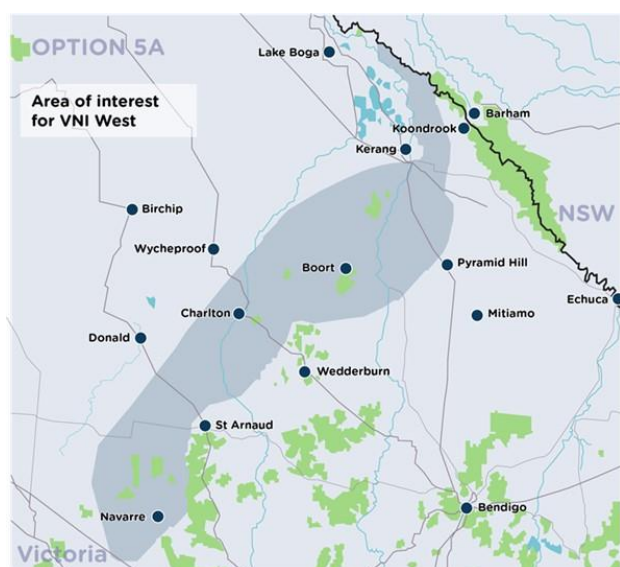


## Community Events Summary July 2023

Victoria NSW Interconnector West (VNI West) is a project to build a new transmission line between Victoria and New South Wales. It will harness clean, low-cost electricity from renewable energy zones (REZs) in both states and improve the reliability and the security of electricity supply as ageing coal-fired power stations retire.

TCV facilitated a total of **five** community events in July 2023, attended by a total of **393** landholders and community members.

**Figure 1 - Event locations and purpose**



- Kerang
- Boort
- Charlton
- St Arnaud
- Navarre

### Purpose of events

- Continue to raise awareness of the Project and understanding of why VNI West is needed.
- Inform community members of the project timeline and upcoming activities.
- Seek community feedback on constraints/opportunities within the area of interest to inform the route refinement process.
- Provide information on key topics of interest (e.g., route selection, agricultural constraints, fire risk, landholder engagement).
- Present the outcomes of constraints mapping to date and seek feedback.
- Answer questions, identify community concerns, and address those concerns where possible.

Community events were held in a **market hall style format**, consisting of a series of booths providing information on a range of topics which are outlined in the table below.




Each event was attended by senior representatives from the project team, VicGrid, Landholder Liaisons and technical specialists. Each project team member was available to attendees for Q&A and general discussion.





At the community events in Kerang, Charlton, St Arnaud and Navarre a range of community members requested an alternative engagement format which would allow for consultation as a group. TCV facilitated these requests through group discussion and Q&A with project representatives.

# Key themes

The following is a summary of all feedback received from the community events program. As noted, TCV received feedback and questions across a range of topics. To address these topics, TCV will work to update the [FAQ](#) and [fact sheet](#) section on its website.

**Table 1 - Key themes**

Item of feedback	Description	How TCV will use this feedback
 <p>Route refinement process</p>	<p>Questions in relation to the route refinement process, including timing, Traditional Owner Engagement, and constraint identification. Specific local constraints were highlighted, including flooding and endangered species habitats.</p>	<p>TCV commits to engaging with Traditional Owners consistently over the course of the project to ensure matters of cultural significance are meaningfully acknowledged throughout project planning and delivery, and that Traditional Owners are treated as partners throughout the process.</p> <p>TCV will review the flood overlay utilised in the environmental constraints report to ensure its accuracy. This review will be supplemented by details provided by community members at events and through the interactive map.</p>
 <p>Policy and regulation</p>	<p>Feedback and questions related to State and Federal Government energy policy, and in relation to renewable energy and climate change. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weighted importance of agriculture and climate change</li> <li>• International coal export activities</li> <li>• Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) selection</li> <li>• Changes to the Regulatory Investment Test for Transmission (RIT-T)</li> <li>• Environmental Effects Statement (EES) and approvals process</li> <li>• Impacts of renewable energy development on climate change</li> </ul>	<p>TCV are working closely with VicGrid to understand community concerns and will ensure VicGrid representatives are available during community consultation sessions wherever possible.</p> <p>TCV will work to ensure we are able to provide clear information to communities on the required approvals process and other regulatory requirements.</p>
 <p>Consultation</p>	<p>Feedback on the event format and future considerations for consultation. Dissatisfaction expressed regarding level of consultation in the early stages of the project.</p> <p>Examples of future considerations include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A number of community members noted they would prefer to be engaged as a group.</li> <li>• Some community members do not have internet access or use the internet often.</li> <li>• Community members noted that TCV needs to demonstrate how input from the community will be considered in the route refinement process.</li> </ul>	<p>TCV will continue to provide a range of options for community consultation, including town halls.</p> <p>TCV's promotional channels and methods of engagement will continue to consider internet accessibility as a key consideration.</p> <p>Technical reports will be published inclusive of community feedback and an overview of how it has been considered.</p>

Item of feedback	Description	How TCV will use this feedback
 <p>Alternative options</p>	<p>Feedback related to the consideration of alternative options to avoid the need for VNI West and new transmission infrastructure. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nuclear energy</li> <li>• High efficiency coal</li> <li>• Opinion of other industry representatives such as Bruce Mountain and Simon Bartlett</li> <li>• Undergrounding</li> </ul>	<p>A range of options were considered during the Regulatory Investment Test for Transmission (RIT-T) for VNI West. To be considered viable, options must be able to meet energy system needs, provide net economic benefits to consumers and be capable of being developed in a timeframe which will maintain electricity reliability.</p> <p>The option selected for VNI West met the criteria outlined above and was forecasted to deliver greater benefit to consumers than other options examined.</p>
 <p>Landholder impacts</p>	<p>Feedback on the landholder engagement process including land access and compensation. Questions were posed on impacts such as farming with transmission and fire risk. Questions were also raised on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insurance</li> <li>• Project timing</li> <li>• Biosecurity</li> <li>• Aerial agricultural activities</li> <li>• Stubble burning</li> <li>• GPS impacts</li> <li>• Decommissioning and permanence of commitments</li> </ul>	<p>TCV commits to working with landholders to minimise project impacts where feasible and will engage with industry and specialist bodies on subjects such as insurance to provide accurate information. Dedicated Landholder Liaisons will work directly with impacted landholders to discuss these matters and provide greater clarity on areas of concern.</p> <p>TCV and VicGrid have committed to developing clear information for farmers about what they are and aren't responsible for when people come onto their land.</p>
 <p>Whole of community impacts</p>	<p>Feedback related to consideration of impacts to the whole community, the cumulative impacts of the transition to renewables and the appropriateness of engaging with individual landholders when the decision of one individual may impact their neighbours and community. Examples of whole of community impacts include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visual impact and infrastructure design</li> <li>• Mental health impacts</li> <li>• Impact of Electric Magnetic Fields (EMF)</li> <li>• Vegetation removal</li> <li>• Future transmission projects</li> <li>• Impacts as a result of landholder decisions</li> <li>• Benefits sharing</li> <li>• Project suppliers and partners</li> </ul>	<p>In addition to individual landholder engagement, TCV will continue to engage with the broader community through a range of channels such as the Community Reference Group and community events. TCV is committed to ensuring the whole community can benefit from the VNI West project through a shared benefits scheme and flow on economic impacts. We welcome VicGrid's recent announcement that the regional benefits sharing scheme proposed under the Victoria Transmission Investment Framework will apply to VNI West.</p>
 <p>Organisational trust and transparency</p>	<p>Feedback related to a lack of trust in TCV the RIT-T process and governance, including the perceived influence of Orders made under the <i>National Electricity (Victoria) Act (2005)</i> (NEVA).</p> <p>Community members also noted that TCV needs to be clear on what authoritative powers it holds.</p>	<p>TCV will continue working to provide accurate and timely information to the community. TCV is committed to maintaining transparency throughout the project by providing regular updates and disseminating information broadly as early as possible.</p>

# Next Steps

TCV will continue to engage with the community as the project progresses to provide information and seek input into important considerations such as opportunities for community benefit and ongoing route refinement.

On the 21st of August 2023 our land team began conversations with landholders in a draft corridor for the VNI West transmission project.

This is an area of approximately 2kms wide that runs from the Murray River to Bulgana.

Out of respect for farmers and property owners, we want to do everything possible to contact property landholders within the draft corridor before making the details of the corridor public. This may take several weeks.

The draft corridor has been identified following feedback from landholders, community members, Traditional Owners, government agencies and stakeholders, as well as data from ongoing technical, engineering and environmental assessments.

A range of factors have been considered including ecology, sites of known Aboriginal cultural heritage, flooding, landscape, agricultural activities and proximity to residential areas and towns.

In coming months, TCV will refer a refined corridor to the Minister for Planning to consider whether an Environment Effects Statement will be required.

VNI West cannot proceed without planning approval from the State and Commonwealth Governments, which will require comprehensive environmental assessments over the next 12 – 18 months.

The final route for VNI West will not be finalised before 2025 and an easement for the project will not be required over all land in the draft corridor.

TCV greatly appreciates the engagement from landholders, Traditional Owners and communities to date and the important insights provided.