



Murrabit Community and Landholder Roundtable

Conversation capture

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1. Background

On the 27 March 2024, from 5:30 – 7:30pm, TCV (Transmission Company Victoria) held a community roundtable with landholders and community members in Murrabit. The meeting was in response to requests from local landholders for a group meeting and provided an opportunity to hear directly from those in the local area. This document provides an overview of the key themes raised by attendees and TCV's response.



Figure 1 - event snapshot

Purpose of Meeting

The purpose of the landholder and community roundtable was to:

- Provide the opportunity for community members to ask questions and speak with the project team.
- Update attendees on the VNI (Victoria to New South Wales Interconnector) West project and describe the planning and approvals process.
- Explain the sensitivities in Murrabit area and the challenges associated with narrowing the corridor across the Murray River.

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 Corridor Location and Constraints

How are you going to avoid houses when crossing the Murray River? Will you purchase properties?

Crossing the Murray River in this area is required to ensure the project can effectively connect into NSW and strengthen the State's electricity grid. TCV is narrowing the corridor based on a principle of avoidance, meaning that we are aiming to minimise impacts to communities as much as possible, for example by avoiding residential areas. With this principle in mind, crossing the Murray River near Murrabit presents several challenges. We will not be able to avoid all sensitives or houses in this area, although we will do our best to identify an option with the least impact.

TCV is investigating the opportunity to implement a 'Voluntary Purchase Scheme.' This means that in some cases, there may be an option for TCV to purchase a property from a landholder, if that property is impacted in such a way where it is no longer fit for its intended use. For example, if a small block of land is hosting a tower and therefore the entire block becomes largely covered by infrastructure, TCV would look to negotiate with the landholder to purchase this property.

Can you give us an indication of where the river crossing will be?

Finding an appropriate location to cross the Murray River is difficult for several reasons. This area is highly constrained, with numerous challenges present such as high-density residential areas, ecological sensitivities, and high value irrigation districts.

The corridor has been kept to approx. ~10km in this region to allow TCV and TransGrid appropriate time to study the area in detail and find a route with the least possible impact on communities, the environment, agriculture, and other sensitives. We do not know where this will be yet.

We are aiming to narrow the corridor in this area by Q3 2024.

Is the NSW side of the project further ahead (i.e. do they have a more narrow corridor)?

TCV is progressing the Victorian portion of the project while TransGrid is leading the project in NSW.

As the two organisations are required to follow different State approvals pathways, the timeline and process will differ. Each State also presents its own unique characteristics, including differing land use and ecological considerations. These differences may also result in a differentiation in the process and approach.

That being said, TCV and TransGrid are working very closely on the Murray River crossing and both sides of the border will be further narrowed at the same time.

TCV and TransGrid will ensure that local communities and more specifically, impacted landholders, are notified first once a narrowed easement has been identified across the Murray River later this year.

The project has not been approved yet, but you have purchased a property in Tragowel for the terminal station. Doesn't that mean you know the project will go ahead and where the route is going?

The project is not yet approved, and we are still undergoing the process of narrowing the route. However, to progress refining the route for VNI West, we needed to determine the proposed location of the terminal station. The terminal station is a key connection point of the project and determining the remainder of the route without it would not be possible. If the project is not approved or the property is deemed to be an unsuitable location for the terminal station, the site can be sold.

Is there a preference for private land over public land?

There is no preference for private land. The proposed project would span approximately 250kms, with towers spaced out approximately every 450 metres. Given the length, it is unavoidable to traverse through private property.

Are you avoiding flood prone areas?

TCV is narrowing the route for VNI West based on a 'principle of avoidance.' We are aiming to avoid constraints, such as sensitive environmental areas and flood prone areas, wherever possible. This will not be possible for the entire length of the transmission line. Where we cannot avoid flood prone areas, we will design and build the infrastructure to suit the local conditions.

We saw TCV drilling in this area a few weeks ago. Why were they drilling here and not in other nearby locations? Does the location of survey works indicate where the route is going?

Geotechnical investigations are being undertaken to broaden TCV's understanding of the geological profile across the full draft corridor. Locations for this work were selected primarily due to public accessibility, enough boreholes in the geological region and roadway safety – they are in no way indicative of the final route or tower locations for VNI West, which will continue to be developed in the coming months. Once the final route is locked in at a later stage, additional geotechnical investigations will be required.

2.2 Community benefits and compensation

Will there be local jobs during construction? Is there a detailed plan for the construction phase yet?

There will be local job opportunities created during the construction phase of VNI West. If the project is approved, TCV will ensure that the construction company appointed is required to create local employment opportunities in line with [State regulations](#).

There is not a detailed plan for construction yet, but this will be developed as the project progresses.

How does the compensation process work?

Total offers of compensation for landholders will consider a range of factors including:

- Disturbance including economic 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 (Consumer Price Index) indexed), based on length of easement on a property.

An initial compensation assessment will be calculated by a qualified valuer in line with the Land Acquisition and Compensation Act 1986 (Vic) and the Valuation of Land Act 1960 (Vic).

With the landholder's agreement, the valuer can visit the property to inform the compensation valuation assessment, particularly around matters of disturbance to existing or planned operations on land affected by an easement.

The landholder will receive an Option for Easement proposal for consideration, including the compensation amount for the easement as assessed by the valuer and other payments for disturbance to the property and operations that may result from construction of the project.

When reviewing the Option for Easement proposal, the landholder may also seek reasonable professional advice (such as an independent valuation and/or legal advice). TCV encourages landholders to seek their own independent valuation advice, and the reasonable costs of this advice will be covered by TCV.

How will the Renewable Energy Zone fund work?

The Victorian Government aims to distribute the benefits of the energy transition fairly, especially to communities hosting new infrastructure, through the Renewable Energy Zone fund. Energy developers will contribute to this fund, which will be allocated to communities hosting major transmission and renewable energy zone infrastructure. Decisions on fund investments will involve consultation with local communities. Contributions will come from transmission companies constructing major new lines and developers of new generation and storage projects. The creation of Renewable Energy Zone Development Funds would be in addition to project-based benefit-sharing schemes put in place by project developers. The aim is to ensure communities benefit in a meaningful and lasting way based on their vision for the region and their priorities for action to achieve it. VicGrid plans to develop and consult on this approach in 2024, releasing a draft guide for feedback before mid-2024.

Do you still get compensation if the line crosses your property, but you do not host a tower?

Yes. Landholders are compensated for hosting an easement, which may include towers and lines or lines only.

How are the near neighbour payments going to work? How will you ensure they are sufficient?

VicGrid acknowledges that adjacent landholders may be impacted by transmission projects, even if not directly hosting infrastructure. They are developing guidance to manage impacts on neighbouring landholders significantly affected by nearby transmission projects. More details will be provided in the forthcoming draft guide.

General information about the reforms work VicGrid is undertaking can be found on the Victorian Energy and Engage Victoria websites. <https://engage.vic.gov.au/victransmissionplan> and <https://www.energy.vic.gov.au/renewable-energy/vicgrid/for-community-landholders-and-traditional-owners>

2.3 Relationship with Gannawarra Shire Council

Have you purchased land from Gannawarra Shire Council for FIFO workers?

No. TCV has not paid Gannawarra Shire council for land related to the VNI West project.

Did you pay Gannawarra Shire \$5m to support this project?

No. TCV has never engaged in any kind of financial relationship with Gannawarra Shire Council.

2.4 Timelines and future planning

How long is the lifespan of these towers? What happens to them when they are decommissioned?

Decommissioning occurs when a transmission line has reached the end of its useful life and is de-energised, and typically removed. Most overhead transmission lines have a long lifespan, so decommissioning of existing transmission lines is not common but may occur if the transmission line is being replaced with a higher voltage line.

Remediation and associated costs would be the responsibility of the TNSP (Transmission Network Service Provider - the owners of the transmission infrastructure).

Why is it taking so long to narrow the corridor to a 100m easement?

TCV are undertaking highly detailed studies and investigations to ensure the 100m easement identified has the least possible impact on communities and the environment. This process is time consuming and requires input and collaboration with several other bodies, such as the Department of Planning and Transport.

We appreciate this process is frustrating for communities and creates a level of uncertainty. We will do our best to ease this uncertainty as quickly as possible, while ensuring the 100m easement is informed by rigorous planning and analysis.

2.5 Community engagement

Why wasn't this event more broadly promoted?

We planned this meeting primarily to respond to landholders who we had been in touch with who had raised concerns about local issues. Aware they may know of others who had similar interests, we asked them to extend the invitation where appropriate.

There will be future events of this nature in Murrabit. We will ensure we utilise local promotional channels moving forward when these occur.

TCV is also hosting a drop-in information session in Kerang on Tuesday 16 April 2024, which has been promoted via local newspapers and social media. We encourage any interested Murrabit community members to attend this session. More information can be found [here](#).

2.6 Severe weather and transmission lines

What happens if the towers collapse like the ones in Geelong a few weeks ago?

Severe weather events in February raised questions about the resilience of overhead transmission towers such as those planned for VNI West. Six transmission towers near Geelong sustained damage from destructive wind gusts associated with a thunderstorm, with speeds exceeding 122 km/h.

We would like to reassure landholders and the community that the infrastructure planned for VNI West would be built to withstand the force of similar storms in the future, in line with the latest Australian standards.

The design and specifications of VNI West assets will factor in location-specific conditions, including maximum anticipated wind speeds, to minimise the risk of failure even in extreme situations throughout the asset's life.

Once the new line is operating, the transmission line owner and operator will oversee tower maintenance activities, including corrosion monitoring, routine maintenance, inspections, and vegetation clearance. The operation of transmission infrastructure is highly regulated including for ongoing monitoring and maintenance.