VicGrid VNI West

Land Access:
Technical Survey Activities



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Introduction

A broad range of on-site investigations and surveys are underway across the VNI West project area as part of the Environment Effects Statement (EES). Our aim is to build an understanding of environmental sensitivities — including flora and fauna — as well as agriculture, visual amenity, and social and technical values.

The field investigations are an important step in the EES assessment process, establishing the existing conditions in the project area. This allows independent technical specialists to carry out an informed impact assessment and identify potential project effects on these existing conditions.

The EES is the most rigorous and transparent environment impact assessment process in Victoria. The Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) administers the process on behalf of Victoria's Minister for Planning.

The EES ensures that major projects are designed, constructed, and operated to minimise adverse environmental and community impacts. The process identifies and analyses the potential physical, biological, heritage, cultural, social, health, safety, and economic effects of a project. The EES includes a broad range of investigations and surveys, and provides opportunities for the public to make submissions about the project.

During the EES process, we may need to complete other investigations and surveys in addition to the examples in this brochure.







Cultural Heritage (standard assessment)

Generally a non-intrusive walkover with an archaeologist and members of the relevant Traditional Owner groups to assess the landforms and potential for archaeological sensitivity.

This walkover usually involves:

- Qualified archaeologists and representatives from Traditional Owner groups
- The property's dedicated Landholder Liaison (if the assessment is taking place on private land)
- Access during daylight hours

Cultural Heritage (complex assessment)

This involves excavating small trenches and pits to look for artefacts just below the surface. The number will depend on standard assessment results and likely occurrence, topography, and the location. All ground disturbance will be remediated and a map of locations for any intrusive works provided and agreed to prior to any works commencing.

This work usually involves:

- The excavation of trenches and pits using handheld equipment (shovel/trowel), although there may be some instances where mechanical excavation using a small excavator (or similar) is required
- One or two archaeologists with up to three representatives from relevant Traditional Owner groups (and equipment operator where required)
- Access during daylight hours

Cultural Heritage Management Plans (CHMPs)

VNI West is required to prepare Cultural Heritage Management Plans (CHMPs) in accordance with the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006, which will include the results of an assessment of the potential impacts of the project on Aboriginal cultural heritage.

CHMPs for VNI West will be prepared in collaboration with Traditional Owner groups, Registered Aboriginal Parties, and First Peoples — State Relations. The CHMPs will identify potential impacts the project may pose to Aboriginal cultural heritage, as well as ways that heritage can best be protected.





Land Use

Surveys conducted to assess land use in the study area include site inspections and consultation with local planning authorities, such as councils. Typically, these surveys involve:

- Small, in-vehicle survey crews, using public roads near and intersecting the VNI West easement to record land-use types and capture photos
- Consultation with shire councils to understand key land use and planning considerations
- Surveys take place during daylight hours

Landscape and Visual Impact

Landscape and visual impact assessments evaluate the significance of landscape change resulting from development, including effects on the landscape itself and on people's views and visual amenity. These assessments include the following elements:

- Surveys conducted on both public land and private properties (where land access agreements are in place)
- Photos looking in the direction of the future transmission infrastructure from predetermined view locations
- The location of the camera and control points within the camera's immediate surrounds are georeferenced and recorded by a licensed land surveyor with a GPS receiver.



Bushfire

Bushfire assessments review potential bushfire risk associated with construction, operation, and decommissioning of a project. Desktop assessments include reviewing legislation, policies, safety guidelines, hazards, and asset risk.

Field surveys may include:

- Up to two fire survey specialists
- Site walkovers to assess topography, land use, and vegetation
- Access during daylight hours.





Camera trap survey.



Tile array survey.

Flora and Fauna

This involves non-invasive ground investigations. The team will typically be on a property for a few days walking and photographing vegetation and fauna. The time on-site is highly dependent on the extent of habitat present. Surveys usually involve:

- Two ecologists
- Some night access and survey activity (with landholder consent). The team may need to leave cameras or other equipment overnight for a short duration to record nighttime fauna
- Possible use of state government-approved survey trapping and other methods to record presence of fauna

Walkovers and Photography

The majority of ecology survey work requires small crews to undertake site walkovers on public and private land, including taking photographs to determine the likelihood of species occurrence.

Nocturnal Fauna Spotting

This involves active searching during nighttime hours to determine the presence of nocturnal fauna. Teams will attend survey sites during the afternoon to familiarise themselves with the habitat and potential hazards, before conducting spotlighting after dark. Teams will also be doing 'call playback,' to determine the presence of bats, owls, or other species. This involves playing animal calls through a Bluetooth speaker to see if the relevant animal is attracted or prompted to call.

Fauna Monitoring

Camera trap surveys involve the placement of two motion-sensing cameras and one song meter, to document the presence of fauna within the survey area. Cameras and song meters are left for a specified period and placed to detect the passing of small animals. Tile array surveys require placing terracotta tiles in a grid formation across a specified area of native grassland to monitor and document the presence of vertebrates (e.g. Striped Legless Lizard). Grids may consist of up to 50 tiles that are monitored over a specified period prior to collection.





Air Quality

These assessments look at how construction activities could affect air quality with a focus on above-ground areas like construction compounds or excavation sites.

This primarily involves non-invasive surveys and discussion on property operations. Surveys usually include:

- Up to two survey workers
- Access during daylight hours
- Use of air/dust monitoring equipment and placement of small equipment installations (temporarily) on-site
- Equipment being left for an extended period for air quality monitoring (up to 12 months)

Surface Water

These assessments aim to ensure local and downstream hydrology, surface water quality, and associated environmental values are protected. This involves desktop assessments, as well as site surveys and mapping of waterways, flooding, and landforms. Surveys usually include:

- Up to two survey workers
- Photography of land and sampling of waterways for quality assessment
- Access during daylight hours.





Geology and Contaminated Land

Geotechnical field investigations are used to determine the current conditions of soil and rock features in the broader VNI West project area.

Site surveys are undertaken to inspect land use, equipment, and soil/ground conditions. Walkovers determine sensitive receptors on the property and on surrounding land. Features of these investigations and surveys are outlined below:

- Surveys may include limited soil sampling depending on requirements, such as hand excavated test pits
- Sampling through bores excavated with drilling rigs will also take place
- Once sites are identified as suitable for geotechnical drilling, engineering, ecological, and cultural heritage specialists assess the area for potential sensitivities before survey drilling activities begin
- Geotechnical investigations will take place within a fenced-off work zone to ensure field investigations can be completed safely
- There will be multiple vehicles at each survey site including traffic management and pumping and drilling equipment
- Each borehole is remediated directly after drilling activity concludes
- Boreholes are backfilled in strict accordance with the Australian Drilling Industry Association's guidelines
- All survey access to occur during daylight hours

Noise and Vibration

This involves the use of noise monitoring equipment and placement of small, temporary equipment installations on-site.

Noise monitors are small devices used to store numerical data, to gather background and existing noise data along the VNI West Easement. This allows the project team to establish background noise criteria with respect to the relevant legislation and guidelines.

Specialised noise monitors capture numerical data based on noise levels — not live audio recordings — to ensure the privacy of landholders and members of the public. Surveys may involve:

- Up to two survey crew members
- Access during daylight hours
- Equipment being left from 2-4 weeks for monitoring





Historic Heritage

Historic heritage surveys assess known and potential historic heritage and archaeological sites.

This includes a review of the current conditions on-site, assessment of previous and potential disturbance to the site, and a review of whether there is evidence of historic heritage, archaeological features, or deposits present on site. These non-invasive works will be undertaken by qualified and experienced archaeologists and will consist of site walkovers and photography. Surveys usually include:

- Up to two specialists on-site for a short duration (depending on access restrictions) with a possible requirement for extra time to record complex features
- Access during daylight hours

Groundwater

Groundwater site investigations assess soil and ground conditions. This may include the following:

- Some excavation works like hand auger bore holes or mechanical water bores drilling
- Machinery and bore hole drilling on-site with drill rigs. This will be site-dependent and only occur subject to further consultation with the landholder to assess the location and minimise any impacts
- Up to two people (may require more if drilling occurs)
- Access during daylight hours
- Potential for machinery and investigation equipment to sample groundwater
- Reinstatement of land for disturbed soils or installed bore holes



Agriculture and Forestry

Agriculture and Forestry assessments look at the project's potential effects during construction and operation. These surveys usually include:

- On-site investigations to determine land use, agricultural values, and farming operations
- Discussions with landholders on property use
- Up to two agriculture specialists
- Access during daylight hours



Traffic and Transport

Traffic and transport assessments look at the use of local roads for construction, road deterioration, and safety issues regarding property access. Field surveys usually include:

- Observing vehicle speeds and road conditions
- Identifying safety hazards, access points, and transport networks.
- Small crews operating in roadside reserves
- Photography
- Possible traffic volume monitors left at locations for a short period
- Surveying during daylight hours

VNI West

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