

Agriculture



Environment Effects Statement

The [Environment Effects Statement \(EES\)](#) is Victoria's most rigorous and transparent environmental impact assessment. It describes the project, its rationale, and potential environmental and social effects.

Scoping requirements

In February 2025, the Victorian Minister for Planning issued the final scoping requirements for the VNI West EES, setting out the proposed specific matters to be investigated and documented. While the scoping requirements are intended to cover all relevant matters, the EES can also address other significant matters that emerge during EES investigations or through consultation.

Agriculture scoping requirements

The EES scoping requirements state that the draft corridor is predominantly located in agricultural areas that are of considerable importance to the community.

Matters for investigation

Potential adverse impacts on agriculture or other forms of farming, including direct and indirect effects on productivity, spread of weeds, pathogens and other biosecurity risks, constraints on cropping or grazing, accessibility of land with farming equipment around transmission lines and restrictions on farming practices.

Assessment overview and study methodology

The agriculture assessment is looking into how agricultural and farming land uses and practices may be affected during the construction and operation of VNI West. The following methodology is being adopted:

- Definition of a study area which for this assessment encompasses the project easement and the Tragowel terminal station.
- Characterisation of existing conditions and identification of agricultural practices throughout the project area.

- Assessment of potential agriculture impacts during construction and operation of the project through:
 - Desktop analysis
 - Property inspections
 - Community engagement sessions
 - Interviews with landholders
- Identification of mitigation measures where necessary.

Landowner interviews conducted throughout the project easement informed this assessment and allow for a better understand of land use and farming operations; engagement with landowners and occupiers remains ongoing.

The project team, which has members from agricultural backgrounds and is very familiar with the region, has also used available land mapping, aerial imagery, Victorian Land Use Information (VLUI 2024), and farm production data from the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES) and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) to better understand how land is used along the route.

This information helps guide design and avoid key infrastructure (such as lateral and centre pivot irrigation infrastructure), intensive farming activities and buildings wherever possible. It will also inform measures to minimise disruption where this cannot be avoided.

The project team conducted a drive-by survey to sight almost all the properties along the project easement was conducted during Spring 2024 to further validate mapping, land use data and advice received from community members.

Scan this QR code to view the complete list of [scoping requirements](#) for the VNI West project





Local input

There has been community consultation with landholders and near-neighbouring landholders to verify the accuracy of the desktop analysis and determine how agricultural activity may be affected.

Consultation has included:

- More than 15 scheduled and structured landholder interviews and 40 responses from an online agricultural survey.
- Discussions with landholders at field days and VNI West project open days (Kerang, Charlton, Boort, St Arnaud and Stawell).
- Discussions with landholders, community members and the project design team at meetings held at smaller centres.
- Discussions with a number of agricultural peak bodies.

Existing conditions

Existing conditions known to date include:

- The project easement passes through productive farmland dominated by large landholdings in northern Victoria.

- Key commodities grown along the easement are winter crops (cereal crops, oilseed crops, pulse crops) and pastures for sheep and cattle.
- There are a few existing intensive agricultural industries (e.g. chickens, pigs, feed lots, horticultural tree crops) along the project area but these are limited.
- There are some irrigated pasture/cropping dependent dairy businesses.
- Parts of the easement cross Goulburn Murray Irrigation District and there are several larger lateral irrigators in proximity to the project.

Next steps

The assessment is still underway and conversations with landholders and other stakeholders are ongoing. The agricultural specialists will be assessing the potential impacts of transmission towers and lines on farm production at the regional level, and what potential impacts on farming practices may occur, including use of equipment, and will make recommendations on measures which may be required to mitigate impacts where they occur.



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