

Media Release

30 April 2024



Minister confirms Environment Effects Statement required for VNI West

The Victorian Minister for Planning has confirmed that Transmission Company Victoria (TCV) is required to prepare an Environment Effects Statement (EES) for the VNI West project. TCV referred the project to the Minister in February 2024.

The EES is a rigorous process to assess the potential impacts of a major project in Victoria, overseen by Victoria's Department of Transport and Planning (DTP).

In her reasons for the decision under the *Environment Effects Act 1978*, the Minister noted that the EES process would provide a "robust, integrated and transparent assessment through which the potential environmental effects can be rigorously assessed".

A Technical Reference Group (TRG) will be appointed by DTP to provide advice throughout the process. Agencies invited to participate in the TRG will include representatives from government agencies, regional authorities, municipal councils, and Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) with statutory, policy, or technical interests in the project.

VNI West is an important project to build a new high voltage overhead transmission line between Victoria and NSW. It will harness renewable electricity from renewable energy zones (REZs) in both states and improve the reliability and security of electricity supply as ageing coal-fired power stations retire.

As part of the EES process, TCV will undertake a program of expert studies and assessments on a range of matters.

The list of matters to be investigated and proposed studies for the EES will be developed by the DTP in consultation with TCV and the TRG. DTP will release a draft scoping requirements document for public comment, providing landholders and community members with the opportunity to provide feedback on the scoping requirements before they are finalised and issued by the Minister for Planning. Likely matters for investigation include cultural and historic heritage, economic benefits, social and community considerations, health and the environment.

VNI West spokesperson, Claire Cass, said: "Community consultation is an important part of the EES, and TCV will continue to engage with landowners, local communities and Traditional Owners throughout the process. This will include sharing information about the EES investigations and assessments, directly in small group meetings, via our website and face-to-face events such as community information sessions.

"The EES process will run for around two years, concurrent with the ongoing work to narrow the current draft corridor to a final transmission easement between 70m and 120m wide," she said.

The project must complete the EES process and obtain relevant Victorian and Commonwealth approvals before construction can commence. VNI West has been referred to the Commonwealth Environment Minister to decide if approval is required under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. A response to this referral is pending.

The EES studies and assessments and project engineering design will take place through 2024 and 2025. Construction is scheduled to commence in 2026, should the project secure all required approvals.

Further information regarding the VNI West EES process can be found in our fact sheet on the TCV website at transmissionvictoria.com.au. The Minister's statement of decision can be found on the [DTP website](#).

ENDS

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About VNI West

VNI West is a major project to build a new transmission line between Victoria and New South Wales. It will harness renewable energy in both states and improve the reliability and security of electricity supply as coal-fired power stations retire and energy demand continues to grow.

As coal-fired power stations retire, new renewable energy generation will be built to fill the supply gap. New transmission lines are needed to connect this power with our homes and businesses and improve reliability.

In Victoria, a draft corridor around 2km wide has been identified and will be narrowed down to a preferred easement of 70-120m wide in 2024, subject to project assessment and approvals. The corridor runs from Bulgana to near Kerang and then across the border into New South Wales. Construction is scheduled to commence after all approvals have been obtained, in 2026.

About TCV

Transmission Company Victoria (TCV) is a company created by AEMO Victorian Planning to progress the VNI West transmission project. TCV will discuss the VNI West transmission project with landholders, Traditional Owners and the community to understand local concerns as the project moves toward construction. As AEMO is the system planner and will not physically construct or own the transmission lines, it established TCV to make sure that commitments made in the early stages are captured and honoured across the life of the project. TCV will provide project updates and will work with the community on this important transmission line. For more information, head to www.transmissionvictoria.com.au.