

Bushfire



Environment Effects Statement

An [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 in the EES. While the scoping requirements are intended to cover all relevant matters, the EES can also address other significant matters that emerge during the EES investigations or through consultation.

Bushfire scoping requirements

The EES scoping requirements state that bushfire has been identified for investigation due to concerns regarding the ability to effectively manage and fight fires in proximity to transmission lines and associated infrastructure.

Matters for investigation

Implications of the project for fire risk management or bushfire suppression on surrounding land, including fire ignition risks arising from the project.

Assessment overview and study methodology

The bushfire assessment encompasses the project area and is adopting the following methodology:

- Undertaking initial assessment of bushfire risk indicators and mapping using available data.

This review includes:

- Regional weather and topography.
- Predominant land use.
- Review of the legislative framework, including planning scheme overlays.
- Fuel hazard mapping.
- Bushfire history.
- Field assessment to confirm the information collected during the desktop assessment, including land use, township locations, fire station locations, water sources, and inspection of Crown Land Reserves surrounding the project and their fuel loads.
- Engagement of an accredited Fire Behaviour Analyst (FBAN) to model possible bushfire scenarios.
- Assessment of bushfire-related effects considering construction, operation, and decommissioning of the project.
- Identification of mitigation measures where necessary to address potentially significant environmental effects.

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



Local input

Engagement with the community and other key stakeholders in relation to the bushfire assessment is ongoing.



Existing conditions

The bushfire assessment for the VNI West project is ongoing. Current findings highlight that south-eastern Australia is one of the most bushfire-prone regions globally. In Victoria, the typical bushfire season runs from late October to early May. This period aligns with warmer temperatures and strong winds, both of which increase fire risk.

The project area primarily contains grassland vegetation, where bushfires are usually wind-driven, fast-moving, and burn at lower intensity with shorter flame heights. These fires tend to burn out quickly compared to forest fires.

Some forested areas exist along the northern section of the VNI West easement and in scattered patches along the route but, by and large, the project easement is located away from these areas. In forests, the tree canopy reduces wind speed at ground level, which slows the fire's spread. Forest fires burn more slowly and intensely due to a mix of fuels of different sizes.

Much of the project easement also passes through cropping and fodder production zones. During summer, these areas are highly susceptible to fire. Dry conditions in late spring and early summer leave crop residues and stubble extremely flammable. High temperatures, low humidity, and strong winds can lead to fast-moving fires across farmlands.

Crops are most at risk from fire between September and January when they are maturing or being harvested. Harvesting equipment can start fires through sparks or heat. Post-harvest stubble burning, while used to manage weeds and prepare soil, also poses a risk – especially if fires escape during dry, windy conditions. Escaped burns can damage crops, reduce soil quality, and threaten nearby properties or infrastructure. These activities usually occur from January to April, overlapping with periods of high fire danger.

Data from the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) suggests that bushfire history along the proposed route is limited. Most historical fires are in the southern section, particularly near Public Land Reserves, which are more prone to ember generation and fire spread. Smaller-scale fires have occurred in the central and northern sections, mostly in grassland areas linked to farming activity. These fires tend to follow prevailing winds, typically from the northwest with a change to the southwest.

Fuel reduction burns are also recorded, mostly in the south where public land is concentrated. However, Mapshare does not provide information on total fire size or duration before containment. Based on recent bushfire history and conditions, the area is likely to continue facing bushfire risk in future years.

There is no record of a bushfire in Victoria being started by 500kV transmission lines like those proposed for VNI West; past fires linked to power lines have involved local distribution lines.

Planning and bushfire regulation

The Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO) is a planning control applied in areas identified as bushfire prone. It is triggered if certain criteria are met:

- **Criterion 1:** Areas with forest, woodland, shrubland, scrub, mallee, or rainforest vegetation larger than 4 hectares.
- **Criterion 2:** A 150-metre ember buffer from vegetation defined in Criterion 1.
- **Criterion 3:** Areas identified by fire authorities as subject to extreme bushfire risk.

Separately, Bushfire Prone Areas (BPA) are defined by the Minister for Planning as areas likely to experience bushfires. In BPAs, building regulations require certain construction standards to reduce risk.

These standards include a minimum Bushfire Attack Level (BAL) rating of 12.5 for new buildings, including homes, schools, hospitals, and aged care facilities. The BPA designation and construction requirements implement one of the 67 recommendations of the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission.

The entire VNI West project area falls within a designated Bushfire Prone Area.

Next steps

The bushfire assessment is ongoing. This includes on-ground surveys of the project easement to confirm current conditions. The bushfire specialists will liaise closely with key groups, including the Country Fire Authority and DEECA, to develop a range of mitigation measures to minimise the risk of transmission infrastructure inhibiting the ability to fight fires in the region.