Explore the Environment Effects Statement

Understanding an Environment Effects Statement

Victoria's *Environment Effects Act 1978* provides a framework for assessing the environmental impacts of a proposed project and works that may significantly affect the environment.

An EES usually has:

- A description of the proposed development
- An outline of public and stakeholder consultation undertaken during investigations and the issues raised
- A description of the existing environment that may be affected
- Predictions of the potential significance of environmental effects of the proposal
- Examination of feasible alternatives to the proposal
- Proposed measures to avoid, minimise or manage adverse environmental effects
- A proposed program for monitoring and managing environmental effects during project implementation

Why an EES is required for VNI West

The energy grid we rely on in Victoria is changing: as old coal-powered stations retire, new transmission infrastructure is needed to keep homes, farms and businesses powered in communities across the state.

VNI West is a major project and, as with all significant infrastructure, it must be planned with care and attention to the land it crosses, the people who live and work nearby, and the broader environment.

The EES process helps to ensure:

- Impacts are assessed using clear evidence and technical standards
- Community and stakeholder input is considered
- Project design can be refined to avoid or reduce impacts
- All relevant decision-makers have the information they need

EES timeline

Late 2023–early 2024

Referral and determining the need for an EES

The Minister for Planning determined there was a requirement for VicGrid to prepare an EES.

From late 2024

Developing what the EES will cover

Draft scoping requirements were prepared and outlined matters to be investigated, details of proposed studies and assessments.

2025 – 2026

Preparing an EES

VicGrid has engaged independent specialists to carry out comprehensive technical studies and assessments to assist in identifying potential project impacts.

WE ARE HERE

2026

Public exhibition and submissions

The EES and proposed Planning Scheme Amendment (PSA) will be on public exhibition once the studies are finalised. VicGrid will give notice of this and invite public submissions.

The Minister for Planning will appoint an independent inquiry and advisory committee to review submissions and hold a public hearing.

After the hearing, the inquiry panel will provide the Minister with a written report of findings and recommendations for the Minister to consider when making their assessment.

Q1 – Q2 2027

Minister's Assessment

The Minister's Assessment will be completed to determine if potential environmental and social effects of the VNI West project are acceptable.

1

2 DTP published draft scoping requirements and invited submissions through a formal consultation process.

3 Community members were invited to share their local knowledge to help ensure EES technical studies are comprehensive.

4 The EES and draft PSA will be on public exhibition and open for submissions. Community members can attend the public hearing.

5

EES engagement opportunities

VicGrid VNI West

EES key topic areas

Community amenity

Electric and magnetic field

Electric fields, magnetic fields and interference

Chapter 8

Technical Appendix A

Air quality

Dust, emissions and air quality

Chapter 16

Technical Appendix I

Landscape and visual

Views, landscape and visual character

Chapter 17

Technical Appendix J

Noise and vibration

Construction and operational noise

Chapter 19

Technical Appendix L

Biodiversity and environment

Climate change

Climate risks and resilience

Chapter 13

Technical Appendix F

Greenhouse gas

Emissions and carbon impacts

Chapter 15

Technical Appendix H

Ecology

Plants, animals and habitats

Chapter 26

Chapter 27

Technical Appendix S

Land use and socioeconomic

Bushfire

Fire risk and emergency management

Chapter 12

Technical Appendix E

Agriculture

Farms, farming and agricultural land

Chapter 20

Technical Appendix M

Business and economics

Jobs, businesses and the local economy

Chapter 22

Technical Appendix O

Land use and planning

Changes to how land is used

Chapter 23

Technical Appendix P

Social

Communities, wellbeing and social values

Chapter 24

Technical Appendix Q

Heritage

Historic heritage

Historic places and heritage values

Chapter 11

Technical Appendix D

Aboriginal cultural heritage

Places of cultural significance and values

Chapter 25

Technical Appendix R

Land and water

Geology and soils

Geology, soils, and contaminated land

Chapter 9

Technical Appendix B

Groundwater

Aquifers, bores and groundwater resources

Chapter 10

Technical Appendix C

Surface water

Rivers, wetlands and flooding

Chapter 14

Technical Appendix G

Transport and aviation

Traffic and transport

Roads, traffic and access

Chapter 18

Technical Appendix K

Aviation

Aircraft operations and airspace

Chapter 21

Technical Appendix N

The complete EES, draft PSA and technical appendices are available on the VNI West website at **vniwproject.com.au/EES**

How to make a submission

Submissions on the Environment Effects Statement (EES) and draft Planning Scheme Amendment (PSA) must be made in writing.

Online submissions are preferred and can be lodged via the Victorian Government's Engage Victoria website engage.vic.gov.au/VNI-West-IAC

Hard copy submissions

Where a submitter is unable to lodge a submission online, they must contact Planning Panels Victoria (PPV) through the Customer Call Centre on 136 186 (select option 6) and request a hard copy submission coversheet.

For privacy reasons, hard copy submissions must be accompanied by a coversheet issued by PPV.

All submissions must state the name and address of the person making the submission.

Submissions will be treated as public documents and will be published on the Engage Victoria website, in accordance with the PPV Privacy Collection Notice.

Inquiry and Advisory Committee and Public Hearings

The Minister for Planning will appoint an independent Inquiry and Advisory Committee (IAC) to consider the EES, draft PSA and received submissions. The scope of the IAC is limited to providing advice on the identified 'key environmental matters' and 'other environmental matters' outlined in the IAC Terms of Reference issued by the Minister for Planning.

The IAC will hold a Directions Hearing to consider the arrangements and timetable for the Hearing and the process for submitters who want to be heard or provide further written material on 'other environmental matters'.

If you would like to participate in the IAC process, by either appearing at the Hearing and/or providing further written information, you will need to make a written submission and mark on the submission form that you would like to participate.

The IAC will conduct a public hearing on the 'key environmental matters', which will commence in 2027.

The IAC will review all submissions, the EES and draft PSA, before providing advice to the Minister for Planning about the project in accordance with its Terms of Reference.

More information

The submission process is independently managed by PPV and any enquiries regarding the management of submissions, or the IAC and Hearing process should be directed to PPV. VicGrid VNI West can help with questions about the project, EES documents and technical studies.

More information on how to make a submission, the submission process and public hearings can be found on the Engage Victoria website at engage.vic.gov.au/VNI-West-IAC or by contacting PPV on 136 186 (select option 6).

The Department of Transport and Planning and the EES process

Victoria's Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) administers the EES process under the *Environment Effects Act 1978* (Vic).

DTP supports the Minister for Planning by managing the EES process, including preparing scoping requirements and convening a Technical Reference Group to provide advice to both DTP and VicGrid VNI West as the proponent.

Scoping requirements set out the matters an EES must assess. These include key environmental issues to be investigated in the EES, the studies that need to be carried out, and the matters that must be addressed. In November 2024, DTP formally released the draft VNI West scoping requirements for public comment, enabling landholders and community members to provide feedback. In February 2025, the Victorian Minister for Planning issued the final scoping requirements for VNI West.

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

Public submission and process

Once an EES is prepared to adequately address the scoping requirements, the Minister for Planning will invite public comment. At least 30 business days is typically provided for the EES public exhibition period; during this time, the public can review the full EES and make written submissions in response to it.

VicGrid VNI West is required to give public notice of the exhibition and invite submissions on the environmental effects of VNI West and the draft PSA. Notice is shared via an advertisement, paid for and placed by VNI West, in one daily newspaper and in one or more local papers, or via other means as agreed with DTP. The notice must be in a form acceptable to DTP and include details of:

- VicGrid and the VNI West project
- The location of the project's exhibited EES material
- How and when submissions should be made

Where to view the EES

The exhibited EES and draft PSA is available to download on the project's website, along with a range of digital resources designed to help community members understand the project and the EES public exhibition process.

The VNI West website also provides:



EES fact sheets covering each technical study area, and a range of supporting project information



Interactive maps and visual before-and-after comparisons of key locations



Explainer videos covering what the EES is, the public exhibition process, how to make a submission, and the roles of key organisations



Audio summaries of the EES technical studies, allowing visitors to listen to information at their own pace

The complete EES, draft PSA and technical appendices are available on the VNI West website at **vniwproject.com.au/EES**

Community members can request a copy of the full EES on a USB by calling 1800 824 221. Printed copies of the full EES can be viewed at the following locations:

VNI West Kerang regional office
Shop 15, 47 Victoria Street,
Patchell Plaza, Kerang

VNI West Stawell regional office
179 Main Street, Stawell

State Library Victoria
328 Swanston Street, Melbourne

For help with making a submission, submission requirements or participating in the public hearing process, visit the Engage Victoria website at **engage.vic.gov.au/VNI-West-IAC** or contact Planning Panels Victoria on 136 186 (select option 6).

Stay connected

Email: **enquiries@vniwproject.com.au**
Free call: **1800 824 221**
www.vniwproject.com.au
@VNIWest

If you need an interpreter, please call 131 450 (within Australia). If you are deaf and/or find hearing or speaking with people on the phone difficult, please contact the National Relay Service on voice relay number 1300 555 727, TTY number 133 677 or SMS relay number 0423 677 767.