North West Transmission Developments

Fact sheet | Landscape and visual

April 2025

TasNetworks | Powering a Bright Future

This fact sheet provides information about the study undertaken to understand how the current landscape and character of the area could be impacted by the construction and operation of the transmission lines and towers and associated substations, switching station and access tracks.

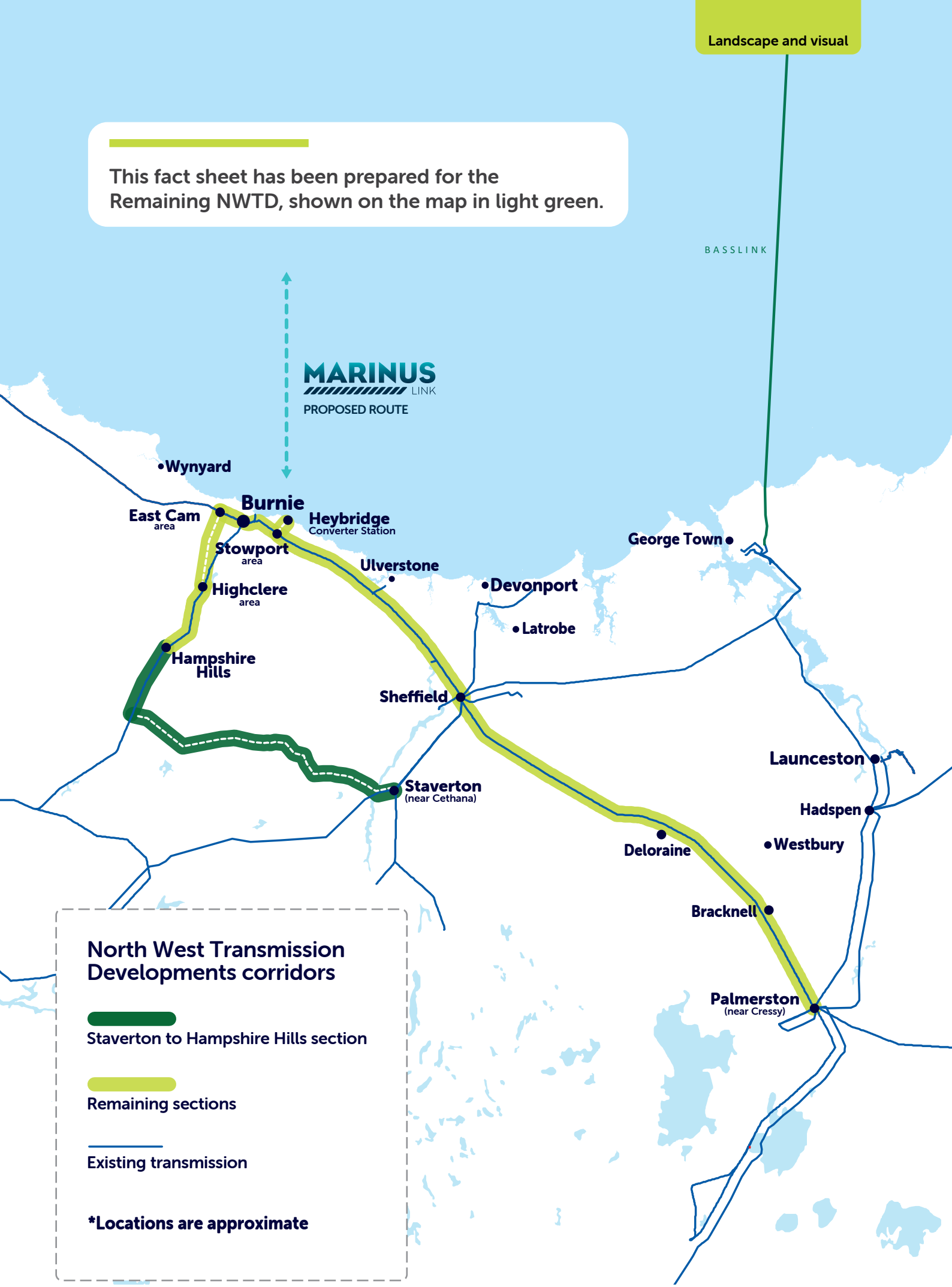
As Tasmania's energy demands increase, TasNetworks needs to strengthen the state's transmission network. The North West Transmission Developments (NWTD) will include new and upgraded overhead transmission lines (OHTLs), substations and switching stations.

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.



Existing view from Montgomery Road, Penguin

Understanding landscape and visual impacts

Technical specialists have undertaken a landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA) to assess:

Areas of likely high scenic quality and critical viewpoints along the preferred transmission line route

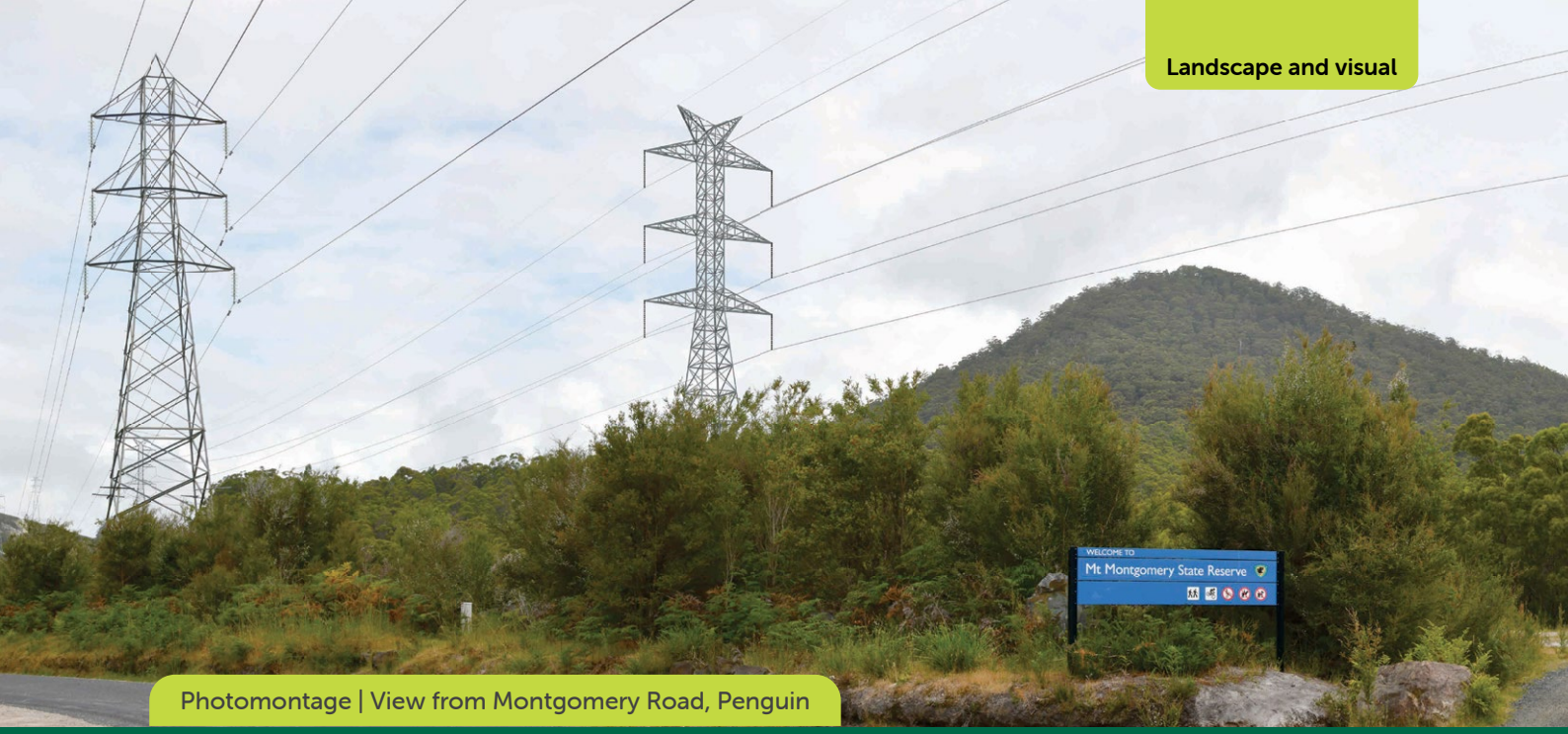
Areas from which the transmission towers and easements will be visible

The extent to which the construction and operation of the project will change the landscape and visual amenity of the project area

The ability of the landscape to accommodate visual change.

In general, assessment and analysis of visual landscape and subsequent visual landscape management seeks to, as far as practicable, preserve the established character of the landscape. In many landscapes, change is expected when developments happen, and the way land is used evolves. While visual variety is valued, alterations that permanently or temporarily differ from the existing character are considered a visual impact.

A series of photomontages have been developed by technical specialists to show what the transmission lines would look like in the existing environment. This assists in understanding how the new transmission lines and towers and associated new and modified substations, and access tracks will change the landscape and visual amenity of key areas within the project area that have been identified as having high landscape quality compared to the existing transmission infrastructure. These have been used, along with other tools, to assess the extent the transmission lines will change the landscape, and to understand the significance of the impacts and the need for measures to avoid, reduce and manage impacts.



Photomontage | View from Montgomery Road, Penguin

Other activities included:

Engaging with landholders and stakeholders to understand what features of the landscape are important and valued

Completing an analysis to assess what might be visible from various locations along the route. The analysis considered over 90,000 potential observation points within 25km of the preferred route

Completing a review of the landscape to identify what makes up the character of the area including an analysis of biophysical values and social and cultural features

Undertaking a range of in-depth technical assessments to understand how the transmission lines will impact upon or modify the landscape.

Combined, the assessment tools and activities helped TasNetworks gain an understanding of the impacts the project will have on existing views and scenic values of the area, the significance of the impacts and what is needed to be done to avoid, reduce, or manage them.

Study findings

The project area already features existing transmission lines that are owned and managed by TasNetworks. Where possible, TasNetworks proposes to locate new transmission lines next to existing transmission lines or replace existing transmission lines with new ones featuring higher towers allowing tower numbers to be reduced and changes to the landscape to be minimised. On the route section between Palmerston and Burnie, where existing transmission lines are to be replaced, there will be a reduction of 113 towers in the landscape. The new galvanised steel lattice transmission towers will vary in height between 33-60 metres.

As with the existing transmission lines in the project area corridors, the proposed transmission lines will travel across a range of landscapes and will be able to be seen from multiple locations. The route passes through areas used for a variety of different purposes, including agricultural, urban, rural, residential, forestry and recreational use. Land along and adjacent to the preferred route is also used for economic and cultural activities such as tourism, and includes features such as large streams and rivers, hills and small peaks, valleys, low plains used for cropping and grazing, coastal plains, rainforest, and other areas of native vegetation.

A study was undertaken to assess the relative scenic quality along the preferred transmission line route and classify it as 'high', 'medium' or 'low'. The study found that values along the route range from low to moderate scenic quality with small areas of high scenic quality. The areas of high scenic quality exist where the proposed transmission lines run through large areas of adjoining native vegetation often near to hills, small peaks, valleys, streams and rivers.

There will be some change to views in areas where new towers are constructed, existing towers are replaced with larger towers and land cleared for easements and access tracks. The assessment found that the overall impacts of these changes are generally low to moderate.

The assessment identified one area where the visual impact will be high. This is the Dial Range area, where the transmission line will pass through a natural, bushland setting used for recreational purposes. To minimise changes in this area the new transmission line will be located in an existing easement and will replace an existing transmission line.

The promotion of the natural landscape of the area by tourism operators is likely to create an expectation of a natural setting, however, these expectations are likely to be tempered on arrival in the area as the landscape is already modified by existing transmission lines.

Managing impacts

TasNetworks has undertaken a range of activities during the design phase to reduce the visual impacts of the towers and transmission lines. These include:

- Undertaking detailed geographic information system mapping and data analysis to understand scenic quality and views to inform the route selection process
- Locating new transmission towers, substations and switching station infrastructure in the same or a similar location to existing transmission lines and facilities, where practicable
- Reducing the total number of towers between Sheffield and Burnie by replacing existing transmission lines rather than adding transmission lines to the landscape
- Positioning many of the towers within modified landscapes to lessen their visual impact on natural scenery
- Minimising the number of new access tracks required by using existing easements, roads and laneways, where practicable
- Aligning transmission line routes to cross roads at right angles to reduce tower visibility, wherever practicable.

TasNetworks will continue to work with landholders and property managers to reduce visual impacts.

Other measures that have been identified in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to avoid, reduce and manage landscape and visual impacts during construction and operation include:

- Implementing a Rehabilitation Plan to guide how locations will be reinstated after completion of construction works. Areas temporarily disturbed during construction will be progressively revegetated and rehabilitated to minimise landscape and visual impacts
- Where landholders hosting infrastructure or their neighbours raise concerns about the visual impact of proposed infrastructure, we will consult with them to identify options to reduce visual impacts by planting trees or other suitable vegetation to help screen the view of the infrastructure from or within the property.

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

Get in touch

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