



Your ref: CSSI-72887208

Our ref: DOC25/735380

Energy and Resource Assessments
Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure
12 Darcy Street
PARRAMATTA NSW 2150

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Victoria to NSW Interconnector West (NSW)

Thank you for the referral of the Victoria to New South Wales Interconnector West (VNI West) Project - Critical State Significant Infrastructure (SSI) 372887208 via the NSW Major Projects Portal as PAE-89488214.

As the project will be assessed under Part 5, Division 5.2, of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (NSW) (EP&A Act), the referral was reviewed with reference to the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) as issued on 22 May 2025 to which Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) - NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) provided input (our ref DOC24/529303).

NPWS appreciates this opportunity to consider the *Victoria to New South Wales Interconnector West (VNI West) (NSW) Environmental Impact Statement – Main volume, prepared by TransGrid, dated 24 July 2025* (EIS), and the supporting Technical Papers. As the project adjoins land reserved under the *NSW National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (NPW Act), as the Murray Valley National Park (as the Wetuppa Precinct) and the Southwest Woodlands Nature Reserve (as the Steam Plains Precinct), referred to collectively as NPWS estate.

Upon review of the EIS, NPWS acknowledges that, based on design and the final alignment selection of VNI West, direct impacts to the NPWS estate have been avoided, with only residual indirect impacts highlighted. Where indirect or prescribed impacts to biodiversity values are detected, DCCEEW-Conservation Programs, Heritage and Regulation Group will be providing comment on NPWS's behalf. This will ensure no overlap. NPWS has focused on raising matters linked to the protection, management and operations relating specifically to the NPWS estate.

Management of Aboriginal cultural heritage

In the preparation of the Aboriginal heritage management plan (AHMP), Heritage NSW will remain the lead representative. NPWS involvement is limited to the receipt of Aboriginal objects excavated or displaced by the project if our estate is selected by the Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) as a preferred recipient site. NPWS actively supports the 'return to country' of archaeological material (as Aboriginal objects) on land reserved and managed under the NPW Act. If this scenario is relevant, consult with NPWS during the preparation of the AHMP to ensure the intent of NPWS policy position, conservation and repatriation protocols and environmental assessment requirements are acknowledged and built into the plan.

NPWS recommendations

1. Include as part of the AHMP preparation a detailed plan for the care and management of recovered artefacts collected or salvaged as part of VNI West. Confirm final actions for the agreed long-term management of the archaeological material (as Aboriginal objects) as set, or

confirmed by the RAPs. Consider the selection of recipient sites and safekeeping places as part of the plan's options.

2. Contact NPWS, if the NPWS estate is selected as the preferred recipient site for archaeological material (as Aboriginal objects) early in the process via the NPWS Riverina Area office on npws.riverina@environment.nsw.gov.au, or 02 6966 8100.
3. Seek guidance from NPWS on adhering to the conservation and repatriation protocols and environmental assessment requirements required for the repatriation of Aboriginal objects on the NPWS estate.

Delivery of aerial operations

No formal or registered 'non-certified aerodromes' exist on the NPWS estate within 10km of the VNI West project construction corridor. NPWS can establish and use helipads on our estate on an as-needed basis in response to park management or operations, and during emergencies. The VNI West project is likely to restrict or preclude aerial operations in the areas where the transmission line alignment is proximate to the NPWS estate.

NPWS recommendations

4. Establish clear communication pathways during both construction and operation of the VNI West transmission line with respect to all aerial operations, where they occur within 8km of the gazetted boundary of the NPWS estate.
5. Notify NPWS of the VNI West final temporary or permanent transmission line assets locations before commencing construction, including towers, crane operations or other obstacles. NPWS requests the provision of a spatial file/s and the referenced coordinates, so NPWS's customised GIS platform can be updated, to ensure the safety of any low-flight / low-visibility aerial operations conducted on, or within 8km of the NPWS estate. A safety risk exists if not effectively managed, where aircraft may be operating proximate to the VNI West construction corridor.
6. Notify NPWS if the VNI West design or asset placement is altered with respect to all temporary or permanent assets, within the 8km area from the NPWS estate.
7. Notify NPWS about the VNI West construction-related activities that include aerial operations using helicopters and/or drones. Ensure operations adhere to specific Civil Aviation Safety Regulations 1998 requirements, and where operations affect the NPWS estate, consider:
 - a. NPWS Drones in parks policy - <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/parks-reserves-and-protected-areas/park-policies/drones-in-parks>, and the
 - b. NPWS Vehicle access policy - <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/parks-reserves-and-protected-areas/park-policies/vehicle-access> - as per items 58-64.
8. Provide VNI West flight operations plans, as prepared in support of the project aerial operations within 8km of the NPWS estate gazetted boundary.

Planning for emergencies

NPWS plays a critical role in all hazard reduction and emergency response on or likely to affect our estate. Consider the NPWS role based on the VNI West alignment, final corridor selection and transmission asset placement proximate to the NPWS estate.

NPWS recommendations

9. Identify NPWS as a key stakeholder in all emergency management planning with respect to the construction and operational phase of VNI West, where assets are proximate to the NPWS estate. Include contact details as:
 - a. NPWS Riverina Area office on npws.riverina@environment.nsw.gov.au, or 02 6966 8100.
 - b. NPWS West Branch Duty Officer on 02 8275 1740 or npwsWB.dutyofficer@environment.nsw.gov.au

- c. NPWS State Duty Officer on 02 9895 6444 or via npws.statedutyofficer@environment.nsw.gov.au.

10. Include NPWS as a key stakeholder and notifiable agency in the preparation and operation of the Bushfire Emergency Management and Evacuation Plan. NPWS is a bushfire-fighting authority under the NSW *Rural Fires Act 1997*. With respect to its estate, NPWS has an obligation to respond to bushfire threats to, and from, its estate within 8km of the gazetted boundary.

Construction management

The preparation and adequate application of the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) is an essential in managing indirect and prescribed impacts associated with VNI West construction on the NPWS estate.

NPWS recommendations

11. Demonstrate ongoing avoidance of the NPWS estate through the final stages of the VNI West design and alignment confirmation. Minimising threats and risks to the natural, cultural and social values of Murray Valley National Park (as the Wetuppa Precinct) and the Southwest Woodlands Nature Reserve (Steam Plains Precinct).
12. Identify the NPWS estate as a sensitive environmental area and receiver, ensuring no unauthorised access, damage or encroachment. Specify and manage the buffer or separation between the VNI West corridor and the gazetted boundary of the NPWS estate.
13. Apply adequate avoidance and minimisation principles, and apply mitigation measures as set out in the project EIS and Technical Papers to reduce the effects and risks associated with the residual indirect and prescribed impacts on the NPWS estate.

Traffic and transport management

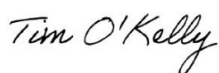
As VNI West construction adjoins the NPWS estate, the alignment is likely to cut management access either temporarily or permanently. Ongoing operation of, and connection from local or state roads to internal NPWS estate management trails must be considered and maintained.

NPWS recommendations

14. During the preparation of the traffic and transport management plan, ensure NPWS estate access is considered, retained or provisions made to retain management trail access as part of the VNI West project. Consider whether any long-term impediments or restrictions to access will occur from the VNI West project. Ensure long-term legal access is considered and provided for.
15. Consider if access to the NPWS estate will be required for construction or environmental monitoring purposes for VNI West, ensure it accords with the NPWS Vehicle access policy - <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/parks-reserves-and-protected-areas/park-policies/vehicle-access>, and authorisation is obtained from NPWS.

If you have any further questions, please contact, Manager, Riverina Area, on 02 6966 8100 or via npws.riverina@environment.nsw.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



Tim O'Kelly

**A/Director, West Branch
NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service**

29 August 2025