

Meeting Minutes

Victoria NSW Interconnector West

Meeting title:	VNI West CCG	Date:	16 July 2026
Location:	Deniliquin Golf Club	Time:	10:00am – 1:00pm
Attendees:	Chairperson:	Brendan Blakeley	
VNI West Project Team - Transgrid			
Claire Moore	Project Director		
Nathan Menser	Community and Stakeholder Engagement Manager		
Wardia Kessal	EIS Delivery Project Manager		
Ben Doran	Land and Property Manager		
Ben Fraser	Community and Stakeholder Coordinator		
CCG Members			
Alison Glenn	NSW Farmers, Bunnaloo Branch		
Anna Kelly	Edward River Council		
Colin Bull	Landholder		
Ethan Koschitzke	Murray River Council		
Jeanette Crew (for David Crew)	Yarkuwa Indigenous Knowledge Centre		
Karen Lyons (for Roger Knight)	Western Murray Land Improvement Group		
Simone Hughes	Regional Renewable Energy Committee		
Steven Parisotto	Murrumbidgee Council		
Trevor Clark	Yanco Creek and Tributaries Advisory Council		
Apologies			
Bruce Rollinson	Landholder		
Donald Bull	Landholder		
Haydon Love	Cummeragunja Local Aboriginal Land Council		
John Kerr	Moama Local Aboriginal Land Council		
Maisie Moore	Wamba Wamba Local Aboriginal Land Council		
Matthew Stewart	Wamba Wamba LALC		
Michael Chalmers	Ricegrowers Association – Wakool Branch		
Mick Lalor	NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service		
Rose Dunn	Deniliquin Local Aboriginal Land Council		
Shannon Sampson	Community member		

Acknowledgment of Country

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

Meeting proceedings

Agenda item	Summary notes
1. Welcome, introductions and review of previous minutes	The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked attendees to introduce themselves. The Chair reviewed action items and minutes from previous meeting were accepted. See slide 5 of the presentation.
2. What are you hearing?	Funding announcement and project split Simone Hughes (SH) noted questions had been raised about the signing of the Project Development Deed (PDD) between Transgrid and EnergyCo, why this was occurring, and who questions can be directed to at Transgrid. Claire Moore (CM) advised the significance of signing the PDD last week supports a collaborative approach with EnergyCo through an alternative regulatory pathway that helps to deliver critical substation infrastructure sooner than otherwise planned. It is a strategic decision also driven by a geographic concentration of work around Dinawan and near Wagga, and a benefit of engaging specialist contractors for different work packages. CM noted that people with questions should reach out to Nathan Menser (NM), VNI West Community & Stakeholder Manager via the project email (vniw@transgrid.com.au) or phone (1800 955 588). NM explained that EnergyCo has announced a project called the South West Renewable Energy Zone Network Infrastructure Project (South West RNIP), which covers a scope of work to support the connection of the renewable generation into the grid. Stage 1 of the VNI West project will increasingly be referred to as South West RNIP as Transgrid and EnergyCo adopt consistent project naming. Victorian project progress and timing Trevor Clarke (TC) raised concerns about the timing of Stage 2, noting the delays in Victoria. He mentioned the lack of property access in Victoria. CM acknowledged the delays announced for VNI West Victoria, which was a feature of Transgrid's decision making. However, VicGrid continues progressing its environmental approvals and contractor procurement, and meets regularly with Transgrid to continue project coordination between organisations. Land access, compensation and acquisition Alison Glenn (AG) asked whether compulsory acquisition was currently being considered. Ben Doran (BD) confirmed Transgrid remains in the voluntary negotiation phase and aims to achieve 100% voluntary agreements. While compulsory acquisition is available to Transgrid, it is used as a last-resort mechanism should voluntary agreement negotiations not be reached. AG advised that some landholders feel they have been threatened with compulsory acquisition. CM and BD noted that there have been no instances of triggering compulsory acquisition for VNI and they requested further details about those concerns for follow-up. Action: Obtain landholder details from AG and follow up regarding concerns about compulsory acquisition. Colin Bull (CB) raised concerns from landholders regarding delays in compensation discussions, lack of communication following property valuations, perceptions that compensation discussions have stalled and reports that Victorian landholders may be receiving more favourable compensation offers.

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	BD advised revised holding plans were issued to landholders in late May 2026, with a request for landholders to share this updated plan with their advisors to revisit compensation assessments. Transgrid cannot progress compensation discussions until valuation advice is updated, or, advice is provided that the valuation is unchanged. CM noted Transgrid has no influence over compensation arrangements being offered by VicGrid in Victoria. CB asked whether the revised holding plans are final? CM noted the updated holding plans were in line with the EIS Amendment Report which included some refinements to access tracks in consultation with landholders. CB requested that Transgrid provide more information on the exact location of each tower, for example by coming along and placing a post in the ground. AG noted the need for more site inspections to confirm the location of the towers, noting that it is difficult to progress property management plans without knowing final tower locations. CM explained final tower siting will occur after appointment of the delivery contractor. Contractors require flexibility to optimise tower locations within the approved 200 metre wide EIS corridor based on constructability, access, environmental constraints and landholder considerations. The approved EIS corridor will remain fixed, but there may be flexibility within that width. CB noted people are worried compulsory acquisition may happen as they do not have much oversight on project progress. CM responded that work is continuing, for example in the week commencing 20 July, Transgrid are starting geotechnical investigations to ensure a consistent level of data across the alignment. These investigation works will occur in two stages, with activities planned for July and September. She noted the progress is quite localised so there is communication with affected landholders however greater communication may be required to ensure broader stakeholder awareness of project progress. Road condition and construction impacts Anna Kelly (AK) raised concerns from a resident regarding the condition of Wanganella-Moulamein Road. SH also noted the impact construction can have on local roads, referencing the experience of Edward River Council in relation to the Boorooban-Tchelery Road. CM requested specific individual details so Transgrid can respond and advised that Transgrid continues to engage with councils regarding road management. Contractors will be required to maintain roads and avoid deterioration. Pre-construction condition assessments and defect inspections will be undertaken. Environmental and Agricultural Impacts AG sought clarification on factors considered when micro siting the transmission towers. BD noted there has been significant consultation over the past 6-12 months which has resulted in multiple refinements to tower locations. The current plans reflect efforts to minimise impacts on farming operations. Micro siting flexibility allows some further movement of towers within the approved corridor. CM advised considerations include: • Environmental impacts • Indigenous heritage • Access requirements • Geotechnical constraints

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	Existing infrastructure and buildings AG emphasised that agricultural impacts should remain a key priority and that Transgrid should continue engaging with landholders on this. Flood management concerns TC highlighted growing landowners concern in the area around flood plain management and tension around increased regulation and access to private land. Telecommunications and Regional Connectivity CB raised ongoing concerns from landholders and community members about poor telecommunications coverage across the region. He expressed concern that Starlink may be viewed as an alternative for telecommunications infrastructure, however it is not a suitable replacement for people working in paddocks and for emergency situations. He noted the ongoing reliability issues with local telecommunications services and stressed that improved communications infrastructure should form part of the project's long-term legacy. TC added that improved telecommunications would provide significant benefits for emergency services. NM acknowledged that telecommunications was discussed extensively at the last meeting and improved telecommunications outcomes has been raised with EnergyCo. He noted that Origin has included a telecommunications tower in its project modification with the intention of leaving it as a community legacy asset. EnergyCo is likely to consider telecommunications as part of its social legacy engagement across the broader South West REZ region. Should Transgrid have updates on telecommunications initiatives, this will be communicated to the CCG. CB noted that Yanco Delta has identified a need for three telecommunications towers, estimated at approximately \$1.2 million each. He advised that Yanco Delta had indicated a willingness to contribute funding and that other proponents, including Spark, had also shown interest. NM noted there continues to be a strong desire to deliver a telecommunications legacy outcome, but there is yet to be a formal announcement from project developers or EnergyCo. CB reiterated the urgency of improved telecommunications, citing ongoing safety concerns and community expectations that renewable energy developments should leave a lasting legacy through better roads and telecommunications infrastructure.
3. Project Director's update – Claire Moore	Project director update CM provided an update on project progress and key milestones. (Refer Slide 8). - VNI West Stage 1 – or, South West RNIP - has progressed to signing of a Project Development Deed, enabling this section of the project to proceed to market. Shortlisted proponents have been notified, and will now participate in the tender process. Contract award is anticipated in early 2027. - VNI West Stage 2 (500 kV transmission line) geotechnical investigations are continuing, which will inform preparation of tender documentation. Stage 2 tender documents are expected to be released by the end of 2026, with contract award anticipated around mid-2027. - The VNI West (NSW) EIS Amendment Report and Submissions Report were published on the NSW Planning Portal last week and are currently with DPHI for assessment. Determination is anticipated in late 2026. CB sought clarification on what works are included in Stage 1.

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	NM explained that Stage 1, now incorporated into South West RNIP, includes: • Construction work for the 500 kV Dinawan substation, including work to facilitate the connection of renewable generation projects from the South West REZ. • Upgrade of 10km of transmission line between Wagga substation and Gugaa substation, and network reconfiguration work that would result in a 500 kV connection between Dinawan substation and Gugaa substation (being constructed by HumeLink). Property update (slide 10) BD noted updated holding maps provided to directly affected landholders, which asked landholders to share the holding map with their advisors for review. Community update (slides 12-14) Noted Round 2 of the Community Partnerships Program (CPP) Grants is expected to open in October 2026. Members were encouraged to remind their networks to begin considering potential local projects and initiatives that may be eligible for funding. NM noted that the CPP provides grants of up to \$5,000 available to support local initiatives and projects within the project area. Regarding community investment and benefits to be proposed as part of VNI West, there will be opportunity to discuss further at upcoming information sessions proposed in August. It was also noted that, due to the project staging for VNI West, some social legacy opportunities may be accelerated. AG sought clarification on the total funding available through the Community Partnerships Program (CPP), including whether there is a fixed annual or quarterly funding allocation. NM explained that applications are assessed on individual merit, against specific criteria and aligned to key themes - including social, education, health, environment and sustainability. The number of projects funded in each round can be constrained by project budget allocation. The current \$5,000 funding cap has been an established limit within the Transgrid program for more than six years. Applications that seek partial funding for a larger project are considered. AG noted that timing constraints can create challenges for community groups seeking to combine funding from multiple grant programs to deliver larger projects. NM encouraged community groups to provide feedback on grant processes and advised further that Transgrid has delivered grant information and support sessions to assist applicants. AG asked whether applicants can participate multiple times throughout different stages of a proposal. NM advised that recurring funding requests are considered across multiple rounds, should projects demonstrate a strong community benefit. However, Transgrid does also aim to provide support to a broad range of community groups. TC questioned whether grant funding increases as project construction progresses. NM advised that the budget for community grants funding is typically increased during construction when there is increased presence in the region. Following project completion, community groups remain eligible to apply for community grants funding. TC noted that administrative costs of putting in applications can significantly reduce the value of smaller grants. CM encouraged stakeholders to continue providing feedback so the team can advocate internally for improvements to community funding programs.

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	SH asked whether community groups that previously submitted Expressions of Interest (EOIs) for the project Social Legacy initiatives would be contacted directly. NM confirmed that previous EOIs are currently being reviewed. The team will be contacting applicants to confirm earlier proposals remain current and identify any emerging community priorities. Follow-up with EOI applicants is expected to commence in the coming weeks. Regarding community information sessions, NM advised these would focus on the EIS Amendment Report and submissions report, project updates, recent EnergyCo funding announcements, and future consultation regarding social legacy initiatives. SH noted it would have been beneficial for some engagement activities to occur prior to submission of the Amendment Report. NM advised that community sessions had previously been held in March as part of consultation on the Amendment Report. This included targeted engagement to communities potentially impacted by proposed project amendments. Action: BH to send out the schedule of upcoming August information sessions to CCG members once finalised. SH asked whether community members and councils can provide feedback on the Amendment Report. Wardia Kessal (WK) clarified that the Amendment Report follows a different process to the original EIS exhibition and submission process. Councils and government agencies will be contacted by NSW DPHI for response. Environment update (slide 16) NM noted summary of next step in approvals process.
4. Response to submissions – Nathan Menser	NM presented an overview of submissions received during exhibition of the project: number of submissions, key themes raised by councils and community members. (Refer slides 18-26) Bushfire Management CB sought clarification on the process for developing bushfire management plans and the involvement of local Rural Fire Service (RFS) brigades. WK advised that bushfire mitigation measures are outlined in the Amendment Report and will be further refined by the construction contractor. Coordination with the RFS and local councils will form part of the process. CB noted the importance of involving local brigades due to their local knowledge. CM confirmed that detailed Bushfire Management Plans will be prepared once a construction contractor is appointed and will consider local conditions, brigade capabilities and response times. She emphasised that contractors would be held accountable for complying with project requirements and maintaining positive relationships with landholders and local communities. Employment, training and local participation AG asked how the project would support cadetships, apprenticeships and ongoing employment opportunities for local people. NM advised that workforce development requirements will be considered as part of contractor obligations, including opportunities for apprentices, students and trainees. CM noted that specific employment and participation targets will be incorporated into tender documentation. She highlighted examples from other projects which are currently in the construction phase where they have been supporting people with training and obtaining licences and industry qualifications.

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	CB asked why Transgrid was proposing to use Port of Newcastle or Port of Melbourne for oversize and overmass vehicles when Origin Energy are using Port of Adelaide and Port of Geelong. CM explained that Transgrid's transport requirements differ from renewable energy generation projects, as the large components for the project are primarily substation components rather than large wind turbine components. She advised that transport routes identified in the EIS have already been assessed and approved by Transport for NSW and do not require bridge or infrastructure upgrades, making them the preferred option. The appointed contractor will select between the approved ports and transport routes. Steven Parisotto (SP) asked whether contractors could choose alternative transport routes or ports if preferred. CM confirmed that contractors are required to use the routes approved in the EIS. Any alternative route would require a project modification and additional approvals.
5. Traffic and transport update – Nathan Menser	NM provided an update on detailed construction traffic routes and expected traffic numbers during construction. (Refer slides 28-33) AG sought clarification on who is responsible for road upgrades associated with the project. CM confirmed that required road upgrades and enabling works will be funded through the project. These works are intended to be completed before major construction activities commence. She noted that upgrade requirements will form part of contractor obligations. SH raised concerns regarding heavy vehicle movements and the need for clearly agreed transport routes. CM advised that Traffic Management Plans will be required which will outline approved transport routes and road safety measures. She noted that contractors must use approved routes unless further approvals are obtained through a formal modification process. SH noted that the transport to and from quarries is what seems to have the biggest impact on road degradation. TC raised concerns about cattle grids along Wanganella-Moulamein Road and noted that some adjoining properties are unfenced, creating additional risks associated with increased project traffic. NM explained Transgrid has committed to making cattle grids compliant for construction traffic to use the Wanganella-Moulamein Road. AG sought confirmation that road management planning would consider all affected roads and local conditions. CM confirmed that detailed Traffic Management Plans (TMPs) will be prepared that incorporate road-specific issues and local constraints. SH asked whether consent conditions would include controls on vehicle movements and whether compliance would be monitored. CM confirmed that project conditions of consent will establish requirements that contractors must comply with, including traffic-related obligations. She advised that contract award will occur after project consent conditions are known, which is unusual and good for the project, as it provides a level of certainty around compliance requirements and project delivery expectations. Construction Delivery and Landholder Communication CB asked how construction activities would be staged along the alignment.

Agenda item	Summary notes
	CM advised that contractors would likely operate multiple work fronts simultaneously. While not yet finalised, we could see an estimated six or seven construction crews working across different sections of the project depending on ground and weather conditions. CB reiterated the importance of ongoing engagement with affected landholders regarding compensation discussions, final tower locations, potential property impacts and project timing and next steps. Community benefits and local procurement TC emphasised the importance of ensuring local communities receive meaningful benefits from the project, noting concerns that contractors and fly-in fly-out workforces can limit local economic participation. CM noted that comparable projects such as HumeLink and EnergyConnect achieved approximately 23% local workforce participation. NM acknowledged that some specialist roles would require non-local expertise but advised that community participation and wellbeing planning forms part of project delivery requirements. AG encouraged the project to focus on local procurement opportunities, including accommodation, supplies, catering, equipment hire and other services available within local communities. CM advised that local workforce and participation incentives can be incorporated into contractor contracts and performance requirements. TC also discussed the importance of balancing workforce opportunities with impacts on existing local industries, particularly the agricultural workforce. AG added the risk that the construction contractor offers wages that drives up expectations for farmers hiring local employees. CB suggested contractors hold supplier and workforce information sessions to ensure local businesses and residents are aware of opportunities to participate. First Nations and Environmental Opportunities Jeanette Crew (JC) asked about the outcomes of test pit excavations and broader opportunities to capture environmental and cultural knowledge, including information about native vegetation (including presence of Nardoo) and whether consideration of historical seeds and pollens is part of the environmental assessment. She noted there is information we do not know about extinct vegetation and it is a missed opportunity for gathering valuable information. WK advised that evidence of nardoo (<i>Marsilea drummondii</i>) was identified within the project area north of Bundure. She noted that the species was recognised as a traditional food source for local Aboriginal communities and was documented as part of the Cultural Values Assessment. JC also requested: • an update on the Concord offset property, • potential First Nations benefits arising from environmental management activities at the offset property, and • training, employment and land management opportunities for local Aboriginal communities. WK advised that there is a process currently underway and further information will be provided on the Concord property.

Agenda item	Summary notes
	Action: Email JC to provide an update on Concord property, First Nations environmental management activities at the offset property, outcomes of the test pit excavations and whether the history of seeds and geological pollens was considered as part of the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment Report.
6. Wrap up and close	The Chair outlined the approach for the CCG meetings for the rest of the year including one meeting in November to provide a project update regarding project approvals, request for tender process, community investment and benefits and a look ahead to 2027. The Chair noted that in the meantime if any significant updates arise, Transgrid will directly contact CCG members.

Action items

Agenda item	Description	Person responsible	Status
1. What are you hearing?	Obtain landholder details from AG and follow up regarding concerns about compulsory acquisition.	Nathan Menser/Ben Doran	
2. Project director's update	BH to send out the schedule of upcoming August information sessions to CCG members once finalised.	Beatrice Hobson	
3. Traffic and Transport update	Email JC to provide an update on Concord property, First Nations environmental management activities at the offset property, outcomes of the test pit excavations and whether the history of seeds and geological pollens was considered as part of the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment Report.	Ben Fraser	

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)
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-

Item	Link
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	The service is confidential and anonymous. Transgrid does not receive any information about who uses these services. There is no cost to landowners in accessing this service. How to make an appointment You can book an appointment by calling Assure on 1800 808 374, or you can request an appointment online. 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. 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.
Property information (Transgrid)	Easement Guidelines – Living and Working with Electricity Lines Transgrid Easements: Information for Landowners Landowner Easement and Compensation Guideline: Fact Sheet Guidelines for Payments of Professional Fees Easement Payments and Strategic Benefits Payments (website)
Property information (Government)	Centre for Property Acquisition (NSW Government website)

Attachments

Attachment	Format
Glossary	PDF
Transgrid Slides	PDF

Next meeting

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