



Victoria NSW Interconnector (VNI West)

VNI West is a proposed new high-capacity transmission line, connecting the Western Renewables Link (WRL) in Victoria to EnergyConnect in New South Wales.

The rapid retirement of existing electricity generation has created an urgent need for transmission to connect clean, low-cost electricity from renewable energy zones with homes, schools and businesses in cities and towns.

Community engagement

In July 2022, AEMO Victorian Planning (AVP) and Transgrid published the Project Assessment Draft Report for VNI West, the second of three reports in the regulatory process (the RIT-T).

Lessons from similar projects have reinforced the importance of early and meaningful engagement with all stakeholders, including Traditional Owners, communities and landowners.

It has also reinforced that the prospect of new transmission lines can come as a shock to communities - creating concerns about impacts on farms, livelihoods, and lifestyles.

AVP and Transgrid are committed to addressing these concerns openly and fairly.

One of the key issues identified through the submissions to the report was the connection of VNI West to WRL at the proposed terminal station north of Ballarat.

Options analysis investigation

In response, AVP and Transgrid investigated alternate options, still running via a terminal station near Kerang, but with connection to WRL west of the current proposed site. In total seven options were considered.

As part of this work, AVP and Transgrid have prepared a report on the further analysis undertaken (the [Consultation Report](#)). The report outlines a new proposed preferred option for the VNI West connection to WRL, near Bulgana, and invites stakeholder submissions during the six week consultation period, concluding on [Wednesday 5 April 2023](#).

NEVA orders

On February 20 the Victorian Minister for Energy and Resources made an [Order](#) under the National Electricity (Victoria) Act 2005 (NEVA) enabling the early works for VNI West as well as the assessment of alternate connections to WRL.

The [Ministerial Order](#) allow AVP to consider alternate VNI West options that could reduce the risk of delays and still deliver the project at a reasonable cost to consumers.

AVP and Transgrid welcome this Order which will allow for greater consideration of important social, cultural and environmental factors, which could facilitate and expedite delivery of both projects.

We believe this is consistent with the feedback we've had from communities on the need for earlier, broader community engagement through the regulatory process.



Project Timeline

Dec 2019	We are here	April - May 2023
Project Specification Consultation Report (PSCR)	Project Assessment Draft Report (PADR)	Project Assessment Conclusions Report (PACR)
Seeks feedback on the identified need for new transmission infrastructure and explores potential investment options to address this need.	Identifies and seeks feedback (through written submissions) on the draft preferred option.	Informs on the final preferred option to deliver the highest net market benefits for consumers.

July 2022	PADR published
Aug - Sep 2022	PADR consultation period
Dec 2022	Further assessment work on potential alternative connection points announced
Mid Feb 2023	Additional consultation report published
Mid Feb - Early April 2023	Additional consultation period

Connecting VNI West to Western Renewables Link at Bulgana is the proposed preferred option:

Multi-criteria analysis clearly shows that connecting VNI West from near Kerang directly to WRL at a new terminal station near Bulgana (Wotjobaluk Country) outperforms all other options considered.

This will require construction of WRL from north of Ballarat to Bulgana at 500 kV rather than 220kV and will remove the need to build a new terminal station north of Ballarat. This option is referred to as Option 5 in the Consultation Report.

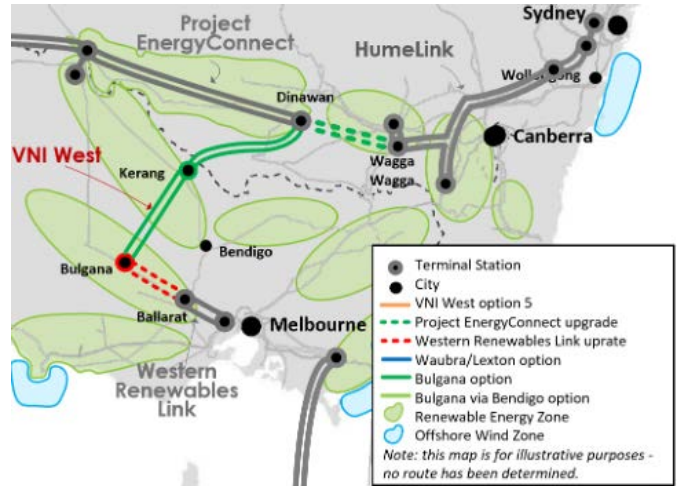


Figure 1 - Option 5 (to Bulgana)

The next best option identified was to connect from near Kerang to WRL at a new terminal station in the Waubra /Lexton area (Djaara Country) and running via a terminal station near Bendigo with an upgrade of the proposed WRL transmission line from Waubra/Lexton (Djaara Country) to Bulgana (Wotjobaluk Country) from 220kV to 500kV. This option is referred to as Option 3A in the Consultation Report.

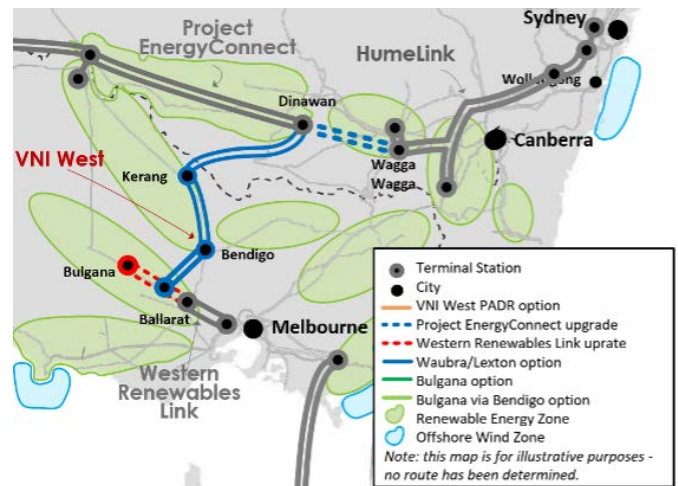


Figure 2 - Option 3A (to Waubra/ Lexton)

While both options deliver similar net benefits for electricity consumers, Option 5 was a stand-out once social, environmental and engineering factors were considered which will help to facilitate timely delivery of the projects.



The key findings from the analysis are as follows:

Option 5, connecting VNI West from near Kerang to WRL at a new terminal station near Bulgana is the strongest performing option once social, environmental and engineering issues are considered in the analysis. It outperforms all other options under the multi-criteria analysis, including the site north of Ballarat proposed for the VNI West connection to WRL in the Project Assessment Draft Report:

- Option 5 is estimated to deliver approximately \$1.4 billion in net benefits in present value terms
- It continues to provide benefits to consumers if it is assumed the Victorian Government's offshore wind targets become legislated, by providing greater opportunities to export electricity to New South Wales when generation is surplus to Victoria's needs
- The expected benefits of Option 5 and WRL combined exceed the cost of both projects
- Fewer protected areas, native vegetation, critical habitat and land with high agricultural potential is expected to be impacted by Option 5 than any other option

We want your feedback:

We are asking Traditional Owners, stakeholders and the community to provide their insights and feedback on this preliminary conclusion and to let us know if there are other social, cultural and ecological factors that could influence a final decision.

To provide input or find out more about the VNI West options analysis you can visit our project page, www.aemo.com.au/vni-west.

The consultation period will run until 5pm, Wednesday 5 April 2023, and AVP will be hosting face to face information sessions in local government areas in addition to webinars and information sessions with stakeholders.

For more details on these events please keep an eye on our VNI West project page - www.aemo.com.au/vni-west. Alternatively, you can call the dedicated hotline on 1800 824 221 or access your local council's website for details.

In parallel, AusNet will continue engaging with landholders along the proposed WRL route to provide them with the latest available information and respond to their questions and concerns about potential changes to WRL.

Next steps:

A final decision on the preferred option for the terminal station will be made, in consultation with the Victorian Government once stakeholder, community and Traditional Owner feedback has been collated and considered.

Thank you in advance for your interest and contribution to these important transmission infrastructure projects.

Contact us

To find out more, speak to the project team and have your say, please visit our website at: www.aemo.com.au/vni-west

You can also call us at **1800 824 221** or email us at VNIWestRITT@aemo.com.au