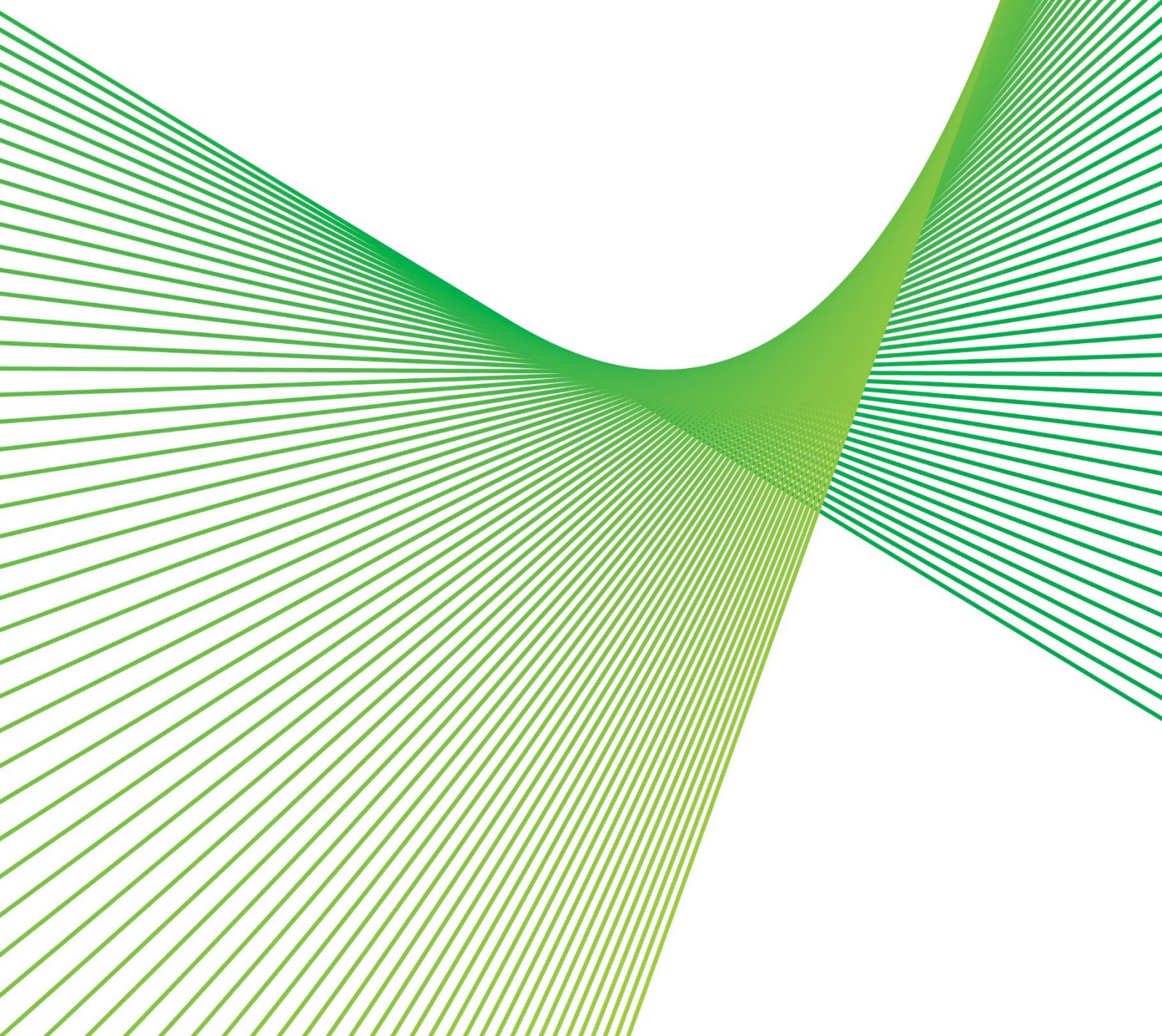


# **Victoria to New South Wales Interconnector West (VNI West) (NSW)**

Addendum Scoping Report

August 2024



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## 1. Overview

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The Victoria to New South Wales Interconnector (NSW) (VNI West or the proposal) proposes a high voltage, 500 kilovolt (kV) double-circuit overhead transmission line that will connect the high voltage electricity grids in NSW and Victoria. Specifically, VNI West would connect the Western Renewables Link proposal (at Bulgana in Victoria) with the EnergyConnect project (at the new Dinawan substation in NSW – currently in construction) via a new substation near Kerang (in Victoria).

A Scoping Report for the proposal was lodged in May 2024 (the ‘Scoping Report’) to support an application to the Secretary of Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI). An application to declare the proposal Critical SSI (CSSI) pursuant to section 5.13 of the EP&A Act was submitted to DPHI in December 2023 and the proposal was subsequently declared to be a CSSI on 3 July 2024. The proposal will be subject to assessment under Division 5.2 of the EP&A Act. As such, this document supports an application seeking the Secretary’s Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) for the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Draft SEARs were issued by DPHI on 23 July 2024 for the proposal (SSI-72887208).

## 2. Report purpose

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This Addendum Scoping Report (‘Addendum’) outlines changes to the proposal identified by the proponent – Transgrid - and should be read in conjunction with the Scoping Report.

The changes relate to minor adjustments to the proposal corridor. The changes will not amend the environmental impact assessment methodology relating to the EIS and the associated technical assessments, and thus should not give rise to any changes to the draft SEARs.

## 3. Proposal changes

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### 3.1. Proposal corridor amendments

Amendments to some parts of the proposal corridor (NSW/Victoria border to Dinawan section) outlined in the Scoping Report have been made in a manner consistent with that described in Section 3.4 (Route identification) of the Scoping Report.

Appendix A, [Figure 1](#) outlines the amendments to the proposal corridor presented in this Addendum.

Similar to the corridor assessment process, a multi-criteria analysis (MCA) and geo-spatial assessment has been undertaken using a range of high, medium and low risk assessment criteria.

Throughout this phase of the proposal development, feedback was sought from the Community Consultation Group (CCG) which has been established for the project.

To further narrow down and refine the proposal corridor, Transgrid also considered the results obtained from:

- preliminary environmental investigations, including targeted biodiversity and heritage assessments
- landowner and stakeholder engagement
- concept engineering design studies.

Refinement of the proposal corridor is an ongoing and iterative process and will continue throughout the development of the EIS.

There are no changes to the key components of the proposal as outlined in Section 4.2 of the Scoping Report.

### 3.2. Statutory context

Amendments to the proposal corridor would not result in a change to the statutory planning process and statutory context of the proposal.

Since lodgement of the Scoping Report, the following has occurred:

- An application to declare the proposal Critical SSI (CSSI) pursuant to section 5.13 of the EP&A Act was submitted to the NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) in December 2023 and was subsequently declared to be a CSSI project on 19 June 2024. The proposal will be subject to assessment under Division 5.2 of the EP&A Act. As such, this document supports an application seeking the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) for the EIS.
- A referral application under the (Cth) *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) was submitted to the Commonwealth Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water ((Cth) DCCEEW) in May 2024 to declare the proposal as a controlled action. A variation to the referral application outlining the amendments to the proposal corridor was submitted on 7 August 2024. The proposal is currently published on the (Cth) DCCEEW's website for public consultation (under EPBC 2024/09871). If the proposal is determined to be a controlled action, the approval of the Australian Minister for the Environment will be required in addition to the State SSI approval and an application will be made to assess the proposal under the bilateral agreement process.

### 3.3. Key environmental issues

#### 3.3.1. Heritage - Aboriginal

New searches of the Aboriginal Heritage Information System (AHIMS) were conducted and identified 50 registered Aboriginal sites in the proposal corridor. Most of these sites were either in close proximity to major watercourses or areas where recent surveys for other major developments had been undertaken (such as the renewable developments at Dinawan). The sites identified generally comprise artefacts, burials, hearths, modified trees and Aboriginal resource and gathering sites.

Amendments to the preferred corridor would not result in a change to the preliminary assessment of Aboriginal cultural heritage impacts as presented in the Preliminary Heritage Assessment (Appendix C) of the Scoping Report.

Appendix A, [Figure 2](#) presents previously registered AHIMS sites within and adjacent to the amended proposal corridor.

#### 3.3.2. Amenity - Landscape character and visual

One additional building has been identified within the amended proposal corridor, approximately 20 kilometres north east of the Maude Road and Wanganella-Moulamein Road intersection. However, this is a shearing shed and is located within a property owned by a landholder already being engaged with, as part of the proposal.



The amended proposal corridor is unlikely to introduce any new near neighbours. All near neighbours will be assessed for potential visual impacts.

Appendix A, [Figure 3](#) presents sensitive receivers within and adjacent to the amended proposal corridor.

### 3.3.3. Biodiversity

Searches of the threatened species and communities were conducted within the locality (10 km) from database searches such as Bionet and Protected Matters Search Tool. The search results aimed to identify any new threatened entities that require further consideration under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* and *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

Overall, the amendments to the proposal corridor would not result in a change to the preliminary biodiversity assessment considerations under the Biodiversity Assessment Method. Targeted surveys are underway as part of the preparation of the Biodiversity Development Assessment Report.

Amendments to the proposal corridor would not result in a change to the preliminary assessment of biodiversity values and any associated impacts as presented in the *Preliminary Biodiversity Assessment Report* (Appendix B) of the Scoping Report.

Appendix A, [Figure 4](#) presents the biodiversity values within the amended proposal corridor and the locality.

## 4. Summation

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Amendments to the proposal corridor outlined in this Addendum will not result in a change to the overall conclusion presented in the Scoping Report.

This Addendum will not amend the environmental impact assessment methodology relating to the EIS and the associated technical assessments. As part of the preparation of the EIS, further assessment would be carried out in conjunction with the ongoing development of the proposal. Consultation with affected landowners, stakeholders and the local community will continue throughout the assessment and construction phases of the proposal.

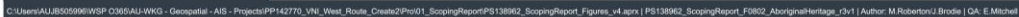
Separate consultation with respect to the amendments outlined in this Addendum has been undertaken with the (Cth) DCCEEW relating to the proposal's EPBC Referral Application under the EPBC Act.

## Appendix A - Updated figures

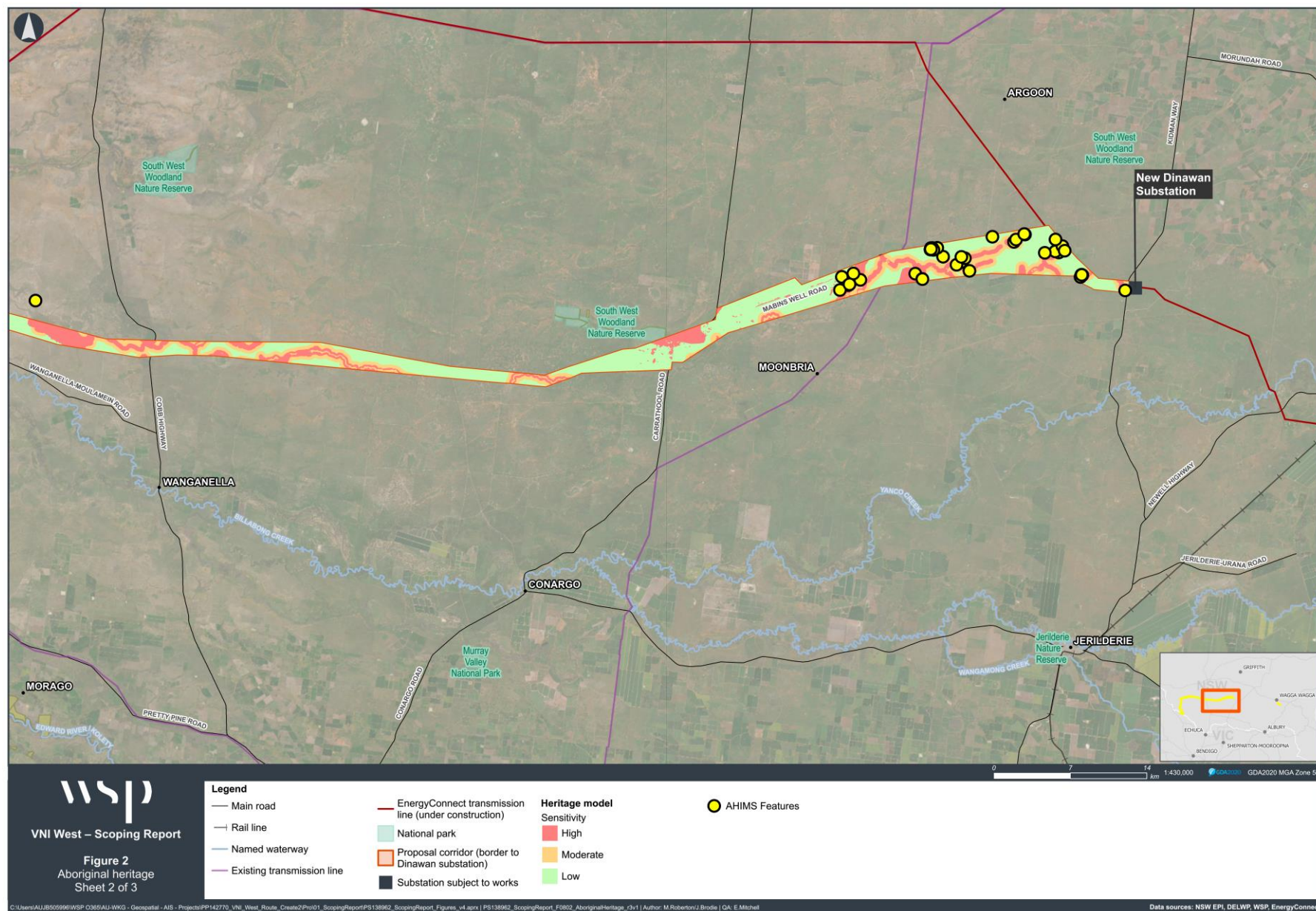
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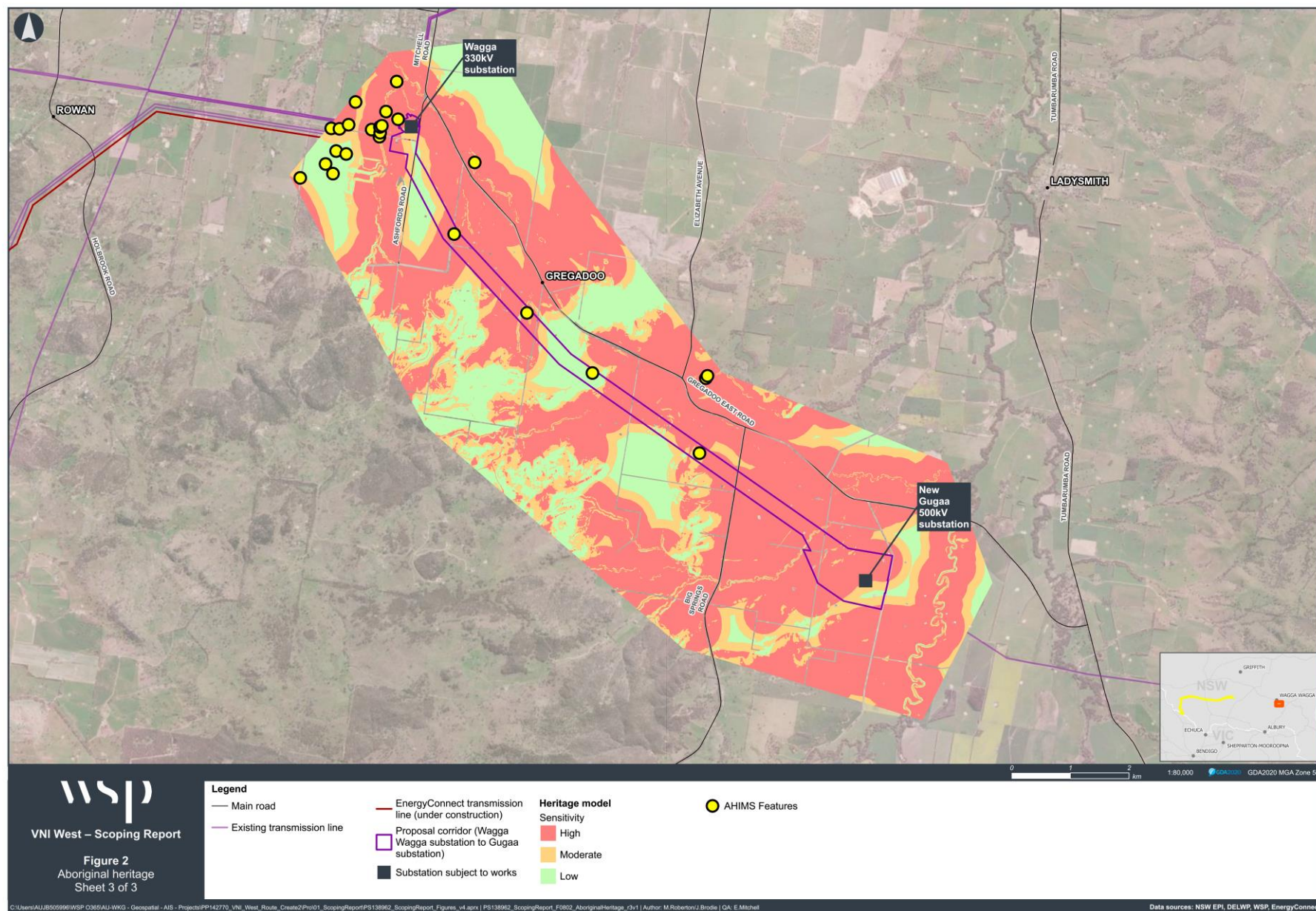




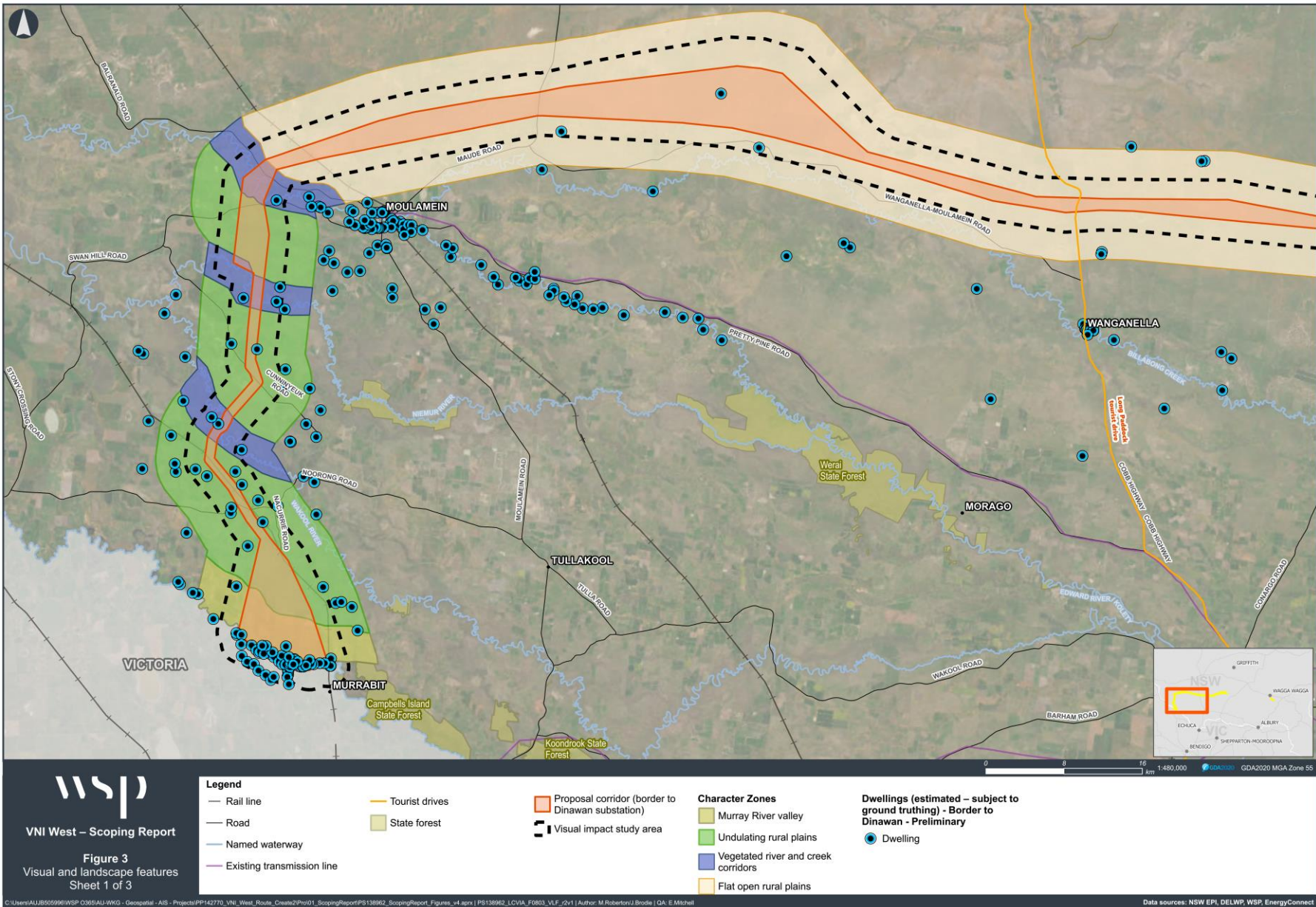




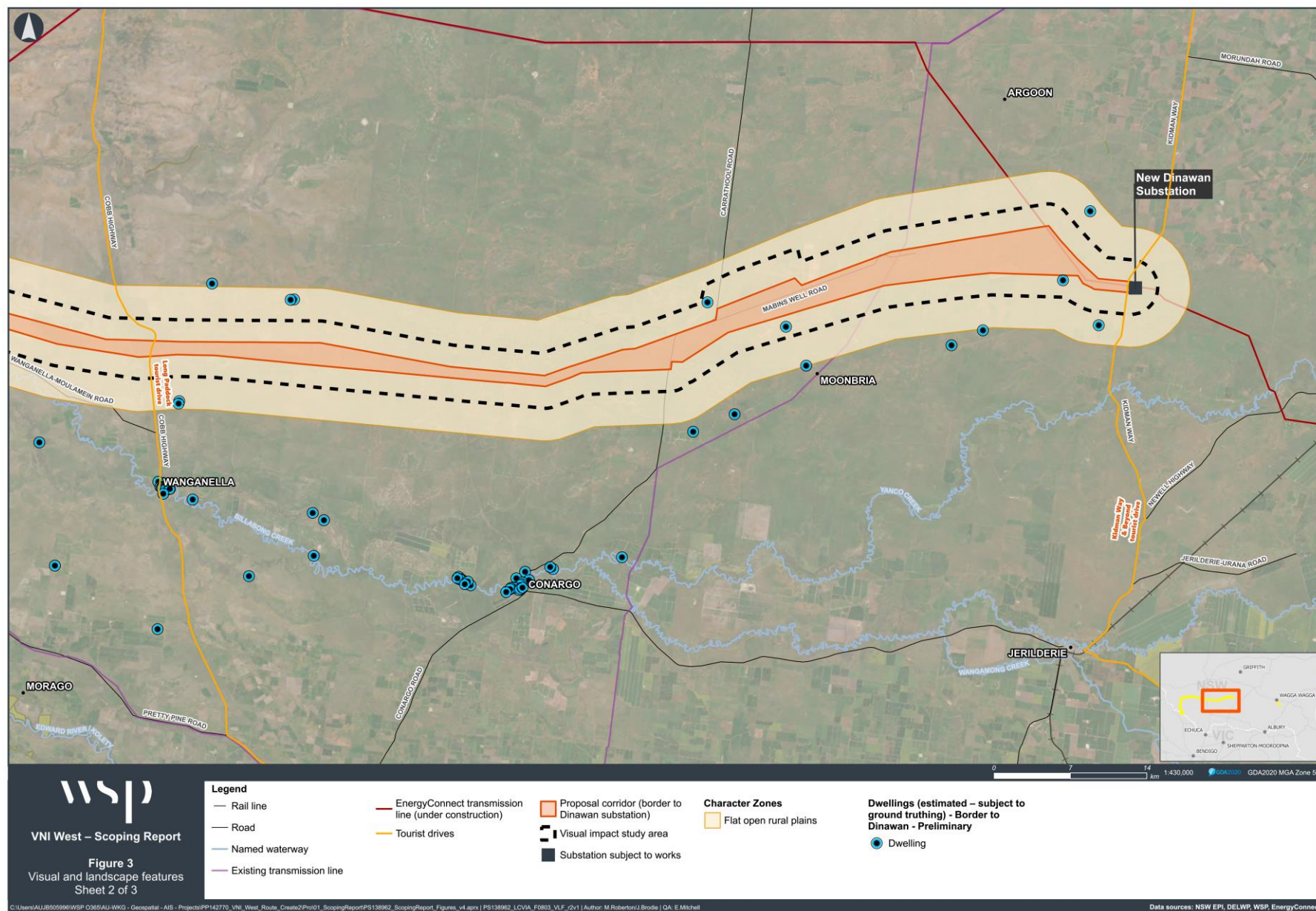




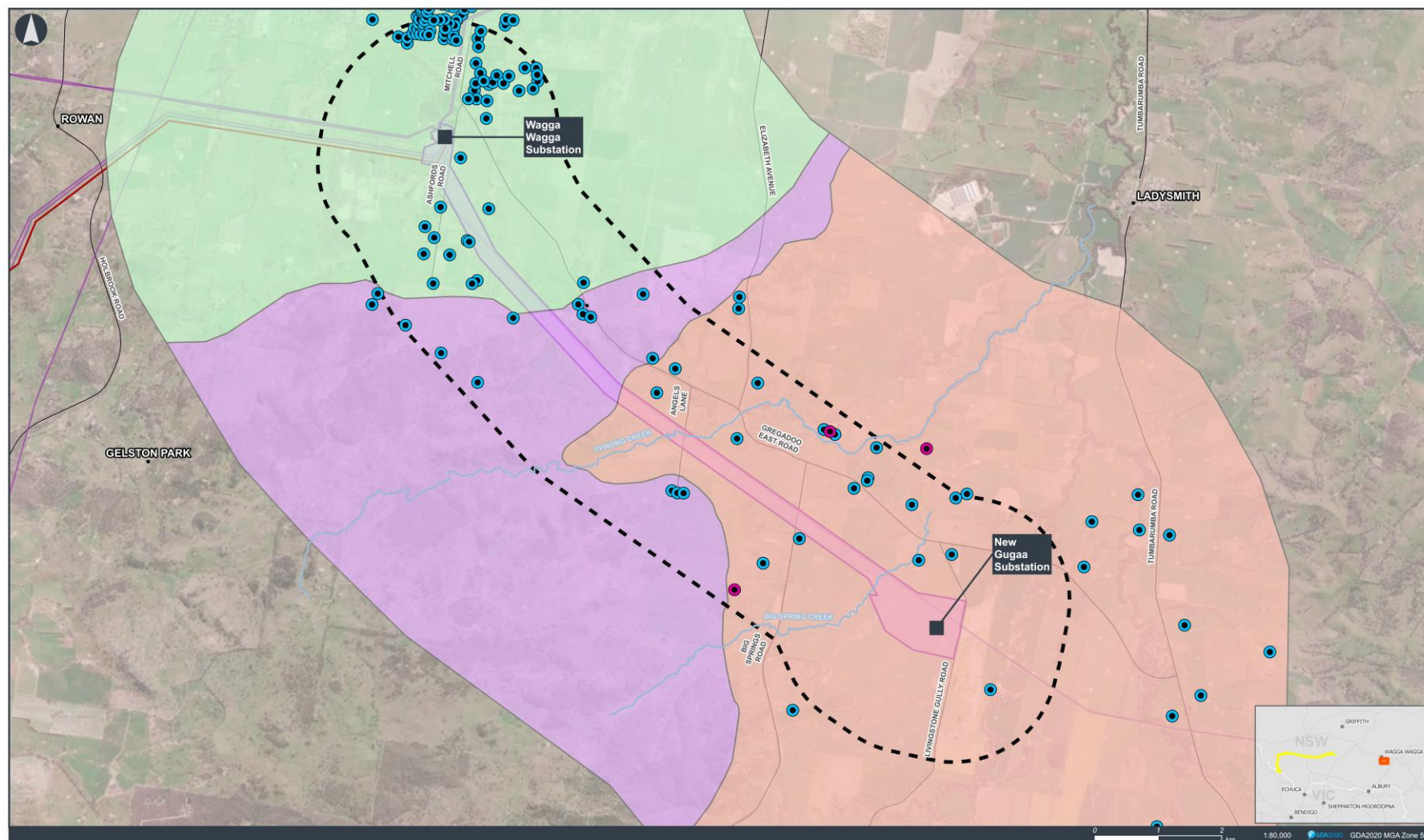












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VNI West – Scoping Report

**Figure 3**  
Visual and landscape features  
Sheet 3 of 3

**Legend**

- Road
- Named waterway
- Existing transmission line

— EnergyConnect transmission line (under construction)

- Proposal corridor (Wagga Wagga substation to Gugaa substation)
- ▭ Study area
- Substation subject to works

**Character Zones**

- Rural fringe landscape - Wagga Wagga
- Great Dividing Range foothills landscape - Gregadoo
- Rural valleys landscape - Gregadoo

Dwellings (estimated – subject to ground truthing) - Wagga Wagga to Gugaa

- Dwelling
- Potential Dwelling



