

VNI West is a proposed 500kV double-circuit transmission line connecting the energy grids of NSW and Victoria. As part of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) being prepared, we are assessing how the project would impact land use and property in the region.



### What is this study?

The Land Use and Property Impact Assessment evaluates the land use in the area and the potential impacts on agricultural operations, livestock and machinery movements, crop production activities, irrigation, and biosecurity during construction and operation of the project. The study will propose mitigation measures to reduce these impacts and will also be informed by a detailed assessment on aviation operations.

The study area includes the project footprint and the four local government areas of Edward River, Murray River, Murrumbidgee and Wagga Wagga.

### What have we heard from the community so far?

During development of the project to date, the community members have raised concerns that the proposed transmission lines could result in:

- a reduction in agricultural production and associated jobs
- limitations on future irrigation development and reduced land available for cropping
- impacts to agricultural operations due to restrictions on machinery height and aerial operations
- impacts to biosecurity and soil quality during construction.

### What does the assessment include?

The assessment footprint of the EIS includes:

- an indicative 200-metre-wide transmission line corridor (this is the area directly affected by the construction and operation of the project); and
- areas which support project construction, including access tracks, workforce accommodation camps and construction laydown areas.

The **Land Use and Property Impact Assessment** involves:

- analysis of potential future property and land uses, including identification of existing agricultural uses along the length of the project
- field surveys including site inspections from publicly accessible land along the project footprint
- identifying impacts to land use and property from construction and operation of the project
- identifying measures to manage and mitigate potential impacts.

In addition, an **Aviation Impact Assessment** is being prepared to assess the potential impacts of the project on existing aviation activities and the general airspace surrounding the project.

This assessment involves:

- assessing impacts on low-level flight operation, including aerial agricultural spraying operations, aerial baiting and culling and aerial firefighting
- identifying potential impacts on certified airports within 30 nautical miles (around 55.5 kilometres) of the project
- assessing likely impacts on aeronautical navigation aids and air traffic control systems
- assessing potential impacts on non-certified aerodromes, such as private runways, including those used in agricultural operations
- consulting with aircraft operating agencies
- recommending management measures to minimise impacts and maintain aviation safety throughout the construction and operation of the project.

## Land use and impact mitigation

The location of the project is predominantly flat with little topographical change and a mild decrease in elevation from east to west. Land use throughout the project footprint has been identified as predominantly agriculture and primary production. Of this, the primary land uses include grazing, irrigated horticulture and irrigated cropping of rice, cotton, corn and sunflower.



An example of grazing land use.



An example of irrigated cropping use

## Preliminary impacts

Preliminary impacts identified as part of the Land Use and Property Impact Assessment include:

- potential impacts to agricultural land use from physical disruption in and around the project footprint, including restrictions on aerial activities within close proximity to transmission lines
- potential biosecurity impacts due to weeds being spread
- temporary restrictions to livestock and vehicle movements
- disruptions to on-ground and aerial and irrigation operations
- potential disturbance of livestock by noise
- potential radio communication and global positioning system (GPS) interference
- potential impacts to the use of some local or private airstrips.

The preferred route has been designed to avoid or minimise potential land use, property and agricultural impacts, wherever possible. However, some farms will still be impacted. In these cases, we will aim to work with individual landowners to minimise and manage impacts on their land. For example, where possible, we will try to run the final 70-metre-wide easement directly along fence and/or parallel to existing lines between adjacent cropping paddocks. Even so, in some cases, construction and operation of the new line is likely to impact some agricultural production.

## How are these impacts minimised?

A range of mitigation measures are proposed to minimise impacts on agricultural land as a result of the project. These mitigation measures will be documented in Property Management Plans (PMPs), which are developed in consultation with directly impacted landowners. The PMP is a legally binding agreement between the landowner and Transgrid that outlines the protocols to be implemented during construction. The conditions and principles of the PMP apply from the date an Option Deed is exercised until the construction completion date.

During operation of the project, agricultural activities within the easement would generally be able to continue, however some restrictions (such as operating heights, or offset of aerial operations) may apply to certain activities.

Transmission line infrastructure would also require ongoing/periodic maintenance that would require access of personnel, vehicles or machinery to the transmission line easement.

Mitigation measures will be identified to minimise ongoing operational impacts including biosecurity controls developed in accordance with Transgrid's *Biosecurity Procedure* and in consultation with the affected landowner. Transgrid will consult on a case-by-case basis to establish Property Management Plans for continuing agricultural activities within easements during operation of the project.



For more information on agricultural operations under transmission lines, refer to Transgrid's Easement Guidelines – Living and working with electricity transmission lines, available on the project website ([www.transgrid.com.au/vniw](http://www.transgrid.com.au/vniw)).

## Next steps

There will be ongoing opportunities for the community to provide input throughout the development of the EIS. Once all the technical assessments have been completed the EIS is placed on public exhibition feedback. During this time, the community members will be able to view the EIS and all supporting studies and provide written submissions on the project to the NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure.

## Connect with us

Transgrid is committed to working with landowners and communities through the development of VNI West.

**Please connect with us for more information.**



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