

Media Statement

VicGrid seeks access for critical ecological surveys

VicGrid is seeking access to 27 properties to conduct necessary environmental surveys, as it progresses Victoria to New South Wales Interconnector West (VNI West), a major transmission project that is crucial to ensuring reliable and affordable electricity for Victorians.

VicGrid has started issuing access notifications under the *Electricity Industry Act 2000 (Vic)* to a small group of landholders and occupiers – where voluntary access for critical ecology surveys has not been agreed.

Landholders with properties identified in the VNI West preferred easement have participated in survey access discussions since 2023. Owners of 170 properties in the broader project region have agreed to access, enabling more than 300 private property surveys to date.

VicGrid Chief Executive Alistair Parker said this latest step came after extensive attempts to reach voluntary agreement and included clear notice requirements and obligations around safety, respectful conduct and biosecurity.

“Our strong preference is always to reach voluntary agreements with landholders, because that gives them more say over when and how access happens — including timing, access points and biosecurity,” he said.

“Where access hasn’t been possible despite repeated efforts, we now need to move to the next step available under the legislation so we can complete the environmental surveys required to design this project responsibly and deliver the power Victorians need.”

“We understand this can be confronting and difficult for some landholders.”

“Voluntary access remains available at any time. Landholders can still work with us on timing, access points and biosecurity, which is always the best way to minimise disruption.”

Access is being sought under Section 93BD *Electricity Industry Act 2000 (Vic)* which introduces additional procedural steps and safeguards, including a requirement to provide landholders with at least 30 business days’ notice before any proposed entry and the use of Authorised Officers.

Mr Parker said ecological surveys are required to identify native vegetation and wildlife habitats, and to inform the project’s Environment Effects Statement (EES) — Victoria’s most rigorous environmental approvals process.

“These surveys protect the environment,” he said,

“Providing ecology specialists with access to properties helps us understand what’s actually on the ground, so we can avoid sensitive areas where possible and minimise impacts on farming operations.”

VicGrid has continued to prioritise agreement-based access wherever possible, providing landholders with a \$10,000 to \$50,000 access payment scaled to the area provided for surveys.

VicGrid has also brought forward 20% of the Landholder Benefit Payment for VNI West landowners during the survey access stage which is calculated at \$46,000 per hectare of easement payment. This represents a new benchmark for energy infrastructure projects, providing financial certainty to the landholders who make these projects possible.

Landholders receiving notices under Section 93BD will be contacted directly by their Landholder Liaisons, who will explain what the Notice means in practical terms, and continue discussions about voluntary access options.

VicGrid’s goal is to keep this project moving responsibly, minimise disruption wherever possible, and design VNI West with input from the people who know the region best.

ENDS

Property access supported by Authorised Officers

- Authorised Officers are employed by Resources Victoria, not VicGrid, and must carry official identification, follow a strict code of conduct, and cannot enter homes or residential buildings.
- Authorised Officers may issue infringement notices up to a maximum of four penalty units per offence (approximately \$800), at their discretion, where access is hindered, obstructed or delayed.
- If entry is obstructed during an attempted access, the Authorised Officer may apply to the Magistrate's Court for an Entry Order.