



15.0 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND VISUAL AMENITY

15.1 LANDSCAPE

15.1.1 Background and Methodology

In order to recognize the value of the study area, a broad landscape character assessment has been undertaken. This assessment includes consideration of landscape elements and how they combine to create the character of the subject area. This assessment addresses the way different components of the environment, both natural (vegetation, geology, topography, etc.) and cultural (land use, built environment, enclosure, etc.), interact with each other to be seen by residents or visitors to the area as creating a distinct combination of features. By defining the existing character of the area, any changes as a result of development can be easily identified and characterised as either contributing to the local character or detracting from the existing character of the area.

15.1.2 Existing Environment

The landscape character of the Western Downs area generally comprises three distinct land use types – rural crop land, grazing land with scattered native trees and areas of native woodland. Beyond the flat agricultural plains, the land is gently undulating between 300 to 360m above sea level and is largely covered with a combination of grazing land and dry eucalypt woodland.

The landscape of the region is characterised by the following distinctive elements:

- Very low density and generally small scale of development;
- Long straight rural roads with open or filtered views of the rural landscape;
- The meandering Condamine River, associated floodplains and riparian vegetation;
- Open flat or undulating rural plains with a patchwork of agricultural uses;
- Rolling grazing land and vegetated foothills; and
- Dry eucalypt woodland

The landscape of the eastern 7km of study alignment is characterised by the low lying open agricultural land and riparian vegetation of the Condamine flood plain. The landscape surrounding the remainder of the route is characterised by dry eucalypt woodland on the foothills, with the highest ground level along the route being approximately 40m above the flood plain level.

15.1.3 Potential Impacts

Where the study alignment follows an existing transmission line corridor, only an incremental amount of vegetation will have to be cleared. No significant changes to the existing topography are required. Existing screening vegetation will be retained where possible, particularly where the route crosses existing roads. The development of the proposed transmission line route will not change the overall landscape character of the study area.

Once construction of the transmission line is complete and vegetation regenerates, the development will have a minimal impact on the local landscape character.



15.1.4 Mitigation Measures

On-going maintenance to allow native vegetation to regenerate will help to integrate the proposed development within the local landscape character.

15.2 VISUAL AMENITY

15.2.1 Background and Methodology

There are no formal viewing points in or around the study area so the most significant viewing locations to be considered will be from state and local roads and from seven houses within 750m (see Section 13.1) of the study alignment. Assuming a nominal transmission tower height of 42m above the existing ground level and an average woodland vegetation height of 12m and a riparian vegetation height of 18m, the screening effect of the existing vegetation will result in limited visibility of the development from the most significant travel routes and will screen the majority of the route from the houses identified.

15.2.2 Existing Environment

The Warrego Highway is the most highly trafficked route in the vicinity of the study area. Secondary roads in the area include the Warra Kogan Road and the Kogan Condamine Road; tertiary roads include Banana Bridge Road, North Kogan Road and Beelbee Road and access roads within the study area that will be effected by the proposed route include Muhlings Road, Healys Croassing Road and Wolskis Road.

Long views of the study area are generally screened by the existing woodland and riparian vegetation and the undulating terrain.

15.2.3 Potential Impacts

The closest point the proposed study alignment comes to the Warrego Highway is 5km away at the eastern most point where it meets the existing transmission line corridor. This section of the study alignment will be screened from the Warrego Highway by riparian vegetation along the Condamine River and the distance from the viewing location.

The closest point the proposed transmission line route comes to the Kogan Condamine Road is 6.5km away at a point approximately half way along the corridor length. This section of the proposed route is screened from the Kogan Condamine Road by existing dense vegetation and the intervening topography.

Views of the remainder of the proposed transmission lines will be predominantly screened from local trafficked roads by existing vegetation other than at road crossings and sections of road where the corridor travels parallel with the road.

The roads that will be impacted are generally less trafficked routes so will have very low visual exposure. However, the transmission lines along a short section of the Warra Kogan Road (approximately 2km) will have a moderate level of visual exposure and therefore drivers will experience a moderate visual impact, particularly during the construction phase. The Transmission Line will be visible at the eastern end of Wolski's Road and where it crosses a property access from this road.



Seven houses have been identified from aerial photography and regional investigations within 750m of the proposed transmission line route. One house is within 250m, 3 are between 250 to 500m and 3 are between 500 to 750m. The house within 250m is currently unoccupied. Section 13.1 discusses this in more detail.

15.2.4 Mitigation Measures

One third of the study alignment follows an existing transmission line corridor through sections of landscape characterised by dense vegetation, no mitigation is necessary along these sections of the route.

In locations where the study alignment crosses roads, existing vegetation should be retained (where possible) to minimise the visual impact of these crossing points on passing traffic. Regeneration associated with existing vegetation south of the Warra Kogan Road will increase the screening effect to the transmission towers and lines along this section of the alignment.

Development of the study alignment should include the following requirements:

- Minimise the removal of existing woodland vegetation outside of the immediate construction site area; and
- Review individual circumstances for properties within 750m of the transmission line routes and where the property is visually impacted, provide advice on screen planting that can be installed within their property to help screen views of the transmission towers from their home.

With the retention (where possible) and regeneration of woodland buffers at road crossing points and along a 2km section of the Warra Kogan Road, the permanent transmission towers and lines will have no long-term visual impacts regionally and will have no significant long-term visual impacts locally.