

5 April 2023

Submission to the AEMO VNI West Consultation Report – Options Assessment

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the 'VNI West Consultation Report – Options Assessment' paper.

Goulburn-Murray Water (GMW) is Australia's largest rural water corporation and manages, stores and delivers water to more than 21,000 active customers in northern Victoria. Our operating area is bordered by the Great Dividing Range in the south and the River Murray in the north and stretches from Corryong in the east down river to Nyah in the west. Northern Victoria supports diverse agricultural commodities including dairy, cropping, horticulture, beef and sheep.

Included within GMW's area of operations is the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District (GMID). The GMID produces an approximate annual agricultural production value of \$6b. Over the last decade the Federal and State Governments have invested over \$2.2b to modernise the century old gravity irrigation network.

GMW and its customers depend on a reliable and affordable electricity grid and supports initiatives that further that outcome, such as the VNI West. In saying this, GMW is strongly of the view that the design of the VNI West, its processes and mechanisms must occur in a way that supports and complements our region's efforts to increase its sustainability and opportunity.

In reviewing the VNI West Consultation Report – Options Assessment and providing feedback on:

1. the assessment undertaken in the report
2. the feasibility of Option 5 (to Bulgana)
3. whether the Multi Criteria Analysis has captured the important social, environmental and engineering factors for each option, including those that sit outside the scope of the RIT-T, that may impact on the timely development of the project

GMW notes the following:

- the Multi Criteria Analysis does not include GMW Infrastructure (assets such as channels, pipelines and drains) as part of the Engineering (Third Party Infrastructure) assessment and evaluation of options.
- the Multi Criteria Analysis does not include GMID (Goulburn-Murray Irrigation District) RILWUM (Regional Irrigated Land and Water Use Mapping) datasets nor the Victorian Land Use Information System dataset as part of the Land Use (Agriculture) assessment and evaluation of options.

With these points in mind, GMW recommends that:

- the VNI West Option 5 minimises or avoids alignments and locations for electricity transmission infrastructure that have direct impact on our customers' irrigation and drainage infrastructure. If this is



unavoidable, that the VNI West Option 5 include low cost and timely processes to fully remedy any impact caused to GMW or its customers.

- the proposed land use change to support the new VNI West Option 5 should align with Victorian Government policy commitments:
 - o for sustainable irrigation districts: commitments outlined in Clause 14.02-3S – *Protection of Declared Irrigation Districts* in the Victorian Planning Provisions
 - o for solar energy: provisions in the *Solar Energy Facilities – Design and Development Guideline (2022)*.
- ongoing stakeholder and community engagement continues. This will help to ensure identification of potential risks associated with the transmission corridor and easement pathway options related to the GMID and build understanding of the implications and community benefits of the project.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide feedback. If you have any further queries please feel free to contact Steve Abbott, General Manager Strategy and Services Planning on 1800 013 357.

Yours sincerely



Charmaine Quick
MANAGING DIRECTOR