacts



Purpose of the assessment

The purpose of this assessment is to identify and assess the potential landscape character and visual impact of the project.

Study area

Study areas identified for landscape character and visual impacts, including:

- landscape character assessment study area - defined as all areas within 5 km either side of the project footprint
- visual assessment study area (NSW/Victorian border to Dinawan defined as all areas within 1.5 km either side of the project footprint
- visual assessment study area (Wagga Wagga to Gugaa) defined as all areas within 1.055 km of the project footprint

EIS overview – Landscape character and visual impacts

Assessment methodology

- Consideration of key guidelines and strategic planning documents, in particular the recently released *Transmission Guideline and Technical Supplement – Landscape and Visual Assessment Technical Supplement* (NSW DPHI, November 2024)
- Description of the existing conditions of the project location and surrounds, including topography, land use and landscape features, landscape values and sensitivities
- Assessment of landscape character impacts and specific visual impacts during construction and operation
- Identification and consideration of cumulative landscape character and visual impacts of the project together with other approved and potential future projects within the study area
- Recommendation of mitigation and management measures for the project.



LCVIA – Sample: View east along Carrathool Road

Existing view - 180 degree panorama



Next steps through to EIS exhibition

- ongoing site investigations
- confirmation of public and private viewpoints for assessment
- completion of landscape character and visual impact assessment.

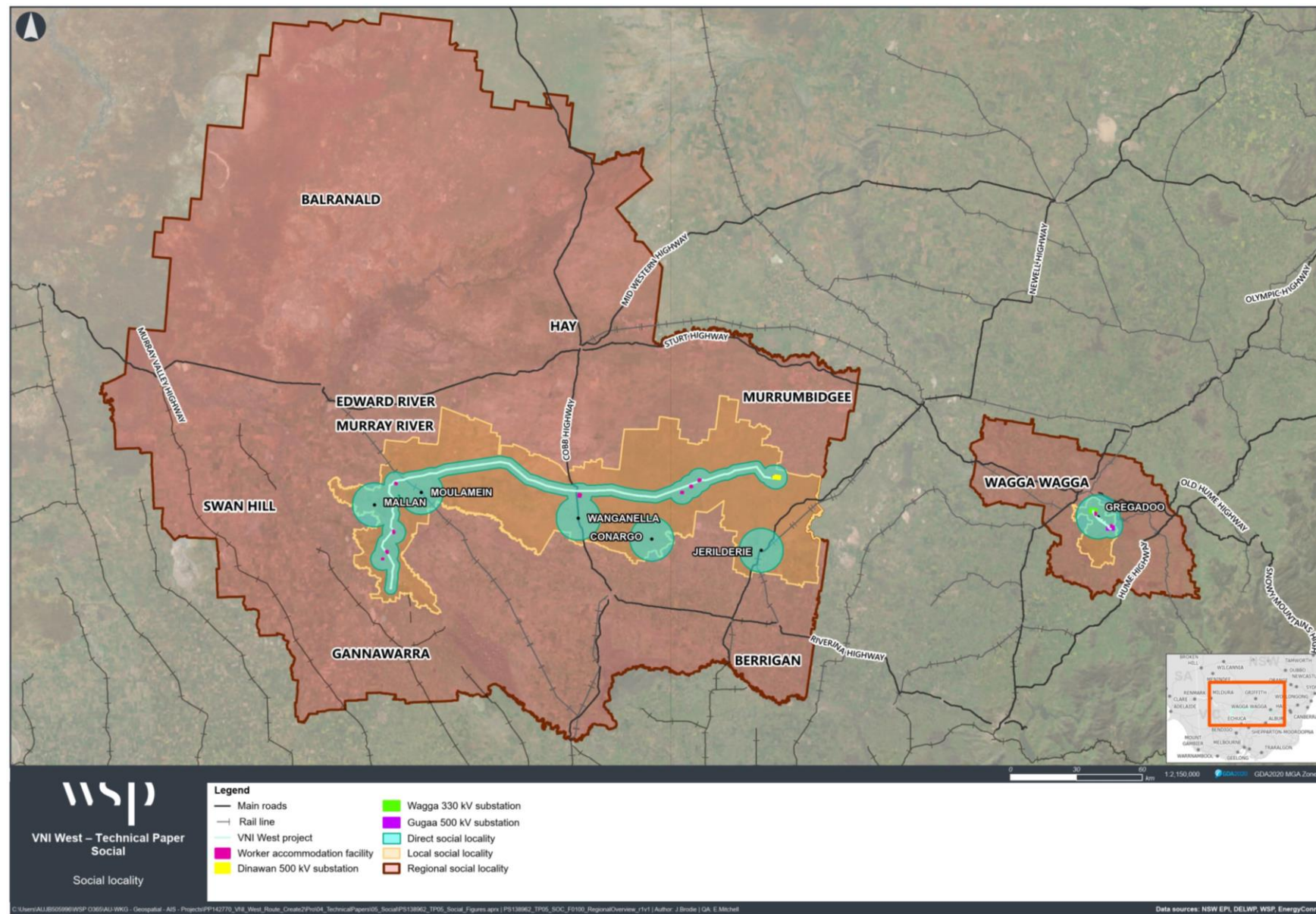
Photomontage - including indicative transmission structure locations



Social impact assessment



EIS overview – Social



Purpose of the assessment

To identify, predict and evaluate likely social impacts arising from construction and operation of the project and propose responses to the predicted impacts – in line with the DPIE *Social Impact Assessment Guideline, 2023*

Study area

Referred to as 'social locality'

1. Local government level
2. Key communities' level
3. Project footprint level.

EIS overview – Social

Assessment methodology

- Defining the social locality
- Establishing the social baseline
- Engaging with communities and stakeholders
- Reviewing relevant state, regional and local plans and policies
- Reviewing other relevant EIS technical reports for the project
- Assessing identified impacts – likelihood (probability) and scale (magnitude)
- Identifying and recommending mitigation measures.



Travelling from Mallan to Moulamein, NSW

EIS overview – Social

SIA engagement

- Community members and representatives of community organisations: 13 in-person interviews and 6 preliminary survey results
- Public services (e.g., emergency services, health services): 2 in-person interviews
- Councils: 3 online interviews
- Landholders hosting infrastructure: 1 phone interview and 1 preliminary survey result
- Landholder within 5km: 3 preliminary survey results
- Local business owners: 3 preliminary survey results



Mallan Memorial Hall, NSW

EIS overview – Social

Preliminary assessment outcomes to date

- Change to visual amenity
- Changes to land use
- Potential impact on agriculture practices, business costs, property values
- Potential loss of income
- Pressure on services
- Increased costs to energy consumers
- Impact to culture and heritage
- Impact on accessibility
- Change to country lifestyle and community cohesion
- Change in sense of safety.



Moulamein Lake , NSW

EIS overview – Social

Next steps through to EIS exhibition

- Ongoing assessment of the project against the eight key categories of assessment (as per the DPIE SIA Guidelines)
 - Way of Life
 - Community
 - Accessibility
 - Culture
 - Health and wellbeing
 - Surroundings
 - Livelihoods
 - Decision-making systems
- Ongoing community consultation through direct engagement and surveys

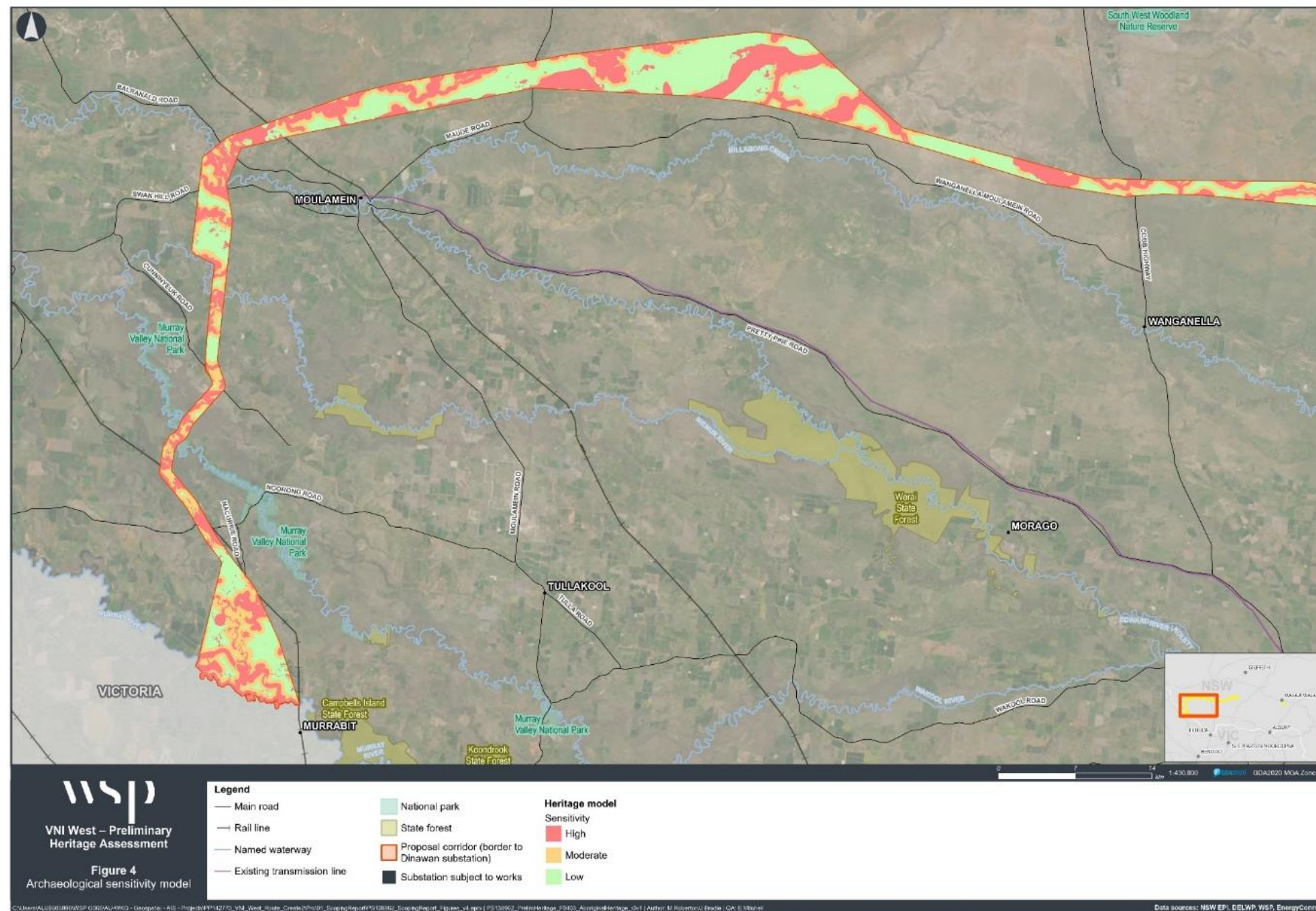


Jerilderie main street, NSW

Aboriginal heritage



EIS overview – Aboriginal heritage



Purpose of the assessment

To identify and assess the potential impacts of the project in relation to Aboriginal cultural heritage values and sites within the subject area, assesses the harm the proposed development may cause, and outlines management recommendations for actions to avoid, minimise or mitigate the impact

Study area

Direct impacts within the project footprint plus a one-kilometre-wide buffer, noting the project affects five Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs):

- Cummeragunja LALC
- Deniliquin LALC
- Griffith LALC
- Wamba Wamba LALC
- Wagga Wagga LALC

EIS overview – Aboriginal heritage

Assessment methodology

- Desktop - AHIMS database
- Developing a predictive model
- Conducting field surveys with registered Aboriginal parties (RAPs)
- Completing test excavations at accessible PADs
- Assessing potential direct and indirect impacts on Aboriginal heritage
- Cultural Values Assessment / mapping

Consultation with Local Aboriginal Land Councils, RAPs and Traditional Owners has been ongoing throughout the assessment process.

EIS overview – Aboriginal heritage

Preliminary assessment outcomes to date

Summary of ACHAR findings for the project footprint to date (to November 2024):

- 49 Aboriginal object locations (comprising artefact sites⁴⁸, hearths and middens) these are likely to be grouped into larger Aboriginal site areas following review of survey data
- 10 potential archaeological deposits (PADs)
- 13 modified trees
- 2 cultural resource sites
- Project does not impact known Aboriginal reserves or early historical properties where documented significant historical interactions with Aboriginal people occurred



Example of scarring on a black box tree in the eastern end of project study area

EIS overview – Aboriginal heritage

Next steps through to EIS exhibition

- Continue to undertake archaeological field investigations, including detailed surveys
- Consult with RAPs and Knowledge Holders
- Prepare an ACHAR with input from registered RAPs
- Prepare a Cultural Values Assessment Report (CVAR)
- Identification of mitigation measures – presented in the ACHAR.

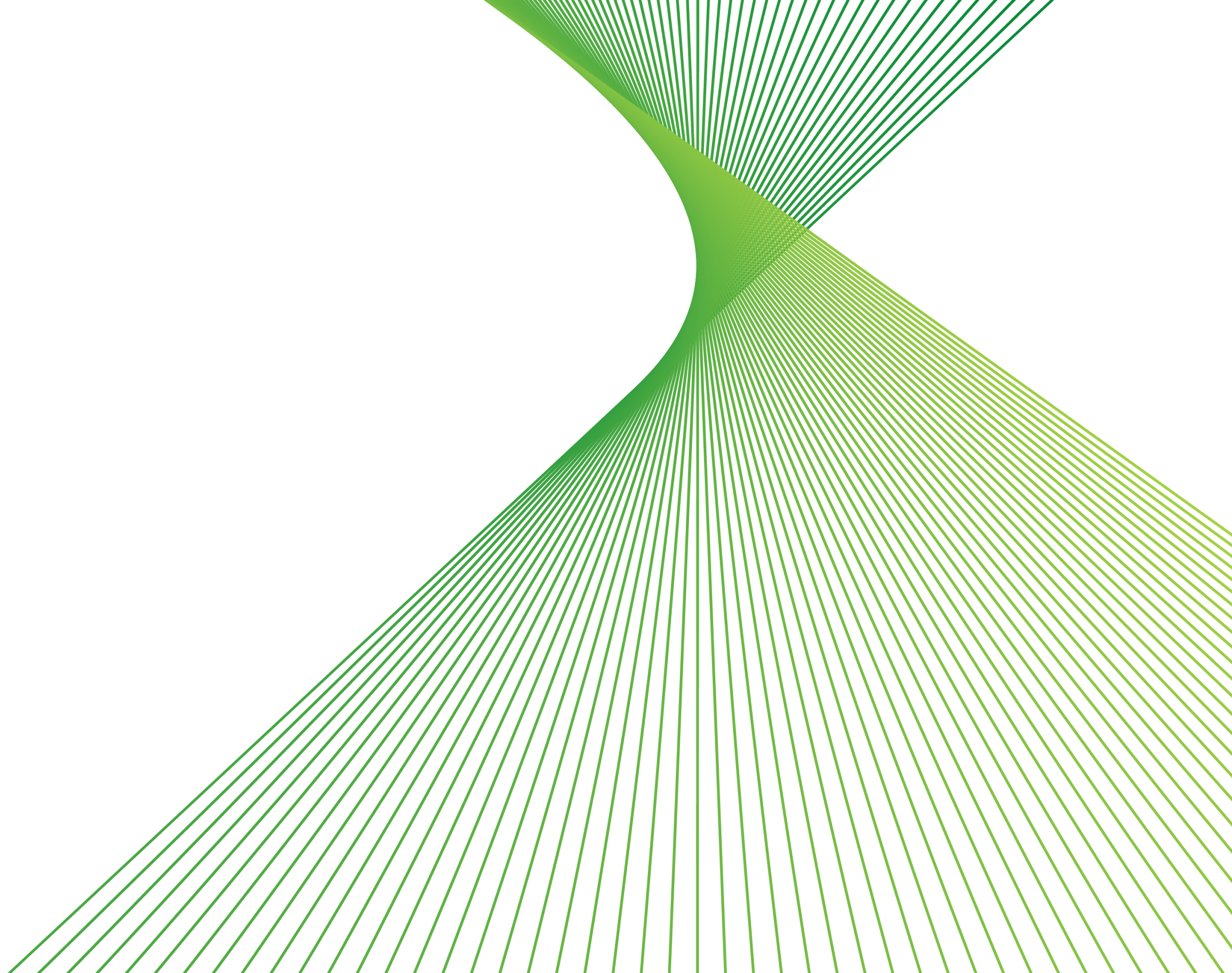


Questions and comments





Look ahead to 2025



Meeting schedule

Proposing four or five meetings in 2025

Wednesdays or Thursdays?

Dates under consideration:

Meeting	Date	Likely milestone
# 8	First week of February (Wed 5 or Thurs 6)	Aligns with planning for next EIS engagements
# 9	First week of April (Wed 2 or Thurs 3)	Optional site tour?
# 10	Mid-June (Wed 18 or Thurs 19)	Advise CCG on EIS prior to public exhibition
# 11	Mid-September (Wed 17 or Thurs 18)	Post-EIS exhibition wrap up
# 12	First week of December (Wed 3 or Thurs 4)	Brief CCG on Responses to EIS Submissions



Meeting close

Thank you for your time

1800 955 588

vniw@transgrid.com.au

www.transgrid.com.au/vniw

Planning and approvals

State processes

- Project declared Critical State Significant Infrastructure by NSW Government on 3 July 2024.
- An addendum letter outlining minor corridor changes was submitted to NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure on 16 August 2024. These changes were based on:
 - preliminary environmental investigations, including targeted biodiversity and heritage assessments
 - landowner and stakeholder engagement
 - concept engineering design studies.
- Draft SEARs have been issued for agency comments. Final SEARs are imminent.

Federal processes

- The Commonwealth Department of Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water (DCCEEW) placed the EPBC Referral [EPBC 2024/09871] on its website for public comment from 7 August – 21 August.

Indigenous engagement

- A second round of AFGs (Aboriginal Focus Groups) took place 7 – 9 August in preparation of the cultural heritage surveys and test excavation works started from 19 August 2024.

