

FACT SHEET

VNI WEST (VICTORIA TO NSW INTERCONNECTOR WEST)



Victorian
Farmers
Federation

2 MARCH 2023

BACKGROUND

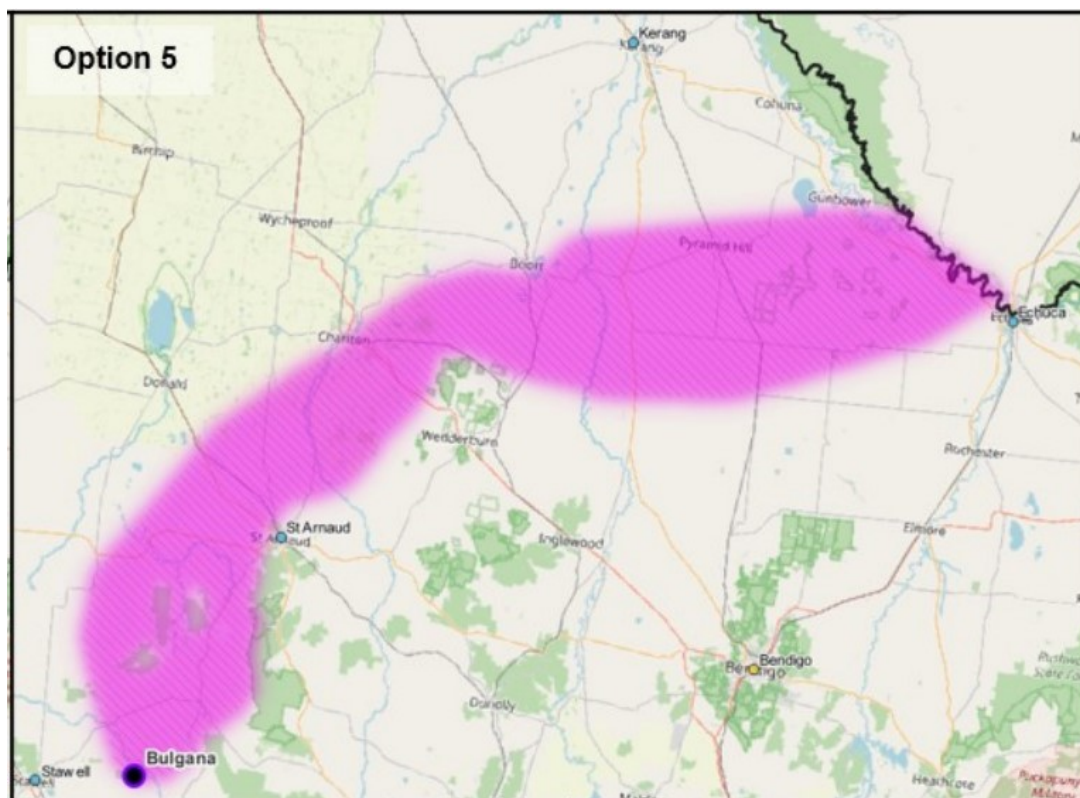
The VNI West project seeks to expand the transmission interconnector capacity between Victoria and NSW through infrastructure that links renewable energy facilities in both states.

In 2019, the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) and TransGrid commenced a joint Regulatory Investment Test for Transmission (RIT-T) to assess the viability of increasing interconnector capacity between Victorian and NSW.

In March 2020, the Victorian Government amended the *National Electricity (Victoria) Act 2005* to provide powers to accelerate transmission projects. A key purpose of these amendments was to fast-track priority transmission projects that can be held up by the complex national regulatory regime.

This was followed by the Minister for Energy and Resources making a Ministerial Order under the Act in February 2023 that effectively expedite the VNI West project.

AEMO has considered a total of seven credible options for the project route. Option 5, a 500 kilovolt (kV) double-circuit overhead transmission line connecting to the Western Renewables Link (WRL) at Bulgana to EnergyConnect in the NSW Riverina via a new terminal station in Northern Victoria, is AEMO's preferred option.



VNI West Option 5 investigation corridor. VNI West Consultation Report Page 68

VFF CONCERNS

The VFF has a range of concerns about the proposed route and more generally about the impacts of transmission infrastructure projects on Victorian food and fibre production.

The corridor for the VNI West project encompasses a number of irrigation districts including the Loddon, Torrumbarry and Campaspe districts. It is VFF policy to oppose renewable energy and transmission infrastructure development in these areas.

The VFF is also concerned about land access arrangements for energy companies during and after the construction phase, including the maintenance of the infrastructure in perpetuity.

Aside from general disruption to farming operations, the VFF is concerned about the following issues caused by transmission lines traversing farmland:

- decreased land value and loss of productive capacity;
- Requirement for permits to use tractors and machinery under powerlines;
- inability to irrigate under powerlines;
- inability to utilize emerging technologies such as drones and autonomous vehicles;
- failure to inform owners of changed policy on the easements;
- refusal to give notice or inform landholders what chemicals have been used on site causing issues with vendor declarations;
- spread of weeds;
- failure to close gates;
- damage to crops;
- materials left on site causing damage to machinery.

NEXT STEPS

In the space of renewable energy and transmission, there is a range of separate government processes and consultations taking place. This has created a complicated policy space for farming communities to understand and respond to.

The VFF is committed to supporting our members to understand this space and to help lead advocacy efforts. Community action will be an important part of this advocacy, and the VFF will support this work through a newly established Energy and Transmission Taskforce. The taskforce will be made up of farmer representatives across the state who are impacted by proposed Renewable Energy Zones and powerline projects to help guide our advocacy. We welcome the input of farmers who have an interest in these issues and are well connected to their communities.

The VFF is concerned by how consultation is taking place and being rushed through. We are requesting that the timeframe for consultation be extended to allow farmers to better understand the project and the potential impact on their operations.

We encourage farmers to contact and convince AEMO to support the VFF's call for the consultation to be extended.

It is also vitally important that all farmers put forward an individual submission to AEMO's consultation. Submissions do not have to be exhaustive or formally written. Anything is better than nothing!

Submissions should focus on the impact you believe transmission lines will have on your farming operations. The list of concerns outlined in this fact sheet is a good starting point. The VFF is collating a list of impacts and will continue to share these with farmers. Written submissions are due on or before 5 April 2023 and should be emailed to VNIWestRITT@aemo.com.au



KEY CONTACT

For further information please contact

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