

# North West Transmission Developments

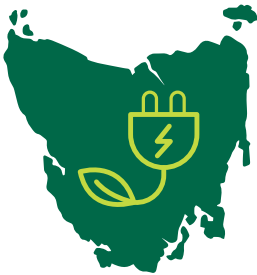
Fact sheet | Ecology

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This fact sheet provides information on the study undertaken to understand the types of animals, plants, and habitats that could be impacted by the construction and operation of the new transmission lines, towers, and associated substations, switching station and access tracks.



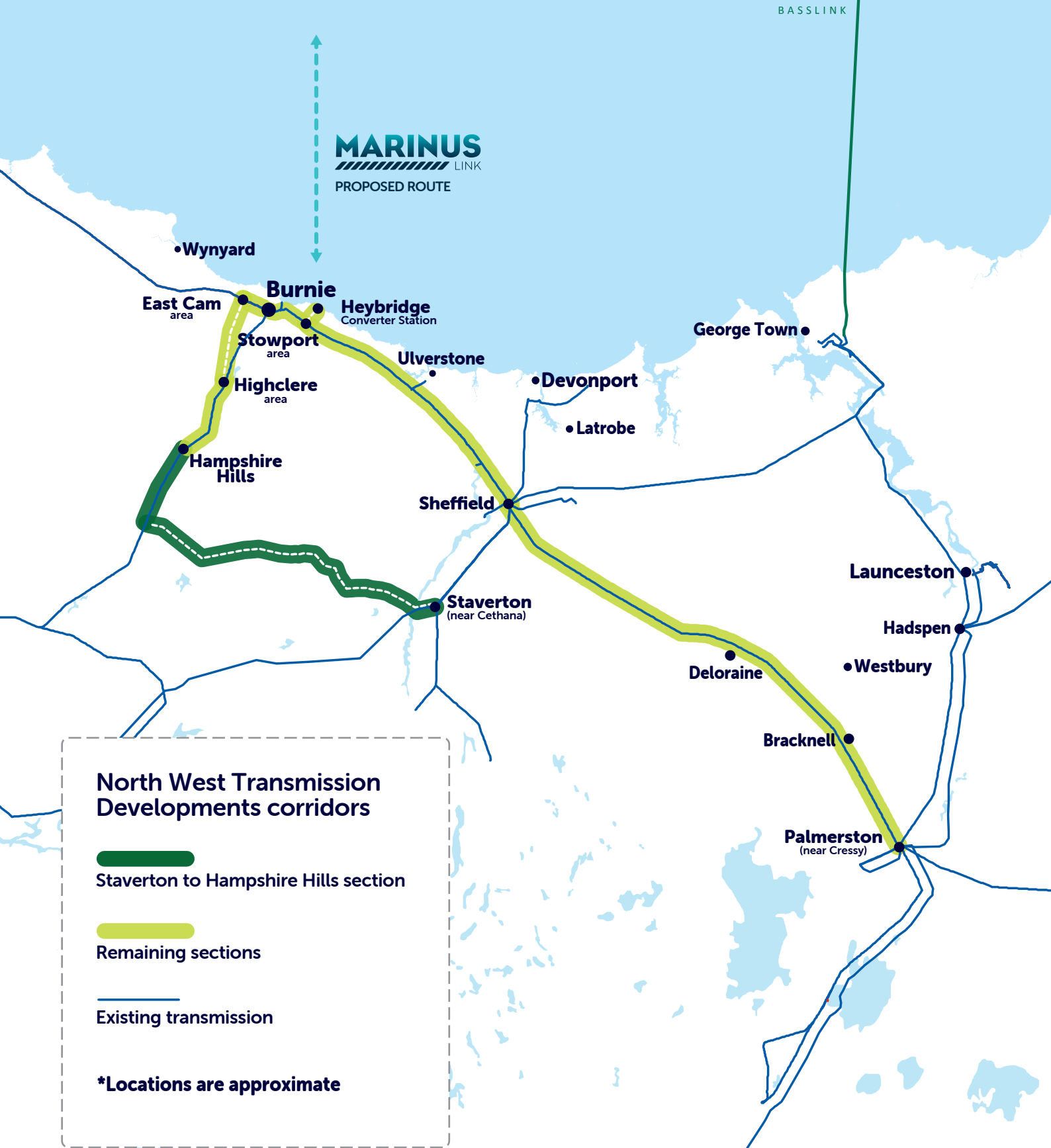
**As Tasmania's energy demands increase, TasNetworks needs to strengthen the state's transmission network. The North West Transmission Developments (NWTd) will include new and upgraded overhead transmission lines (OHTLs), substations and switching stations.**

NWTd will support new renewable energy developments and generate significant benefits and opportunities for Tasmanian communities and businesses. The project is proposed to be delivered across two stages. The first stage will link Cressy, Sheffield and Burnie, and the second stage will connect Staverton, Hampshire Hills and Burnie. Two spurs will be constructed between the Stowport area and Heybridge.

The Remaining NWTd includes constructing new double-circuit OHTLs, dismantling of the existing single circuit 220 kV OHTLs from Palmerston to Sheffield and Sheffield to Burnie, constructing a new switching station at Hampshire Hills, modifying the Palmerston, Sheffield and Burnie substations, modifying two short sections of the existing 110 kV Sheffield to Burnie OHTL, and modifying the 22 kV distribution network where the new OHTL crosses distribution lines.

**A permit is required for the section of new OHTL between Staverton to Hampshire Hills, and a separate permit is required for the remaining sections of the project (Remaining NWTd).**

This fact sheet has been prepared for the Remaining NWTD, shown on the map in light green.







## What is ecology?

**Ecology is a branch of science focused on the study of how organisms, such as plants and animals, interact with one another and their physical environment.**

Ecological assessments take place before construction of a major project to establish an understanding of the existing environment from which to assess the potential impacts project activities may have on the environment. This information helps identify ways to avoid, reduce and manage impacts.

## Assessing ecology

Qualified ecologists have surveyed over 3,400 hectares (ha)<sup>1</sup> of land surrounding the proposed transmission line route and access tracks to understand impacts on native vegetation and identify any threatened species and habitats that may be affected by the project. Surveys were conducted over multiple field campaigns, including targeted surveys in specific seasons. This information has been used to assess the impact the project may have on ecological values, including animals, plants, and vegetation communities, and identify ways to avoid or manage potential impacts.

**The study included:**



Reviewing existing data, environmental legislation and regulations, literature and reports to identify and map native vegetation, declared weeds and sensitive ecological areas along the preferred route



Field studies and surveys to identify any threatened species, habitats, native vegetation and weeds



Helicopter and field surveys along the route to identify and map the location of eagle nests and verify active nests



Assessing impacts of the project on ecological values and developing measures to reduce these impacts.

<sup>1</sup> A hectare is a unit of area equal to 10,000 square metres and is equivalent to about 2.5 acres.





## TasNetworks recognises the unique values of Tasmania's natural environment and is committed to minimising the impacts of the project on that environment during construction and operation.

As a result, the transmission lines have been designed to avoid sensitive environmental areas as much as possible. Between Palmerston and Burnie, the new transmission line is generally located within an existing easement and will replace the existing Palmerston to Sheffield and Sheffield to Burnie transmission lines.

Where the transmission lines will be constructed in new areas (Stowport to Heybridge and Burnie to Hampshire), transmission towers have been placed in locations to allow them to 'flyover' sensitive environmental areas, as far as practicable. This includes key habitats, native vegetation, and features such as rivers, waterways, trees, and areas used for nesting.



### Vegetation and flora

It is acknowledged that no project of this size is without impacts. Approximately 1,111 ha of vegetation will be impacted to varying degrees for the upgrade of the transmission lines during construction and operation. Of this proposed area, 967 ha (87%) is already modified land used for agriculture, plantations, and electricity easements. The remaining 144 ha (13%) is native vegetation.

Approximately 144 ha of native vegetation will be impacted to construct the project (including transmission lines, access tracks, switching station and substation modifications). This includes 25 native vegetation communities with the most common being 38 ha of *Eucalyptus obliqua* dry forest and woodland, 36 ha of *E. obliqua* wet forest and 33 ha of *E. amygdalina* coastal forest and woodland. The only threatened flora species known to occur in the survey area is fragrant hempbush, with two plants recorded adjacent to the Dasher and Minnow rivers.

The transmission lines will be constructed through parts of the Blythe River Conservation Area, Emu River Conservation Area, and Mount Montgomery State Reserve. While many gullies and riparian areas will not require clearing, approximately 9.7 ha of vegetation will need to be cleared across the three reserves which is less than one per cent of the total area of the reserves. There will also be 16.9 ha of vegetation cleared from informal reserves managed by private and public landholders, with most of this land used for agricultural or forestry practices.

The study identified 14 declared weed species within the survey area, including crow garlic, nodding thistle, California thistle, pinkpampas grass, English broom, Spanish heath, canary broom, St Johns Wort, holly, Elisha's tears, blackberry, willow, ragwort, and gorse. The study found that the movement of workers, vehicles and machinery during construction could lead to introduction of weeds into new areas and/or spread of these species.





## Animals (fauna)

**Threatened or listed animal species in the study area that require a detailed assessment of impacts include:**

- Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagle
- Tasmanian Azure Kingfisher
- White-bellied sea eagle
- Grey goshawk
- Tasmanian masked owl
- Swift parrot
- Fork-tailed swift
- Satin flycatcher
- Tasmanian devil
- Spotted-tail quoll
- Eastern quoll
- Eastern barred bandicoot
- Australian grayling
- Giant freshwater crayfish
- Burnie burrowing crayfish
- White-throated needletail
- Green-lined ground beetle
- Green and gold frog
- Beddomid snails (three species).

Construction and operational activities that may impact these species include vegetation clearing, access track construction, helicopter surveys, noise-generating activities, and vehicle movements.



## Cumulative impacts

The study also looked at the potential cumulative impacts on the environment from the Remaining NWTB and other major projects planned in the area.

**The major projects considered in the study included:**

- Guildford Wind Farm
- Jim's Plains Renewable Energy Park
- Robbins Island Road Renewable Energy Park
- Robbins Island to Hampshire Transmission Line
- Staverton to Hampshire Hills Project (stage two of the NWTB)
- Hellyer Wind Farm
- Sheffield to Staverton Upgrades
- Lake Cethana Pumped Hydro Energy Storage
- Northern Midlands Solar Farm
- Whaleback Ridge Renewable Energy Project
- Tasmanian Advanced Minerals – Hawkes Creek silica mine expansion
- Tasmanian Advanced Minerals – South Blackwater Mine.

The assessment found that several of these projects are proposed to commence within a similar timeframe and may result in cumulative impacts on habitats, threatened species and biodiversity in some locations due to vegetation removal, and the potential for increased construction traffic causing roadkill.



**Helicopter surveys have identified 27 eagle nests within 1km of the survey area.**



## Managing impacts

**A range of measures have been identified in the Environmental Impact Statement to avoid, reduce and manage impacts from the project on animals, plants, and habitats.**

**Specific measures that will be used during construction and operation to avoid, reduce and manage potential impacts on animals, plants, and habitats include:**

- Placing, accessing, and constructing temporary worksites and infrastructure in existing disturbed areas, such as existing tracks and clearings, to reduce disturbance to conservation areas, productive agricultural and forestry land, native vegetation, and threatened flora and fauna habitat, where practicable
- Undertaking pre-clearance inspections/surveys by a suitably qualified ecologist to identify the location of fauna, particularly threatened fauna, before habitat removal. If fauna is encountered during construction (particularly during initial clearing and pruning), a suitably qualified person holding the appropriate wildlife handling permits will be contacted to capture, provide care, and relocate the animal, where required. Where relocation is required, an ecologist will be consulted on appropriate translocation sites
- Prior to commencing vegetation clearing activities, a suitably qualified ecologist will establish and clearly delineate (e.g. using brightly coloured flagging tape or bunting) environmental protection zones and environmentally sensitive areas using GPS to avoid unauthorised disturbance. Disturbance to environmentally sensitive areas (such as formal reserves and patches of threatened vegetation communities), will be avoided or minimised. Works within environmental protection zones, (such as Tasmanian devil and quoll den sites and trees with nests of threatened raptor species) will be avoided, or where not practicable to avoid, undertaken in accordance with approval to disturb or permit to take under the Nature Conservation (Wildlife) Regulations 2021
- Installing animal-proof fencing around open trenches. Placing fauna (including stock) ramps or other devices to enable fauna (including stock) to escape open excavations (pits and trenches). Inspecting open excavations (pits and trenches) for fauna within five hours of sunrise, before sunset and prior to backfilling. Engaging a suitably qualified person to remove, treat and translocate trapped fauna
- Retaining ground cover when clearing native vegetation, including hollow bearing logs, fallen timber and branches, and woody debris, to provide habitat features for ground dwelling species, where practicable and safe to do so
- Undertaking vegetation removal activities in line with Forest Practices Code 2020 to minimise disturbance to ground cover and soils
- Installing locked gates on access tracks, in consultation with landholders, to prevent public access to environmentally sensitive areas
- Implementing controls to manage impacts on eagles and other raptor species, including conducting annual eagle nest surveys to identify new nests, scheduling activities within 500 m or 1 km line of sight of known eagle nests outside the eagle breeding season (usually July to January) or obtaining appropriate approvals, and implementing a raptor mortality plan
- Implementing a Roadkill Management Plan to identify measures to minimise collisions between wildlife and project vehicles. The plan will also outline how construction workers respond to injured animals
- Implementing a Hot Work Process in consultation with TasFire and maintaining appropriate clearances between vegetation and transmission lines to reduce bushfire risks
- Constructing and maintaining access tracks to manage erosion risks (new access tracks will be constructed to the Forest Practice Code Class 4 Standard, and we will make every effort to minimise new watercourse crossings)
- Implementing a Rehabilitation Plan to guide how locations will be reinstated after the completion of construction works. Areas temporarily disturbed during construction will be progressively revegetated and rehabilitated to minimise exposed soils to erosion and weed colonisation
- Implementing controls to manage biosecurity, dust, weeds, erosion and sedimentation, noise and vibration, contamination from spills and leaks of hazardous materials, particularly near environmentally sensitive areas and waterways
- Implementing a weed and pathogen management plan to avoid and minimise the risk of introducing, spreading and establishing weeds, diseases and pathogens within easement, temporary worksites, and along access tracks
- Training all workers prior to and during construction so they are aware of environmental management protocols and understand their responsibilities in managing impacts.

Every effort had been made during the design phase to minimise impacts on native vegetation and threatened species through route selection, the careful placement of transmission towers and by increasing the height of some towers to 'flyover' sensitive areas.

A Construction Environmental Management Plan will be in place throughout the construction period that will detail how works are to be undertaken to manage, minimise and mitigate the impacts.





## Next steps

**The Remaining NWTD permit application will be submitted to the Tasmanian Planning Commission (TPC) for review and consideration. The TPC will place the application on public exhibition, including the full versions of all technical reports.**

All members of the community will then be provided with the opportunity to make a written submission on the application when it is placed on public exhibition. We anticipate this to occur during May 2025.

The TPC will consider all submissions received and then hold hearings to provide community members with an additional opportunity to have a say. It is possible that the TPC could require additional information to address any matters raised in submissions or hearings. The TPC will then determine if the project will be approved or not approved. If the project is approved the permit would be subject to a number of conditions.

In addition, the project will need to be approved by the Commonwealth Government to satisfy the requirements of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cwth)* before works can commence.

**We encourage you to sign up to receive the NWTD newsletter for regular updates on the project at [www.tasnetworks.com.au/nwtd](http://www.tasnetworks.com.au/nwtd)**

## Get in touch

**To learn more about the North West Transmission Developments:**



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