Notice of Decision – Snowy 2.0 Transmission Connection

Section 2.22 and clause 20 of Schedule 1 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*

Application type	Critical State significant infrastructure
Application number and project name	Snowy 2.0 - Transmission Connection (SSI-9717)
Applicant	NSW Electricity Network Operations Pty Limited as trustee for NSW Electricity Networks Operations Trust
Consent Authority	Minister for Planning

Decision

Under section 5.19 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (**the Act**), the Minister for Planning has approved the critical State significant infrastructure (CSSI) application to develop the Snowy 2.0 – Transmission Connection, subject to conditions.

The key components of the project include:

- constructing and operating two new 9 km long 330 kilovolt (kV) double-circuit overhead transmission lines from the Snowy 2.0 cable yard in Lobs Hole, Kosciusko National Park to the new substation;
- constructing and operating a new 500/300 kV substation at Maragle, in the Bago State Forest;
- 330 kV grid connection between the new substation and Transgrid's existing Line 64;
- construction facilities, such as construction compounds and access tracks.

Construction of the Maragle substation would take 55 months and construction of the transmission infrastructure would take 30 months. Once operational the project would connect 2,000 MW of additional dispatchable capacity and 350 GWh of deep storage to the electricity network.

A copy of the Department's assessment report and Minister's infrastructure approval is available here.

Date of decision

2 September 2022

Reasons for decision

The following matters were taken into consideration in making this decision:

- the relevant matters required under the Act, including the objects of the Act;
- relevant Commonwealth and NSW legislation, policies and guidelines;
- advice from key government agencies, including the National Parks and Wildlife Service;
- all information submitted to the Department during the assessment of the application;
- the findings and recommendations in the Department's assessment report; and
- the views of the community about the project (see **Attachment 1**).

The findings and recommendations set out in the Department's Assessment Report were accepted and adopted as the reasons for making this decision.

The key reasons for approving the application are as follows:

- the project would provide a range of benefits for the State and National Electricity Market (NEM) as a whole, including connecting 2,000 MW of additional dispatchable capacity and 350 GWh of deep storage to the electricity network;
- the project is critical for energy security and reliability in NSW, and would play an essential role in helping to stabilise the NEM as it transitions away from a long-standing reliance on coal-fired power stations to a reliance on renewable energy;
- the broader Snowy 2.0 project is consistent with relevant NSW Government policies and guidelines, including the *Transmission Infrastructure Strategy*, the *Electricity Strategy*, and more broadly the *Climate Change Policy Framework* and *Net Zero Plan Stage 1: 2020 – 2030*;
- the impacts on the community and environment can be appropriately minimised, managed or offset to an acceptable level, in accordance with applicable NSW Government policies and standards;
- none of the NSW Government agencies objected to the project and Council is supportive of the project;
- the issues raised by the community during consultation and in submissions have been considered and adequately addressed through changes to the project and the recommended conditions of consent; and
- weighing all relevant considerations, the project is in the public interest, subject to strict conditions of approval.

Attachment 1 – Consideration of Community Views

The Department exhibited the application from 23 February 2021 to 5 April 2021 and received 29 submissions, including 24 from the general public and five from special interest groups. In addition, Snowy Valleys Council (Council) provided comments and 10 government agencies provided advice.

Of the 29 submissions received from the community and organisations, four submissions provided comments on the development and 25 submissions objected to the development. The key matters raised include the consideration of alternative options, biodiversity impacts and visual amenity impacts.

A summary of how the key issues raised by the community were taken into consideration is provided in the below table.

Issue	Consideration
Consideration of Alternative Options • adequacy of alternative options analysis • consideration of underground route options • impacts on timing, cost and biodiversity • consistency with the Kosciusko National Park Plan of Management	*Assessment* • Transgrid evaluated 12 route options, including underground options against the project objectives including network and connectivity, constructability and design, cost, community and environment, and safety. • The Department considered advice provided by government agencies and technical experts, and concluded that the method Transgrid employed to compare the alternative options was sufficient. • The Department concluded that while other options, including underground transmission lines, may be feasible and would further reduce environmental impacts such as biodiversity and visual impacts, these options would significantly constrain Transgrid's ability to meet its other project objectives.
Biodiversity • scale of disturbance • impacts on threatened species • adequacy of offsets	*Assessment* • Transgrid has attempted to reduce biodiversity impacts by selecting the most direct route to the NEM, locating the grid connection outside of state conservation areas, reducing transmission line easement width, utilising existing infrastructure and defining distinct clearing management zones. • The project would still disturb 118 ha (74 ha in National Park and 44 ha in State Forest) of native vegetation, comprising 115 ha of vegetation in moderate to good condition, 1 ha of derived native grassland and 2 ha of derived shrubland. • The impact on native vegetation and species would generate 2,889 ecosystem credits and 11,321 species credits for flora and fauna species. • The Department recognises that the project would impact on biodiversity values, however considers that subject to the recommended conditions, including minimisation of impacts during the detailed design of the project, a range of flora and fauna management measures, and by offsetting the residual biodiversity impacts of the project, the impacts would not significantly impact the biodiversity values of the locality. *Conditions* • Minimise the clearing of native vegetation and key fauna habitat. • Prepare and implement a Biodiversity Management Plan. • Prepare and implement a Biodiversity Offset Package, including: - payment to the NPWS of up to $10.59 million to carry out conservation actions in other parts of KNP to offset the residual biodiversity impacts of the project (on top of the $82.29 million under existing approvals); and - lodging bank guarantee(s), where an asset is held until certain requirements are met, for the amount calculated by the Biodiversity Offset Payment Calculator (as at 9 August 2022) for the credit liability which correlates to $24.87 million. • Undertake ecological rehabilitation to a high standard in accordance with objectives to restore vegetation composition, structure and ecosystem function of disturbed areas within set time frames.
Visual Amenity and Park Values • changing the landscape character • introduction of permanent infrastructure • vegetation clearing below lines	*Assessment* • Impacts to the landscape character, visual amenity and park values would occur from both the introduction of new permanent infrastructure into the landscape and the vegetation clearing below the transmission lines. • Four of 13 assessed representative viewpoints would potentially experience high visual impacts.

	• The Department acknowledges that residual visual impacts would be significant, however impacts could be reduced through mitigation measures including the re-location of campgrounds and applying paint/treatments to permanent infrastructure to blend the infrastructure into the landscape. • The Department considers that contributions to fund programs to improve park values would assist in reducing impacts to park values. *Conditions* • Ensure transmission towers blend into surrounding landscape as much as possible by painting or pre-dulling to minimise the potential for glare and reflection. • Minimise the off-site visual impacts, including lighting impacts. • Prepare and implement a Visual Impact Management Plan. • Pay NPWS a total of $5 million, to be spent by NPWS on programs to improve park values (on top of the $4.96 million already paid for the Exploratory Works and up to $1.995 million to be paid for Main Works); • Additional measures including: - removing the 11 kV overhead transmission line (~18 km) between Providence Portal substation to Tantangara Dam, replace with a standalone supply or underground line between the Snowy 2.0 Tantangara intake/portal area and Tantangara Dam area, and rehabilitation of the easement; and - Removing the damaged 11 kV overhead transmission line (~29 km) between Eucumbene to Happy Jacks and replace with an alternative standalone power supply, and rehabilitation of the easement.