

Frequently Asked Questions

Mount Piper to Wallerawang Transmission Line Upgrade Project

July 2024



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General

Question	Answer
<p>What is Transgrid?</p>	<p>Transgrid operates and manages the high-voltage transmission grid in NSW and the ACT. We operate a safe, reliable and efficient high-voltage grid that connects electricity generators to one in three Australians.</p> <p>We are building the future grid to enable greater renewable integration and drive down wholesale electricity prices.</p> <p>Transgrid is a privately owned company that manages publicly owned network assets on behalf of the people of NSW.</p>
<p>What is the Mount Piper to Wallerawang Transmission Line Upgrade Project?</p>	<p>The Mount Piper to Wallerawang Transmission Line Upgrade Project will see a new 330 kV transmission line established between our existing substations at Mount Piper and Wallerawang, on the lands of the Wiradjuri people.</p> <p>The project will strengthen and reinforce the grid in the State's Central Tablelands region, helping to ensure that power from the Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone (CWOREZ) can be reliably transmitted to consumers.</p>
<p>Why is this project needed?</p>	<p>The NSW Government's Electricity Strategy and Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap plans to deliver the state's first five Renewable Energy Zones (REZs). This builds on the NSW Transmission Infrastructure Strategy and supports the implementation of the Australian Energy Market Operator's Integrated System Plan.</p> <p>The NSW Government is in the development phase for the first REZ in the Central-West Orana region, which is around Dubbo and Wellington on the land of the Wiradjuri, Wailwan and Kamilaroi people. The Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone (CWOREZ) will be serviced by new transmission network infrastructure, including transmission lines and energy hubs, which will transfer power generated by solar and wind farms to electricity consumers.</p> <p>The Mount Piper to Wallerawang Transmission Line Upgrade Project is located outside of the REZ area but is impacted by the power flows that will be generated by the new renewable energy generators coming online. Therefore, Transgrid is required to upgrade a number of transmission lines within its existing network.</p> <p>The Mount Piper to Wallerawang Transmission Line Upgrade Project has been declared Critical State Significant Infrastructure (CSSI). CSSI projects are declared when a project is essential for NSW for economic, environmental and social reasons. You can read the Government's announcement here.</p>
<p>What exactly prompted the need for this project?</p>	<p>The development of the Central West Orana REZ (CWOREZ) has created a current and future demand for more electrical infrastructure to facilitate the growth in electricity generation in the Central Tablelands area. The Mount Piper to Wallerawang Transmission Line Upgrade Project will increase the capacity of electrical infrastructure to support the CWOREZ.</p> <p>EnergyCo is responsible for ensuring that the new network infrastructure is developed to connect the CWOREZ to the existing grid, delivering affordable electricity to NSW. To achieve this outcome, EnergyCo is leading the delivery of the CWOREZ Transmission Project which has been approved by the Minister. EnergyCo has appointed Transgrid in its capacity as the State's jurisdictional</p>

	<p>transmission planner to coordinate the delivery of complementary upgrades to Transgrid's existing infrastructure network.</p> <p>More information about EnergyCo can be found at https://www.energyco.nsw.gov.au/about-energyco</p>
What is a REZ?	<p>Renewable Energy Zones (REZs) are the equivalent of modern-day power stations. They combine:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new renewable energy infrastructure, including generators (such as solar and wind farms) • storage (such as batteries and pumped hydro) • high-voltage transmission infrastructure. <p>By connecting multiple renewable energy projects and electricity storage, these REZs capitalise on economies of scale to deliver cheap, reliable, and clean electricity for homes and businesses in NSW.</p> <p>More information on REZ can be found at https://www.energyco.nsw.gov.au/renewable-energy-zones/what-renewable-energy-zone</p>
When is the project proposed be completed?	<p>Project completion is expected by late 2027.</p>
What are the expected project benefits?	<p>The project will deliver a range of benefits for customers in NSW including:</p> <p>Cheaper electricity – improving the affordability of electricity for consumers by increasing supply and driving down electricity prices</p> <p>Improved reliability – by delivering large amounts of new energy and, strengthening and reinforcing the grid in the local region</p> <p>Reduced emissions and a greater mix of renewable energy in the National Electricity Market</p> <p>New local jobs – opportunities for local workers and businesses during construction</p> <p>Reduced emissions and a greater mix of renewable energy in the National Electricity Market.</p>
How is Transgrid giving back to the community?	<p>We aim to create positive and lasting relationships with our local communities. It's part of our commitment to building a sustainable future.</p> <p>Transgrid's Community Partnership Program represents a starting point in our strategy to support communities. The program supports local, grassroots initiatives by providing grants in areas where our assets are located or under development. It is designed to help not-for-profit groups to deliver initiatives that will have a tangible and lasting impact on local communities. We do this in a way that demonstrates respect for those who were here before us, as well as for future generations.</p> <p>Recipients of the three rounds of CPP grants for the project area were announced in early 2023, late 2023 and early 2024. To learn more about previous grant recipients, visit:</p>

<https://transgrid.com.au/partnerships> or contact our team at cpp@transgrid.com.au.

1. Route Selection

Question	Answer
<p>How is a route identified?</p>	<p>Transgrid applies a structured route selection process when identifying proposed options for transmission lines, which is influenced by stakeholder and community input throughout. The project developed a multi criteria analysis relevant to the local area, investigated and assessed a number of different factors when investigating routes that included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social and community views • Aboriginal heritage, including significant cultural heritage sites • Biodiversity including flora and fauna • Other environmental features like soils and hydrology • Intensive agriculture • Impacts to the community and local industries • Licensed airstrips • Engineering e.g., where it can be built and length of corridor • Alignment to existing infrastructure like roads and power lines • Hazards such as bushfire and extreme weather • Cost constraints • Network resilience • Topography, the features of the land e.g., gradient, valleys, rivers • Land use considerations, including existing or planned use for agriculture, tourism and industry. <p>The final assessment of route options is accompanied by early field studies where possible.</p>
<p>What route options did Transgrid investigate exactly?</p>	<p>A detailed explanation on each of the 11 route options investigated can be located in the Preferred Route Report, located on the Transgrid website.</p>
<p>Do you consult on route options?</p>	<p>Yes, consultation with landholders and the local community plays a key role in our decision-making process.</p> <p>Transgrid recognises the vital role that landowners and the community have in the planning and delivery of our projects. We are committed to talking to the community to help us shape the best possible solution.</p> <p>We are seeking your feedback on the preferred transmission line route and encourage everyone to share their views and local knowledge.</p>
<p>Can you put the transmission line underground?</p>	<p>Undergrounding high voltage electricity lines refers to the installation of electrical cables in underground conduits, as opposed to the traditional method of installing overhead power lines supported by poles or towers.</p> <p>While undergrounding has some advantages, such as reducing the visual impact of power lines, there are a number of factors determining the suitability of undergrounding of transmission lines that need to be considered. These factors include delivery timeframe, cost considerations, social considerations and environmental issues.</p>

	<p>There are also technical aspects to consider when designing and constructing transmission line infrastructure including voltage levels to be transmitted, the distance of the line being installed and the terrain and environment that is crossed. While underground transmission lines are often chosen to reduce visual impact, their installation can still have environmental impacts.</p> <p>See page 27 of the Preferred Route Report https://www.transgrid.com.au/media/eynnh1ud/mount-piper-to-wallerawang-preferred-route-report.pdf.</p>
<p>Can you use the existing transmission lines?</p>	<p>No. The Central West Orana Renewable Energy Zone (CWOREZ) will generate a significant amount of electricity. The existing transmission lines (132 kV) running from Mount Piper to Wallerawang does not have the capacity to cater for the additional electricity generated from the CWOREZ.</p>
<p>Why was Option B-4 selected as the preferred route?</p>	<p>Transgrid listened to feedback from community and stakeholders in identifying and assessing routes for this project and are grateful for feedback provided. After careful assessment and consultation, Transgrid selected a preferred route that utilises part of an existing 132 kV transmission line easement and lines between Mount Piper and Wallerawang. The selected route minimises visual impact for community and the local township and balances landowner preferences and various constraints including engineering, constructability, environmental impacts and cost, to ensure that the outcome is prudent and efficient.</p> <p>The route will traverse primarily through the Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area and Centennial Coal land, which has been predominately disturbed by past activities. Environmental offsets will help mitigate this impact. In particular it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • impacts the smallest number of landowners compared to other options • utilises the existing easement as far as possible • has the least impact on private properties • minimises impacts on the Gardens of Stone SCA (compared to other options within the SCA), and therefore potentially minimises biodiversity impacts; and • is more cost-effective when compared to an underground transmission line.
<p>Now the preferred route has been decided is there any way that it will change?</p>	<p>After careful assessment and consultation, Transgrid have identified a preferred route. Transgrid will now follow a comprehensive environmental assessment process to help refine the design and identify measures to further reduce the project's impacts. All Critical State Significant Infrastructure (CSSI) projects must be accompanied by an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). We are currently undergoing surveys and investigations to inform the draft EIS technical reports.</p> <p>You will be able to provide feedback on the EIS during the public exhibition period. This will take place in early 2025 and the project team will widely consult during this period to ensure community and stakeholders can actively participate in the exhibition and submissions. After a minimum exhibition period of 28 days, Transgrid will then review all entries provided to DPHI.</p> <p>A summary report with responses will be developed by Transgrid and posted on the DPHI's website for public viewing. Following this, a final assessment of the EIS including feedback will be undertaken by DPHI and a determination made. If approval is granted, a report outlining Conditions of Approval for the next stage of the project will be given by the NSW Minister for Planning and Public Spaces.</p>

<p>What happens if the line comes through my property? How will I be compensated?</p>	<p>If an easement is identified as required over your land, we will discuss the acquisition process with you directly.</p> <p>The property acquisition process occurs over many months. After meeting with you, or making reasonable attempts to arrange a meeting, we provide a letter of intention or an offer to purchase an easement over your land.</p> <p>This letter represents the start of a minimum six-month negotiation period that is required under Section 10A of the Just Terms Act.</p> <p>If an easement is needed, we negotiate with landowners for at least 6 months to acquire the land by agreement. If an agreement can't be reached through negotiation, we have the authority to acquire land. Compulsory acquisition is a last resort and most acquisitions happen through negotiation.</p>
<p>Who did Transgrid consult?</p>	<p>Transgrid identified stakeholders who would reasonably be expected to have an interest in the project or be directly or indirectly impacted by possible route options and Transgrid's operations in the region. Once we identified stakeholders, we focused on effective and meaningful engagement to inform and support our decision making.</p> <p>To obtain feedback, a number of stakeholders were contacted for their direct input. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project partners • MPs • Local Councils • Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal Groups • Industry bodies • Energy regulator / operator • Impacted landowners • The community <p>For more information on the stakeholders we consulted and the timeline, please refer to our Preferred Route Report https://www.transgrid.com.au/media/eynnh1ud/mount-piper-to-wallerawang-preferred-route-report.pdf and Consultation Outcomes Report https://www.transgrid.com.au/media/3zqcx54r/preferred-route-consultation-outcomes-report.pdf.</p>

2. Approvals and Process

Question	Answer
<p>What is the regulatory pathway this project will follow?</p>	<p>Federal and state government regulations require all major infrastructure projects to undergo a robust environmental assessment before they are considered for approval.</p> <p>In May 2024, Transgrid submitted a Scoping Report to the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) – formerly known as DPE. The report presents a preliminary assessment of the potential impacts from the project.</p>

	<p>DPHI reviewed the Scoping Report, and at time of writing, the project is awaiting the Planning Secretary’s Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs). The SEARs set out issues that must be addressed in the EIS.</p> <p>In March 2024, Transgrid requested that the Project is declared Critical State Significant Infrastructure (CSSI). In July 2024, the project was declared Critical State Significant Infrastructure. All CSSI development applications must be accompanied by an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The purpose of an EIS is to identify and assess the potential environmental, economic and social impacts of the project to help government agencies, relevant authorities, community and stakeholders make an informed decision or provide an informed submission on the merits of the project.</p>
<p>What is CSSI?</p>	<p>Critical State Significant Infrastructure (CSSI) projects are projects that are deemed to be essential to the State for economic, social and environmental reasons.</p>
<p>What are SEARs?</p>	<p>The SEARs identify and specify matters which must be investigated as part of the Environmental Impact Statement and essentially form its terms of reference. It includes the requirements for both the NSW and Commonwealth Governments. The NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) has issued Secretary’s Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) for the Mount Piper to Wallerawang Transmission Line Upgrade project. DPHI seeks input from relevant government agencies to consider their requirements for the project before issuing SEARs.</p>
<p>What do you mean by EPBC Act approval?</p>	<p>Transgrid submitted a referral to the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act). The EPBC Act is Australia’s main environmental law and provides a legal framework to protect matters of National Environmental Significance.</p> <p>The Minister invites public comment for each referral regarding whether the proposed action is a controlled action. Under section 74(3) of the EPBC Act, proposed actions are open for comment. The referral for the Mount Piper to Wallerawang Transmission Line Upgrade Project is available here and the reference number is 2024/09855.</p> <p>After consideration of Transgrid’s EPBC Referral, the Commonwealth DCCEEW will identify whether our project is a ‘controlled action’ and if it will require Commonwealth Approval.</p>
<p>What is included in the environmental assessment?</p>	<p>The environmental impact statement (EIS) will be prepared to respond to the SEARs. The preliminary environmental assessment that was undertaken within the Scoping Report has identified the following key environmental matters relevant to the assessment of the project. These key matters have been identified through a risk-based approach based on available information of the existing environment and studies and investigations completed to date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biodiversity • Aboriginal heritage • Historic heritage • Land use and property • Visual amenity

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noise and vibration • Social impacts. • Other matters that will be assessed but are considered likely to result in lower risk to the environment include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soils and contamination • Hydrology/flooding • Water – surface water and groundwater • Air quality and greenhouse gas • Waste management • Traffic and access • Hazard and risk e.g. bushfire, electric, and magnetic fields, and mine subsidence. <p>For each environmental matter, an assessment will be undertaken to inform the EIS.</p>
How do I make a submission to the EIS?	<p>Once the environmental assessments are completed and the EIS is finalised, the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) will place the final EIS on exhibition and call for public submissions. You will be able to provide feedback on the EIS during the public exhibition period. This will take place in early 2025 and the project team will widely advertise this to ensure community and stakeholders can actively participate in the exhibition and submissions.</p> <p>The project team is also carrying out community and stakeholder engagement ahead of the EIS public display to seek feedback to inform our project.</p>
When is construction likely to start?	<p>If approved, early construction works is expected to begin in late 2025 with the main transmission line work starting mid to late 2026. These dates are subject to change.</p>

3. Environment and Maintenance

Question	Answer
Will trees be removed as part of the transmission line?	<p>Extensive environmental studies are underway to inform the transmission line design and refine the design to identify opportunity to minimise the vegetation removal required. Opportunities to avoid and minimise impacts wherever possible, including consideration of clearing methods and procedures, will be further considered during design development and reported in the EIS.</p>
What's the potential for lightning strikes?	<p>Transmission towers are earthed and are protected against lightning strikes. This means that in the event of a lightning strike hitting a tower it will be safely conducted to ground, unlike lightning strikes to trees that can lead to a fire.</p>
I am worried a new transmission line will start a bushfire. How do you manage bushfire risk?	<p>Our comprehensive maintenance program ensures the network is safe for our people and the community. Our Bush Fire Risk Management Plan outlines our responsibility for managing the potential impact of bush fires on our electricity network assets. The plan outlines hazardous events of concern and describes how we manage the associated risk. This plan is located on the Transgrid website: https://www.transgrid.com.au/safety/managing-bush-fire-risk.</p>

How high will the towers be?	The design of the towers has not yet been finalised, however steel lattice structures approximately 60 m height will be the most likely option.
How wide will the easement be?	<p>Transgrid will widen the existing 132 kV line easement from 45 m to 60 m and create a new 60 m easement in the section where the transmission line does not follow the 132 kV line easement.</p> <p>For more information on easements, please refer to our Easement Guidelines https://www.transgrid.com.au/media/3tkdd5lr/easement-guidelines.pdf.</p>

4. Feedback

Question	Answer
How do I give my feedback or get further information about the project?	<p>Transgrid recognises the vital role that landowners and the community play in the planning and delivery of our projects. We are committed to ensuring all stakeholders have the opportunity to have their say in the development of this Project.</p> <p>We encourage you to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share your feedback and ideas at community information sessions and scheduled meetings. • Email us via community@transgrid.com.au or call our community hotline on 1800 222 537. • Visit our webpage for project updates and to subscribe to receive the latest news.
Concerns or complaints	<p>You can contact our Community Engagement Team on Transgrid's general community number 1800 222 537 and email community@transgrid.com.au.</p> <p>Furthermore, you have the right to take your complaint to an external agency with jurisdiction, such as the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner (AEIC) and the Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON). Both the AEIC and EWON will receive complaints from members of the community and present them to Transgrid for response.</p> <p>In instances where we have received a complaint via the AEIC or EWON, we will seek to respond as quickly as possible and manage the matter in accordance with their complaints management processes.</p> <p>You can contact the Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON) on phone 1800 246 545 or fill in an online complaint form at www.ewon.com.au.</p>

5. Most Recent

Question	Answer
Does the Coalition's plans for nuclear power at Mount	Transgrid is delivering the transmission infrastructure identified as critical to enabling the Commonwealth and NSW governments' clean energy vision.

<p>Piper Power Station change the project?</p>	<p>The Mount Piper to Wallerawang Transmission Line Upgrade Project will strengthen and reinforce the grid in the State's Central Tablelands, supporting the delivery of new generation from the NSW Government's Central-West Orana Renewable Energy Zone.</p> <p>Transgrid will continue to consult residents, landowners, community organisations, First Nations people, local councils and other key stakeholders as we continue to plan this critical transmission infrastructure.</p>
<p>How would nuclear power generation affect Transgrid's operations and projects?</p>	<p>As a Transmission Network Service Provider (TNSP), Transgrid is agnostic on where generation comes from.</p> <p>Our role in the energy system is to ensure the safe delivery of energy from where it is generated to where it is needed.</p> <p>Right now, Australia is undertaking one of the most ambitious and rapid clean energy transitions in the world.</p> <p>We are in a vertical take-off - making the grid fit for renewables - as fast as possible.</p> <p>Securing the grid depends on timely delivery of transmission.</p> <p>To deliver Australia's energy targets we must ensure the supporting transmission infrastructure is in place.</p> <p>At Transgrid we are squarely focused on delivering priority projects for the Federal and NSW governments including EnergyConnect, HumeLink and VNI West and augmenting the existing network to enable REZ projects.</p>