



Tragowel Community Roundtable

Conversation capture

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1. Background

On the 27 February 2024 TCV held a community roundtable with landholders and community members in Tragowel. This document provides an overview of the key themes raised by attendees and TCV's response.



Figure 1 - event snapshot

1.1 Purpose of meeting

The purpose of the community roundtable was to:

- Update attendees on the VNI West project
- Present information on the proposed terminal station
- Discuss an alternative corridor proposed by several community members
- Share information on VicGrid's purpose and plans for community benefit sharing
- Provide opportunities for community members to ask questions

2. Key themes

Community members raised several questions and concerns over the course of the meeting. The following is a summary of those questions and TCV's response.

2.1 Flood and fire risk

Will the terminal station result in increased flood risk for neighbouring properties?

The terminal station design will be optimised to occupy areas where flood water is not present or where water levels are predicted to be at their lowest. Where the terminal station encroaches onto areas that are potentially at risk of flooding, the project team will work to ensure existing flood risks remain unchanged for any other property. Detailed flood modelling will be performed to inform the design and the planning and approvals process.

If flooding into properties were to occur because of the terminal station, who would be liable to repair damage?

If landholders suffer damage as a direct result of altered water flows attributable to TCV's design or construction of the terminal station, TCV would be liable for the damage caused.

How was the flood modelling undertaken?

Flooding and water flows were an important consideration during the due diligence process as we made an initial assessment of the suitability of the site for a terminal station. Initial studies looked at issues such as siting, water flows, flood depth, flood extent and the requirements from water and catchment authorities.

In our initial site investigations, we looked at different data sets including aerial imagery of the 2011 flood event and outputs from an existing flood model of the same flood. The 2011 flood is comparable to an event that has a 1% probability of occurring in any year (i.e. a 1% annual exceedance probability (AEP) flood, formally known as the 100-year recurrence interval). These data sets indicated that floodwater was less than a 100mm across large parts of the proposed terminal site during the 2011 flood event. The impacts of the 2022 floods were also taken into consideration based on the available information found in the public domain.

Further technical and engineering assessments will be conducted as part of the planning and approvals process for the project. We will do a full flood impact assessment for the terminal station as part of the Environment Effects Statement (EES) process, with the involvement of the local authorities, technical specialists and the community. Note, the Minister is still to determine if an EES is required for VNI West, the project team are of the view that it is highly likely that the Minister will determine that an EES is required. An EES determination is expected from the Minister within the next few weeks.

The technical specialist engaged to carry out this flood impact assessment is the same company that developed the regional flood model, including the Loddon System. They have a good understanding of the flood issues around the site and will use the latest survey data to improve the existing model and investigate the potential changes in flood characteristics. Where changes are identified, the EES process will require us to develop the mitigation measures that will prevent an increase in flood risk, including potential changes on neighbouring properties.

The North Central Catchment Management Authority (NCCMA) will be closely involved in the assessment, planning and design process for the proposed terminal station. The NCCMA is the State Government regulatory authority responsible for the catchment management strategy, which includes floodplain management in the northcentral region.

What is the fire risk associated with the terminal station?

Terminal stations do not pose any specific fire risk. As they are transmitting high voltage electricity, terminal stations are carefully designed with fast protection systems and other safety measures in place to ensure they

pose minimal fire and safety risks to surrounding areas. If there is a fault on site, including from a major fire emergency, automatic protection systems will shut down the equipment to remove any electrical safety risks. Terminal stations are generally remotely operated and can be shut down remotely if required.

What happens if a transformer catches on fire?

The design considers the placement of transformers with adequate fire clearance to adjacent equipment. Where clearances cannot be achieved, firewalls are constructed to ensure that fires do not spread and are contained. In addition, transformers are designed to sit within a bund that is able to contain the full volume of oil within the transformer plus contingency. In the event of a catastrophic transformer failure, the precautions in place allows the fire to completely burn while being self-contained. The terminal station also considers firefighting water availability if and when required. The risk of a catastrophic transformer failure is extremely low.

2.2 Corridor selection and alternatives

Could the terminal station location move now that a property has been purchased?

The terminal station site was selected following careful analysis to identify suitable sites within the corridor near Kerang. Out of a handful of suitable sites, the property purchased was deemed the most appropriate site for the proposed terminal station.

A broad range of environmental and technical assessments will be conducted through the planning and project assessment phase, commencing later this year.

If through this process the property is deemed to be an unsuitable location for the terminal station, the site can be sold.

How was this corridor selected?

The draft corridor for the Victorian component of VNI West was identified following analysis of data from ongoing technical, engineering and environmental assessments and feedback from landholders, community members, government agencies, Traditional Owners and other stakeholders.

The overall approach adopted to refine the broad area of interest down to a narrower draft corridor was based on the principle of avoidance of sensitive environmental, social and cultural values wherever possible.

If engineering, technical and financial criteria were the only criteria used to locate infrastructure, the transmission lines would be primarily straight lines over the shortest distance between connection points. Instead, TCV has made a commitment to minimise environmental, social, agricultural and cultural impacts wherever possible. This avoidance approach has resulted in a refined draft corridor which seeks to navigate constraints and minimise potential impacts.

Can the corridor move/will you consider alternative corridors suggested by the community?

While the proposed VNI West corridor has been narrowed to a width of approximately 2km, the route has not been finalised. Ongoing consultation and studies may identify additional areas proximal to the corridor for assessment. If a better overall alignment is identified and confirmed through the assessment process, then the proposed route may change.

TCV will consider alternative corridors outside or proximal to the existing draft corridor put forward by the community, where the alternative is endorsed by the local community and landholders. The person/group making the submission will need to confirm the proposal has the support of all landholders who would be directly impacted by the proposed route, before we can consider it.

There are a broad range of considerations in identifying the best route, including engineering and design feasibility, and we cannot guarantee that alternate proposals will be reflected in the final easement.

The draft corridor for VNI West was designed based on the principle of 'avoidance'. This means we will minimise environmental, agricultural, social and cultural impacts wherever possible. We welcome and will consider feedback, but note that any alternate proposals put forward will be assessed for how well the proposal effectively minimises these impacts.

Why doesn't the corridor go through the Mallee west of Kerang?

The opportunity for VNI West to run through the Mallee area west of Kerang was considered in the early planning phase of the project. This option is documented in the May 2023 Project Assessment Conclusions Report as the "Option 5A Westerly Sensitivity". It was determined this area was unsuitable because the westerly sensitivity does not perform as well as Option 5A from a net market benefits, renewable generation development, or power system performance perspective.

2.3 Future planning

How will the remainder of the property (not occupied by the terminal station) be used post construction? Could TCV consider using it for the benefit of the community?

TCV is open to considering using the remainder of the site for community benefit, noting that future plans for the property post construction of the terminal station have yet to be determined. The exact use and features of the site will be determined through ongoing project planning and consultation.

How many connections could go into the terminal station? Is there a way to ensure the community has a say on any further developments in the area, such as renewable energy?

The terminal station will have provisions for approximately 12 future connections, as per AEMO's requirement for future provisions on any new terminal station in Victoria. Future connections may include solar, wind or battery storage development projects in the area, or could be new load connections. Any new renewable energy developments would be required to go through a planning and approvals process, which would likely include a level of community consultation.

VicGrid is responsible for coordinating the development of the Victoria's Renewable Energy Zones and is undertaking extensive consultation in development of the Victoria Transmission Investment Framework.

2.4 Compensation

How will landholders be compensated if their farming practices are interrupted (for example, inability to irrigate)?

Farmers will be compensated if there are disruptions to their farming operations. Total offers of compensation for landholders will consider a range of factors including:

- Disturbance including financial loss suffered in connection with the impact of the easement. This could include things such as impact to farming operations and costs associated with professional advice such as valuation, legal, tax or insurance advice.
- Loss in market value resulting from location of the VNI West easement on a property.
- Other compensation such as a Construction Licence Fees or reasonable cost for registering the easement.
- An option sign-on fee of \$20,000 per property paid to landholders when they agree to their total compensation and sign associated documentation.
- The Victorian government annual payment \$8,000 per linear kilometre for 25 years (CPI indexed), based on length of easement on a property.

2.5 Construction and decommissioning

Will you repair land if it is damaged during construction?

Yes, wherever possible TCV will ensure the properties impacted by construction are returned to their previous state or appropriate compensation is paid for any damage.

Will construction involve developing access tracks?

TCV will work with each landholder to create a Property Management Plan (PMP) specific to the easement on their property.

It is planned that the PMP will be an attachment to the easement agreement (Option Deed) entered into with each landholder.

The agreed PMP will specify any required temporary fencing of the construction workspace, including access crossings (if required), as well as any other construction impacts and mitigation methods that the project can implement to ensure the broader property can continue to be utilised as usual by landholders.

Where there is any productivity or access loss, this impact needs to be considered by the project's independent experts as part of the assessment of compensation. The impact will be specific to the property.

Where will the soil to raise the terminal station come from?

TCV will seek to use any suitable soil from the terminal station property to elevate the terminal station by roughly 500mm above the 1% AEP levels. If that soil is unsuitable, fill may need to be brought in from elsewhere. Note that the entire site will not be raised, only a small portion of the site where electrical equipment will be situated.

Who is responsible for decommissioning?

Remediation and associated costs would be the responsibility of the TNSP (the owners of the transmission infrastructure).