

VNI West proposes the construction, operation and ongoing maintenance of 500kV double circuit overhead transmission line that would connect the high voltage electricity grids in NSW and Victoria. As part of the EIS for VNI West (NSW), a detailed assessment was undertaken to understand the potential impacts of the project on Aboriginal cultural heritage across the project footprint. For more information, refer to **Chapter 8: Aboriginal Heritage, Technical Paper 2: Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment Report** and **Technical Paper 2a: Cultural Values Assessment**.



Key findings from the EIS assessment

Aboriginal sites and objects recorded

The assessment identified 194 Aboriginal heritage sites located within the project footprint between the future Dinawan substation and the NSW-Victorian border.

These heritage sites include potential archaeological deposits (PADs), hearths and heat retainers, artefact scatters and isolated finds, and modified trees. Transgrid seeks to avoid or minimise impact to any identified heritage sites. The number of sites that may be impacted, and the extent of the potential impact, would be confirmed during detailed design. It is expected that most sites would be avoided.

Landscape sensitivity and ecological impacts

Predictive modelling identified areas of high and moderate archaeological sensitivity across the project area, particularly near major water sources and in landscapes with suitable soil and vegetation.

Cultural values

The Cultural Values Assessment recorded community concerns about both direct and indirect impacts of the project on significant watercourses and the surrounding landscape.

Cultural values were identified at the Murray River, Edward River/ Kolety, and nearby creeks such as Delta, Yanco, Cox's and Boiling Down, which were identified as being of high significance to Aboriginal communities.

Participants in the cultural values assessment expressed some concerns about potential direct and indirect impacts associated with construction of the project on these areas.



Image: Shell fragments recovered in the project corridor northeast of Moulamein.

Mitigation measures



The final design will aim to avoid sites of moderate or high cultural or archaeological significance.



Additional surveys and test excavations will occur in unassessed areas prior to ground disturbance.



A Heritage management sub-plan will be developed to manage heritage impacts, in consultation with Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) and would include measures to identify, protect and manage heritage sites, procedures for unexpected finds, heritage monitoring, and compliance management and induction requirements for construction workers.



Cultural heritage awareness training will be provided to all construction personnel. Salvage excavations and surface collection will be undertaken where impacts to heritage items cannot be avoided.



Known Aboriginal sites will be recorded and clearly marked to prevent accidental damage.



An unexpected finds protocol will be implemented during construction.



Ongoing consultation with RAPs will occur throughout project delivery.



How the assessment was carried out?

The Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment was carried out in accordance with the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs), the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*, and the *Guide to Investigating, Assessing and Reporting on Aboriginal Cultural Heritage in NSW (2023)*.

The approach to the assessment included:

- reviewing relevant legislation, policy and existing data including the Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System (AHIMS), Atlas of Aboriginal Places, and previous archaeological reports
- developing predictive models of archaeological sensitivity based on desktop research and refined through fieldwork
- identifying and consulting with RAPs in accordance with formal consultation protocols
- conducting archaeological field surveys and test excavations in collaboration with RAPs
- identifying potential intangible cultural heritage values through research and consultation with Elders and knowledge holders, and preparation of a Cultural Values Assessment
- assessing potential impacts on known sites and culturally significant places, both within and adjacent to the project footprint
- recommending mitigation and management measures to avoid or minimise impacts to Aboriginal cultural heritage.

The EIS outlines:

- known and newly identified Aboriginal heritage sites across the project footprint;

Next steps

You have the opportunity to review and comment on the EIS via submission to the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) during August 2025. Electronic copies of the EIS are available via:

- DPHI Major Projects website:
<https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects>
- VNI West (NSW) project website:
www.transgrid.com.au/vniw

Following the EIS Exhibition period, Transgrid will produce a Submissions Report to formally respond to community and stakeholder feedback received during exhibition.

- areas of archaeological sensitivity and potential heritage value
- cultural values and connections to Country identified through engagement with RAPs;
- methods used to assess and document tangible and intangible cultural heritage;
- potential impacts to Aboriginal heritage during construction and operation;
- consultation with Aboriginal stakeholders and their involvement in the assessment;
- measures proposed to protect culturally sensitive sites and minimise disturbance; and
- next steps to refine mitigation measures and continue Aboriginal community involvement.



Image: Example of a modified (scar) tree recorded in the project footprint.



For more information on the VNI West EIS, please scan the QR code, or visit www.transgrid.com.au/vniw.

Connect with us

Transgrid is committed to working with landowners and communities throughout the delivery of VNI West.

Please connect with us for more information.



1800 955 588 (free call)
vniw@transgrid.com.au
transgrid.com.au/vniw

VNI West Project Team,
PO BOX A1000, Sydney South, NSW 1235

Privacy statement: Transgrid recognises the importance of privacy and protecting the personal information it holds, uses and discloses in line with the Privacy Act. It is committed to protecting personal information and handling personal information responsibly and in accordance with its obligations.