RMCG

VNI West
Community Reference Group

1 April 2025

Chairperson's summary and update

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CRG BRIEF UPDATE

The VNI West Community Reference Group (CRG) met for its ninth meeting on 1 April 2025, bringing together community members and senior representatives from VicGrid, the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner's (AEIC) Office, the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO). Eleven CRG community members attended the session, which included a closed-door discussion in the first hour, giving community members the chance to prepare questions for visiting guests. Notes for this session were recorded in confidence.

For the second part of the meeting the CRG community members were joined by Alistair Parker (VicGrid CEO), Ilsa Colson (VicGrid Executive Director of Communications and Engagement), Tony Mahar (Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner), Carolyn Francis (Assistant Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner), Merryn York (AEMO Executive General Manager – System Design), Claire Cass (TCV Victorian Network Services and Delivery) and other observers.

The CRG had the opportunity to ask questions of the meeting guests. Key topics of discussion included:

- The role and responsibilities of the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner.
- Transition of energy planning from AEMO to VicGrid, including development of the Victorian Transmission Plan and Renewable Energy Zones.
- The recently proposed Syncline project, how this is being assessed and the implications it could have on the VNI West and the Western Renewable Link (WRL) projects if it proves viable.
- How the upcoming Victorian Transmission Plan will influence renewable energy generation access to the energy grid.
- Concerns about sites of cultural heritage and significant wetland biodiversity close to the proposed transmission line and concerns that engagement with Traditional Owners has excluded local representatives.
- Funding sources for major transmission projects, including government contributions and charges on electricity bills.
- Opportunities for compensation and community benefits for small towns within the region.
- Timeframes and the assessment process, which includes some CRG representatives, for the appointment of the VNI West Transmission Network Service Provider (TNSP).
- Progress on resolving insurance challenges related to transmission and generation infrastructure.
- Mental health impacts of the project, information on the support services being funded by TCV and the need for additional support.
- Plans and arrangements underway for temporary and legacy worker accommodation during construction.

The CRG continues to act as a place for two way communication between community and TCV. The minutes for the April meeting will be reviewed and endorsed by the CRG at its next meeting. The minutes from the February meetings will be available on TCV's website shortly.

This report has been prepared by:

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