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MEDIA RELEASE

Voluntary agreements remain the strong preference for survey access on VNI West

Transmission Company Victoria (TCV) has begun notifying a small number of landholders about upcoming property access requirements for critical ecology surveys. The letters outline when surveys need to occur, and the voluntary and compulsory access pathways available to undertake this important work.

Landholders were provided with updated advice regarding the need for survey access in their Land Easement and Access Packages, provided in July.

“Spring and summer ecology surveys involve non-invasive activities such as walkovers, photography, species identification and tree measurements. These surveys are essential to preparing the Environment Effects Statement (EES), ensuring each property’s unique features, including sensitive flora and fauna, are properly considered,” said VNI West Program Director Mick Douge.

“Access during this survey window is critical for VNI West to be delivered on time, to meet Victoria’s future energy needs.

“These surveys are a crucial step in making sure that VNI West is designed responsibly, and we are working with landholders to carefully balance the design with the region’s environmental values, and the farming and business operations of more than 200 properties.”

“TCV is ready to meet each landholder’s voluntary access requirements – from biosecurity procedures, seasonal considerations to notice periods – as we have done for more than 160 properties across the project region.

“Agreeing on access isn’t a vote of support for VNI West, but what it does mean, is that access happens in a way that works best for landholders and their properties, with the least disruption possible,” Mr Douge said.

Voluntary access agreements also unlock clear benefits, including eligibility for 20% of the Landholder Benefit Payment upfront (set at \$46,000 per hectare), and a scaled access payment of \$10,000–\$50,000, depending on the area landholders make available for surveys.

For landholders who want more time to consider their Enablement and Access Deeds, TCV also offers short-form agreements, tailored to one-off survey types such as ecology. This allows surveys to proceed while providing a longer negotiation period for more detailed arrangements.

Since 2023, TCV’s dedicated team of Landholder Liaisons has worked to ensure voluntary access meets landholder needs; regularly engaging with landholders, providing flexible terms, boosting access payments and facilitating independent advice or meetings with technical specialists.

“We are committed to working with landholders, creating flexible pathways for access, and providing the space and time to make those calls to get property-specific advice,” said Mr Douge.

Landholders have received packs outlining proposed survey dates, the types of activities involved, and the equipment and personnel required.

While TCV’s priority is always to secure voluntary agreements, the packs also explain that if this cannot be achieved, access may need to occur under Section 93 of the *Electricity Industry Act 2000 (Vic)*.

At this time, TCV will not be accessing properties under the recently legislated Section 93BD of the *Electricity Industry Act 2000 (Vic)*.

“Compulsory access doesn’t close the door on voluntary agreements. Landholders can choose to enter into voluntary access agreements at any time, so access works in a way that suits their property,” Mr Douge said.

“Our ongoing commitment is to keep engaging openly and respectfully, to listen to concerns, and minimise impacts wherever we can.”

ENDS

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About VNI West

Victoria to New South Wales Interconnector West (VNI West) is a project to build a new 500 kV double-circuit transmission line between Victoria and New South Wales. Harnessing new sources of electricity generation in both states, VNI West is required to maintain the reliability of electricity supply as aging coal-fired power stations retire. In Victoria, the proposed 70-metre-wide project easement runs north from Bulgana to near Kerang, continuing across the border into New South Wales. This new infrastructure will help to ensure Victorians can access clean, reliable energy into the future.

About TCV

Transmission Company Victoria (TCV) was established by AEMO Victorian Planning to progress the VNI West transmission project. TCV is working directly with landholders, Traditional Owners, and local communities to understand concerns and ensure that early commitments are honoured across the life of the project. TCV provides regular project updates and invites input from landholders and communities throughout the project. For more information, head to www.transmissionvictoria.com.au.

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