

Meeting Minutes

Victoria NSW Interconnector West

Meeting title:	VNI West CCG	Date:	18 September 2025
Location:	Moulamein Bowling Club	Time:	10:00am – 1:00pm
Attendees:	Chairperson:	Brendan Blakeley	
VNI West Project Team - Transgrid			
Meredith Butler	A/Project Director		
Nathan Menser	A/Community and Stakeholder Engagement Manager		
Geoff Hudson	Environment Manager		
Clint Hansell	Land Access Manager		
Aaron Atkinson	Indigenous Engagement and Access Officer		
Ben Doran	Land and Property Manager		
Ben Fraser	Community and Stakeholder Coordinator		
CCG Members			
Beck Hayward	Murray River Council		
Trevor Clark	Yanco Creek and Tributaries Advisory Council		
Alison Glenn	NSW Farmers, Bunnaloo Branch		
David Crew	Yarkuwa Indigenous Knowledge Centre		
Roger Knight	Western Murray Land Improvement Group		
Michael Chalmers	Ricegrowers Association – Wakool Branch		
Colin Bull	Landholder		
Apologies			
Colin Mayer	Project Director		
Mick Lalor	NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service		
Donald Bull	Landholder		
Garry Stoll	Murrumbidgee Council		
Shannon Sampson	Community member		
Bruce Rollinson	Landholder		
John Nolan	NSW Local Land Services - Murray		
Maisie Moore	Wamba Wamba Local Aboriginal Land Council		
Haydon Love	Cummeragunja Local Aboriginal Land Council		
Rose Dunn	Deniliquin Local Aboriginal Land Council		
John Kerr	Moama Local Aboriginal Land Council		
Mark Dalzell	Edward River Council		

Acknowledgment of Country

On behalf of the group, Brendan Blakeley acknowledged the Wamba Wamba and Barappa Barappa/Pereppa Pereppa, Traditional Owners of Wanganella and its surrounding areas.

Meeting proceedings

Agenda item	Summary notes
<p>1. Welcome, introductions and housekeeping and review of previous minutes</p>	<p>The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, acknowledged Country and asked attendees to introduce themselves.</p> <p>The Chair reviewed action items and minutes from previous meeting were accepted. See slide 5 of the presentation.</p> <p>Review of previous minutes: Biodiversity</p> <p>Roger Knight (RK) highlighted the use of the NSW DCCEEW's Credits Near Me app to help landowners identify potential biodiversity credits, especially in subregions like the Murray. He questioned whether landowners could participate in offsetting and if Transgrid planned to purchase properties for this purpose.</p> <p>Geoff Hudson (GH) explained Transgrid's strategy involves both buying properties and purchasing biodiversity credits to meet offset requirements. One property has been acquired, but more credits will be needed due to limitations in available land. Ecologists have assessed properties for Biodiversity Stewardship Agreements (BSAs), but these are complex and restrictive (e.g., no grazing allowed), making them unsuitable for <i>some</i> landholders.</p> <p>Regarding regeneration opportunities, GH noted that Transgrid is collaborating with Tulla Natives to consider offering landholders tube stock and mechanised planting, enabling participation in regeneration without formal BSAs.</p> <p>RK explained his audits revealed landowner interest in BSAs as a new income stream but also uncovered significant tax implications – biodiversity credits are taxed unlike primary productivity.</p> <p>David Crew (DC) emphasised keeping biodiversity credits local where possible and suggested involving Aboriginal communities in any vegetation supply initiatives.</p> <p>ACTION: GH and DC to talk about Aboriginal Nursery Opportunities.</p> <p>RK noted assessments for biodiversity credit eligibility cost between \$100,000 and \$400,000, typically paid by landowners. He asked whether there could be funding for landowners wanting to get an assessment done.</p> <p>Alison Glenn (AG) enquired about the value of biodiversity credits.</p> <p>RK noted that there are generally between 3.4-7.6 credits per hectare and the current cost is around \$2,900 per credit.</p> <p>GH explained that credit value depends on species and market demand, with high-demand species with low-supply commanding higher prices.</p> <p>AG suggested Transgrid could approach landowners to do a survey to identify available credits.</p> <p>GH highlighted that while landowners have done this however BSAs impose strict land-use rules, which may not suit all.</p> <p>AG emphasised that since BSAs are perpetual, the value of them must justify the long-term land restrictions.</p> <p>Review of previous minutes: Concord</p> <p>GH updated CCG members on Transgrid's engagement with National Parks and Wildlife at Concord.</p> <p>GH noted A2B has been awarded the tender for farm management and BSA setup at Concord. Future stages at the site may include cultural training. A cultural heritage assessment is underway, with local RAPs invited to participate.</p>

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	<p>Review of previous minutes: Community benefits</p> <p>RK responded to the action on community benefits in the form of in-kind engineering support for local projects explaining that it was more related to planning support for a project, not physical engineering support but desktop support.</p> <p>Nathan Menser (NM) encouraged groups to reach out to Transgrid with specific information about their request so Transgrid can assess internal capability or fund external help.</p> <p>RK noted an example would be a community microgrid for Moulamein, he noted the Salvation Army have a built-in billing system where there is some return for low-income families.</p> <p>Meredith Butler (MB) noted while Transgrid may be able to provide assurance, microgrids and the ability for revenue sharing falls under remit of generators and distribution. Transgrid cannot provide advice as it is against its licensing conditions as a Transmission Network Service Provider (TNSP).</p> <p>NM offered that where Transgrid cannot assist on social legacy projects, it can connect communities with relevant contacts and advocate for support.</p>
2. What are you hearing?	<p>Road Management and Maintenance</p> <p>Colin Bull (CB) expressed frustration over deteriorating road conditions, especially Mabins Well Road, impacted by traffic from Dinawan substation. He noted Donald Bull (DB) has been speaking to Edward River Council and they are at capacity and are unable to provide more assistance with the roads.</p> <p>GH noted that as part of VNI West, Transgrid is conducting pre-construction road condition assessments and confirming detailed traffic requirements including numbers and size of vehicles to provide a recommendation to Council for construction maintenance schedule.</p> <p>CB asked about how Transgrid will manage Council's lack of capacity to maintain roads.</p> <p>GH responded that contractors will be responsible for road upkeep during construction. Transgrid have also commenced discussions with Origin Energy and Spark Renewables on shared upgrades.</p> <p>CB noted his concern about current damage around Dinawan substation not being addressed. He requested clarity on the timeline for consultation with Councils.</p> <p>GH confirmed they are aiming for a proposal for Councils by the end of the year. He clarified that as VNI West hasn't commenced yet, the damage is not related to this project but is related to the EnergyConnect project.</p> <p>CB noted there should be an agreement with Council about the standard of the road maintenance prior to the beginning of the project.</p> <p>GH responded that discussions are ongoing with councils to agree on road standards before, during, and after construction, including cumulative traffic impacts.</p> <p>MB explained that road management will be embedded in contractor requirements and assessed as part of the head contract.</p> <p>Telecommunications and Connectivity</p> <p>CB commented that Mabins Well Exchange is a known blackspot the community is urging Origin Energy to install a booster on its wind assessment tower. He asked if Transgrid has made any progress in their discussions with Telstra.</p>

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	<p>ACTION: Transgrid to confirm progress of Telstra discussions.</p> <p>AG asked about expediting the community investment and benefits program.</p> <p>MB explained that Transgrid can only spend project funds once approved by the Australian Energy Regulator (AER), which ensures spending benefits consumers. Until approval is granted, Transgrid is restricted from using the funds but there may be other things they can do prior to approval such as advocating for change.</p> <p>CB noted that the combined pressure from Spark Renewables, Origin Energy, EnergyCo, and Transgrid may influence Telstra.</p> <p>Beck Hayward (BH) asked how Transgrid plans for telecommunications when delivering the project.</p> <p>CH responded that Transgrid uses Starlink and satellite phones for connectivity in remote areas associated with its project, they have Wi-Fi at the camps.</p> <p>AG commented that lack of communications raises safety concerns, especially with the potential for more accidents with increased traffic.</p> <p>Landowner Concerns and Vegetation Management</p> <p>CB noted that there are landowner concerns around gates being left open leading to livestock escaping. He also noted there had been vegetation clearing on his property and he noted he was not informed of the vegetation clearing and there were tree limbs and stumps left on the ground.</p> <p>GH explained some practices (e.g. leaving stumps and branches) may be intentional for biodiversity or erosion control but acknowledged the landowner should have been consulted with on this.</p> <p>ACTION: Transgrid to investigate vegetation maintenance practices on landowner's property.</p> <p>Michael Chalmers (MC) noted the importance of Transgrid maintaining active communication about the delays to timing of the project. He also commented that increased traffic may impact Rural Fire Services response times, raising community safety concerns.</p>
<p>3. Project Director's update – Meredith Butler</p>	<p>MB provided a project update. See slide 8 of the presentation. Transgrid is coordinating with EnergyCo to identify opportunities to streamline works around the Dinawan substation. As part of this they are considering a staged approach to delivery, with stage one being the Dinawan substation upgrades and Line 51, which will unlock the capacity within the South West REZ. Stage two would include the construction of the transmission line from Dinawan substation to the NSW-VIC border. The CCG will be kept updated about the delivery outcomes and funding streams for the project.</p> <p>Regarding community investment, 33 projects were received as part of the Social Legacy Expression of Interest (EOI), with a combined value of about \$80 million. These projects are directly supporting the four LGAs in the project location (Edward River, Murray River, Murrumbidgee, Wagga Wagga).</p> <p>CB asked if road upgrades come from that \$80 million.</p> <p>MB responded that road upgrades due to project impacts are funded from the project construction budget, which will be separate from any community investment funding.</p> <p>CB asked about timing of the road maintenance.</p> <p>MB responded that timing of road maintenance will depend on whether the affected roads fall within Stage one or Stage two work. Similarly, the availability</p>

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	<p>of community investment funding will also be influenced by the approval of Stage one and Stage two project funding.</p> <p>TC noted that community benefits have not been very successful with Water NSW. He explained that while \$160 million was promised to be spent in the local region, this funding is now going over the entire State.</p> <p>NM presented an overview of the 33 projects submitted in the EOI process.</p> <p>MC asked whether there was an upper limit or cap on community benefits funding.</p> <p>NM advised that benchmarking studies had indicated a community benefit spend is the equivalent of 1-1.8% of total project value. However, the team will work with community to ensure strong justification for each project and initiative, so that it can be submitted to the AER for their consideration and approval.</p> <p>MC asked whether this means the AER could choose to approve all the projects. NM responded that the precedent is the Humelink project which submitted about \$12 million worth of projects and they got 100% of this funding. NM emphasised that the importance will be to demonstrate justifiable projects to the AER.</p> <p>TC noted the total cost of this project has grown significantly since the project started so the community investment should increase with that.</p> <p>NM agreed noting VNI-West were originally aiming for around \$10-30 million for community investment and benefits however as the project cost is 2.5 times that original amount, the \$80 million is a proportionate increase.</p> <p>RK noted that other renewable energy proponents are looking at projects and Transgrid should coordinate with them on projects that receive funding.</p> <p>NM noted Transgrid is engaging with EnergyCo and four renewable developers in the South West REZ to explore coordinated community investment, though they are constrained by differing project timelines. Transgrid are also progressing discussions with other potential partners (e.g. Telstra and Essential Energy) to understand how projects may be delivered.</p> <p>RK noted Western Murray Land Improvement Group submitted about 8 or 9 different projects, all of which are locally based, but he noted some of them were hard to put a money value on. He also advised of information sent to Transgrid about a property which may be an opportunity for biodiversity offset.</p> <p>GH responded that Transgrid has considered this property; unfortunately the property does not have the right credits for Transgrid. Transgrid have only purchased one property for VNI West; other properties have been looked but have not met the specific requirements needed for biodiversity credits.</p> <p>CB asked whether there is a set of criteria for assessing the 33 EOI projects.</p> <p>NM noted the criteria for the EOI process are available on the VNI West website. The criteria include the community need for the project, its impact, sustainability and feasibility, and community capacity to deliver the project.</p> <p>BH asked whether Transgrid is gathering details on the community investment and benefits identified projects to include in the request to the AER.</p> <p>NM responded that Transgrid will work with applicants to ensure high quality applications are put forward to the AER for approval. The AER determines how much funding Transgrid can commit to community investment, as this expenditure must be justified and align with regulatory expectations. Based on the funding commitment, there might need to be a process of decision making from Transgrid on how to direct spending on community investment. NM explained that applications will need to be ready to be submitted to the AER by</p>

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	<p>Q3, 2026 so Transgrid will spend the time between now and then working with applicants on getting applications ready.</p> <p>BH noted that there is significant time between the initial EOI and Q3, 2026.</p> <p>NM agreed and advised that there will need to be ongoing contact with each applicant, as the specific request for funding may change from when the EOI was first lodged to the time Transgrid submits projects to the AER.</p> <p>MB noted there may be an opportunity to access funding commitment sooner if the Contingent Project Application 2 can be secured earlier. She noted that while the construction is delayed, the funding is not necessarily delayed.</p>
4. Property Management Plans	<p>Clint Hansell (CH) presented on Property Management Plans (PMPs). See slides 16 to 33 of the presentation. PMPs are tailored to individual properties, and include commitments made during consultation with directly affected landholders. The PMP is also a commitment to ongoing consultation, it is a live document and can be updated as information changes. The PMP will also provide a nominated point of contact for landholders for issues that arise.</p> <p>Access tracks are typically placed on the outer edge of easements, not under the transmission line, to minimise clearing and support traffic flow. Work sites generally span 20–25 metres from the easement edge to the tower.</p> <p>CB asked whether access roads could be placed beside the tower so that rather than clearing 70 metres, only 30 metres may need to be cleared. CH responded that this is an option. In the photo observed, the location of the access track coincided with an existing track.</p> <p>MC asked what the lowest sag of the transmission lines are.</p> <p>CH responded it is about 12-13 metre.</p> <p>AG asked how Transgrid restores an area after construction.</p> <p>CH noted post-construction rehabilitation includes consultation with landowners about retaining access tracks, gate inspections and repairs, topsoil replacement and spoil removal and regeneration outside of a 5 metre buffer around tower foundations.</p> <p>CB asked about impacts where the transmission line changes direction.</p> <p>CH advised impacts are managed on individual site, with the intention to reconfigure the construction areas (e.g. brake and winch sites) so that no change is required on existing infrastructure. This would be captured in the PMP; noting that some impacts are also temporary during an 8 week construction period where rehabilitation can commence once this work is done.</p> <p>CH explained that so far on the EnergyConnect project, no landowners have had to remove livestock for the construction of the project. He noted mitigation measures are taken such as speed limits within properties and daily safety briefings.</p> <p>CB noted that lambing and irrigation channel impacts are landowner concerns. He noted options such as fencing off areas so they become a construction zone or destocking paddocks.</p> <p>CH encouraged landowners to have conversations with their nominated point of contact about options for individual properties, such as stocking rotations or temporary fencing. Any such discussions where an agreement is reached is then documented as part of the PMP.</p> <p>CB commented the crews seem to have fire trucks where they are working on EnergyConnect, he asked if the people have been trained on how to use them.</p>

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	<p>CH responded that there are minimum training requirements for workers.</p> <p>CH explained that landowners have a designated contact and clear escalation pathways for resolving issues related to their PMPs. The contractor uses a documented process where agreements with landowners are recorded as formal commitments. Additional items can be added during construction if needed.</p> <p>RK raised concerns about contractors unknowingly damaging cultural sites.</p> <p>Action: Transgrid to confirm approach to managing and avoiding culturally sensitive locations during construction.</p>
5. EIS process update	<p>NM provided an update on the EIS public exhibition period and the submissions received. See slides 34 to 45 of the presentation.</p> <p>All Government Agency advice (responding to the EIS) is available on the NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure's website. These can be viewed at: https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/victoria-nsw-interconnector-west.</p> <p>MC asked if there is somewhere the community can view the community benefit projects.</p> <p>NM responded that they have not been made publicly available. Transgrid need to work through the applications and then get in contact with the EOI applicants.</p>
6. Wrap up and close	<p>NM noted that due to there being no further project updates for the December meeting, the next CCG meeting will be delayed until March 2026. At this session, Transgrid plans to consult with members on the submissions report, which is expected to be well progressed by then.</p>

Action items

Agenda item	Description	Person responsible	Status
1. Welcome, introductions etc	GH and DC to talk about Aboriginal Nursery opportunities.	Geoff Hudson	
2. What are you hearing?	Transgrid to confirm progress of Telstra discussions.	Paul McFadyen	
	Transgrid to investigate vegetation maintenance practices on landowner's property.	Clint Hansell/Nathan Menser	
4. Property Management Plans	Transgrid to confirm approach to managing and avoiding culturally sensitive locations during construction.	Geoff Hudson	

Resources

Item	Link
Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act 1991	https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/whole/html/inforce/current/act-1991-022
VNI West CPA1 Determination	https://www.aer.gov.au/documents/aer-determination-transgrid-vni-west-stage-1-early-works-contingent-project-may-2024 (PDF 648Kb)

Item	Link
VNI West Contingent Application (CPA) 1	https://www.aer.gov.au/documents/transgrid-vni-west-cpa-stage-1-a1-principal-application-31-january-2024 (PDF 1.28MB)
Preferred Route Report	https://www.transgrid.com.au/media/5whhsuo2/vni-west-preferred-route-report-march-2024.pdf (PDF 4.7MB)
Draft Route Report	https://www.transgrid.com.au/media/1vbfkt2d/vni_west_draft_route_report-29-january-2024.pdf (PDF 23.3MB)
Preferred Corridor Report	https://www.transgrid.com.au/media/0wue2k4h/vni-west-preferred-corridor-report-october-2023.pdf (PDF 3.66 MB)
Draft Corridor Report	https://www.transgrid.com.au/media/af5d3pry/ps135761-env-rep-001-reva_corridor_rpt_v2-2.pdf (PDF 39.34 MB)
Regulatory Investment Test for Transmission Documents	https://www.transgrid.com.au/projects-innovation/vni-west#Regulatory-Investment-Test-for-Transmission--RIT-T-
RIT-T Consultation documents	https://aemo.com.au/initiatives/major-programs/vni-west/stakeholder-consultation
State Significant Infrastructure	https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/development-and-assessment/state-significant-infrastructure
NSW Planning Portal	https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/victoria-nsw-interconnector-west .
Assure Programs	<p>The service is confidential and anonymous. Transgrid does not receive any information about who uses these services.</p> <p>There is no cost to landowners in accessing this service.</p> <p>How to make an appointment</p> <p>You can book an appointment by calling Assure on 1800 808 374, or you can request an appointment online.</p> <p>When you call Assure, please let the team know that you are from Transgrid, and the business unit is “Landowners.” This will ensure you are able to get the support you need. You are not expected to provide the reason – this is a conversation saved for your session with the psychologist.</p> <p>In addition, the NSW Centre for Property Acquisition has free support and counselling services available to any landowners affected by an acquisition. For more information, call 1300 029 146 or visit their website.</p>

Attachments

Attachment	Format
Glossary	PDF
Transgrid Slides	PDF

Next meeting

Date:	March 2026	Time:	10:00am – 1:00pm
Location:	TBC	Chairperson:	Brendan Blakeley