CLOUSTON associates

INFRASTRUCTURE NSW
CLARENCE CORRECTIONAL CENTRE TRANSMISSION LINE
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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Cover page: Clarence River from the banks of South Grafton.
This page: Clarence River looking south towards Grafton.

CLARENCE CORRECTIONAL CENTRE TRANSMISSION LINE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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Note: This document is Preliminary unless Validated.

Grafton Post Office

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Executive summary

Grafton Bridge from the Clarence River foreshore.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CLOUSTON Associates has been engaged to prepare an assessment of the surrounding visual catchment and key views in relation to the proposed Clarence Correctional Centre 132kV Transmission Line within the Clarence Valley that informs a Landscape Character and Visual Impact Assessment (LCVIA) report.

The purpose of the proposed works is to construct a new electricity transmission line which will provide power to the Clarence Correctional Centre currently under construction, in order to help meet the State's prison capacity requirements.

The LCVIA addresses the possible effects of change on the landscape in relation to views and visual amenity through examining the principal legislative and planning context and applying the relevant methodologies to the assessment. The planning instruments and guideline that has the most direct bearing on the visual assessment of the project is the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.

The landscape character surrounding the proposed transmission line is one of predominantly rural and agricultural land, with areas of State Forests and wetlands and floodplains present. Small townships are scattered throughout the wider area, and the major city in close proximity is Grafton.

After undertaking a visual catchment assessment of the wider context of the site a number of suitable viewpoints were selected to analyse for visual impact. A range of viewpoints were selected surrounding the route of the transmission line with a focus on areas where the limited number of private dwellings in the area are located, as well as public access roads and lanes. Much of the transmission line passes through uninhabited agricultural land with no public access or residential dwellings, meaning the number of visual receptors is minimal.

Of the 12 viewpoints selected and analysed the findings are as follows:

- **negligible** impact ratings 7 views
- **low** ratings 2 views
- **moderate/low** ratings 1 views
- **moderate** ratings 2 views

A range of potential mitigation measures have been considered in order to reduce any visual impacts. After an analysis of the visual impacts the most appropriate form of mitigation would be Offsite Compensation (screen planting) which would involve the strategic planting of vegetation at the point of any viewpoints that are visually affected if required and requested by any residents to alter any unacceptable negative visual impacts.

PART A

existing conditions

Looking east along Tancreds Lane.

1.0 Introduction

Looking west along Coldstream Street, Ulmarra.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

CLOUSTON Associates has been commissioned by Infrastructure NSW to prepare this Landscape Character and Visual Impact Assessment (LCVIA) for a new electricity transmission line.

BACKGROUND

In 2015, the NSW Government announced that the new Northern NSW Correctional Centre, required to help meet the State's need for increased prison capacity, would be located in Grafton.

The downsizing of the old Grafton Gaol in 2012 and its reclassification as an Intake and Transient Centre coupled with the unprecedented forecasted growth in inmate population justified the need for the construction of the Clarence Correctional Centre (CCC).

The CCC will be the major multifunctional, regional correctional facility servicing the northern part of NSW and, in particular, will be the primary correctional facility for all corrections operations from the Queensland border in the north to Kempsey in the south, and Tamworth in the southwest.

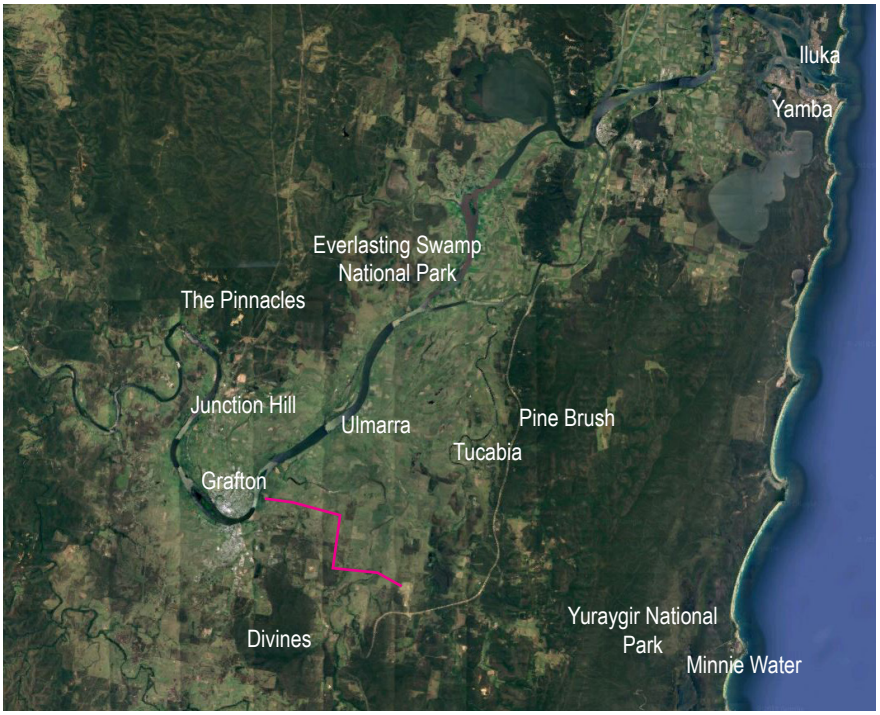


Figure 1.1 - Regional Map — *Proposed transmission line.*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

APPROACH TO VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Landscape Character and Visual Impact Assessments aim to ensure that all possible effects of change and development in the landscape, views and visual amenity are taken into account. It is concerned with how the surroundings of individuals or groups of people may be specifically affected by change in the landscape, both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Judgement as to the significance of the effects is arrived at by a process of reasoning, based upon analysis of the baseline conditions, identification of receptors and assessment of their sensitivity, as well as the magnitude and nature of the changes that may result from any development.

This assessment is an independent report and is based on a professional analysis of the landscape and the proposal at the time of writing. The current and potential future viewers (visual receptors) themselves have not been consulted about their perceptions.

The analysis and conclusions are therefore based solely on a professional assessment of the anticipated impacts, based on a best practice methodology.

RELEVANT METHODOLOGIES

In the planning context of NSW there are several methodologies documented by the NSW State Government that relate to the assessment of visual impact for varying types of development.

The most relevant to this assessment is

- EIA-N04 Environmental Impact Assessment Practice Note: Guideline for Landscape Character and Visual Impact Assessment. Roads and Maritime Services, Sydney, NSW.

Importantly also the Commissioners of the NSW Land and Environment Court have developed Planning Principles that relate to visual impact assessment derived from two key cases, namely Tenacity Consulting v Warringah Council and Rose Bay Marina Pty Limited v Woollahra Municipal Council (2013).

The latter case prompted the Commissioners to establish a suite of Planning Principles relating to public domain views, in which the assessment required five steps to be followed:

Step 1: identify the nature and scope of the existing views from the public domain. This identification should encompass (but is not limited to):

- the nature and extent of any existing obstruction of the view
- relevant compositional elements of the view (such as is it static or dynamic and, if dynamic, the nature and frequency of changes to the view)
- what might not be in the view - such as the absence of human structures in the outlook across a natural area
- is the change permanent or temporary
- what might be the curtilages of important elements within the view.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Step 2: identify the locations in the public domain from which the potentially interrupted view is enjoyed. (Note that the Planning Principles give primacy of views from the public domain over views from private land).

Step 3: identify the extent of the obstruction at each relevant location.

Step 4: identify the intensity of public use of those locations where that enjoyment will be obscured, in whole or in part, by the proposed development.

Step 5: identify whether or not there is any document that identifies the importance of the view to be assessed. The absence of such provisions does not exclude a broad public interest consideration of impacts on public domain views.

FIELD OF VIEW

It is important to note that the process of assigning visual impact ratings to viewpoints has been undertaken during a site visit and is calculated from a human vision perspective, on site. Photographic images should be considered **representative only**.

The photos within the following viewpoint analysis are taken with a Sony Alpha ILCE-A7 II with the following specification:

- Body type: Compact
- Sensor size: 855.62mm^2 (35.80mm x 23.90mm)
- Sensor type: CMOS Full Frame
- ISO: Auto
- Focal length 50mm

The use of a 50mm focal length and a full frame sensor is generally considered the closest achievable replication of the human eye view.

QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE VALUES

The visual experience of the area and its landscape setting varies depending on the viewer's standpoint within and outside the site and indeed from the viewer's personal perceptions of what they may appreciate in any given setting.

This requires an assessment to address both the quantitative characteristics of the landscape and views (What elements form the scene? What features dominate? What breadth of view is offered – narrow vista or wide panorama?) and the qualitative assessment of the values ascribed to those scenes.

The quantitative-based strategies are less debatable (Can that view still be seen when the new built form is introduced? How much of that view will we lose?) than in establishing the qualitative strategies (Which view is more important to retain?); the latter could be perceived differently by every viewer that sees that scene. Such variation of perception is particularly acute around the built form.

Farmland, Grafton.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

CHRONOLOGY OF ASSESSMENT

For this LCVIA the sequential assessment steps employed in determining the potential visual impact of the Clarence Correctional Centre Transmission Line are as follows:

Stage 1:

Establishing the baseline – drawing on background documents and site investigation to document the existing landscape character and visual environment of the study area and its visual catchment. This leads to determining the most significant views and vistas currently enjoyed within the surrounding area.

Stage 2:

Visual Impact Assessment - assessment of the visual impacts of the proposed development for the transmission line, set against the planning and design principles. This leads to determining any mitigation measures that may be required to reduce visual impacts from the preferred development option.

A detailed methodology is provided in Appendix A - Detailed Methodology.

Clarence River from Grafton shore.

2.0 The Site

Clarence Valley Farmland

2.0 THE SITE

THE SITE

The local area is characterised by a mildly undulating landscape of low hills and plains, utilised mainly for agricultural and rural residential living. The transmisison line is predominantly located in the Clarenza locality, with a small portion of the eastern section of the line in Lavadia as it approaches the Clarence Correctional Centre.

To the west of the transmission line is the city of Grafton, which is the administrative centre of the Clarence Valley Council and the largest settlement, with over 18,000 people (2016 census).

As the transmission line is surrounded by agricultural and rural land, the site is largely unpopulated, with large areas being open farmland or established vegetation, which limits the visual accessibility of the line from many surrounding locations.

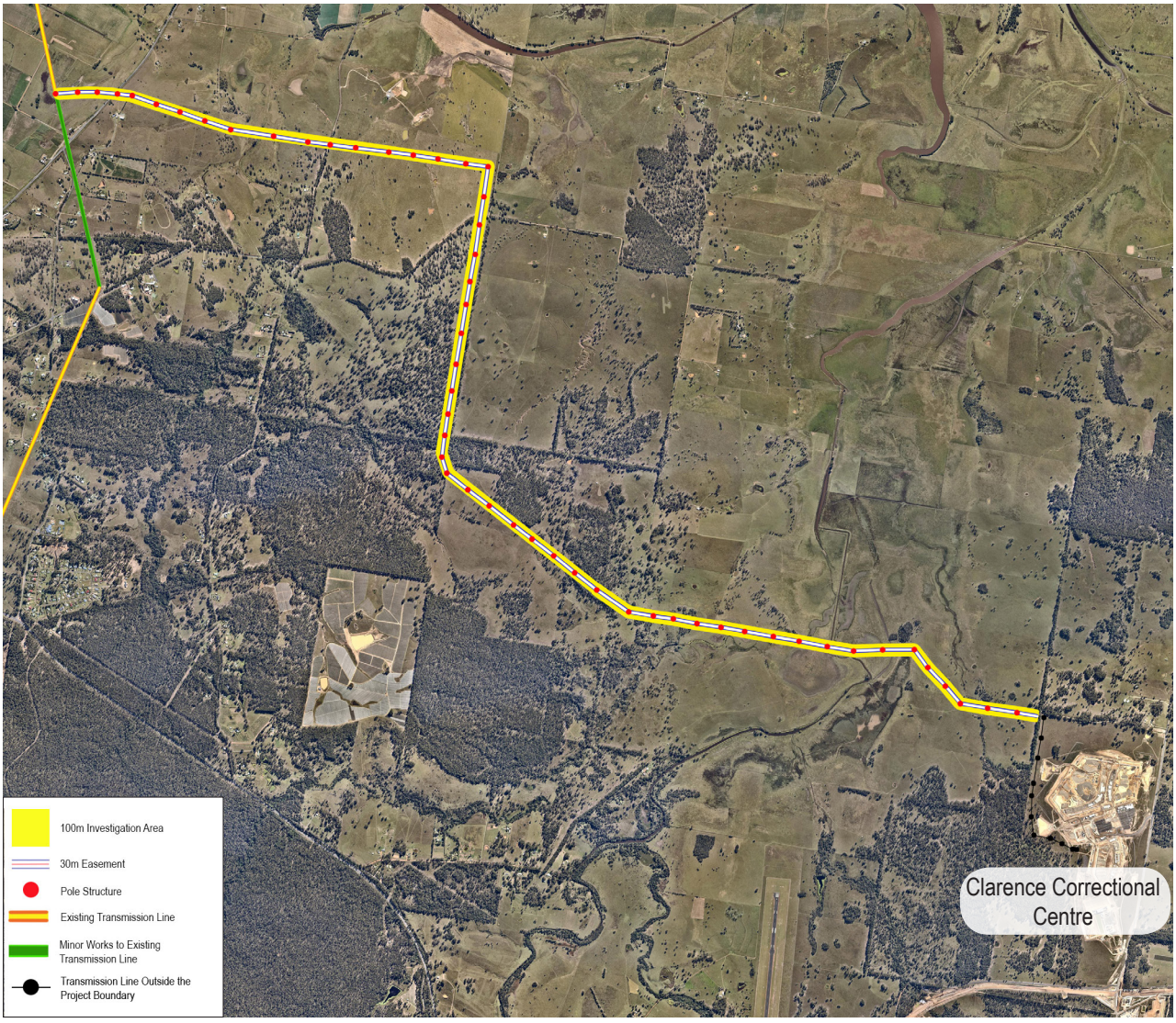


Figure 2.1 - Proposed transmission line route.

2.0 THE SITE

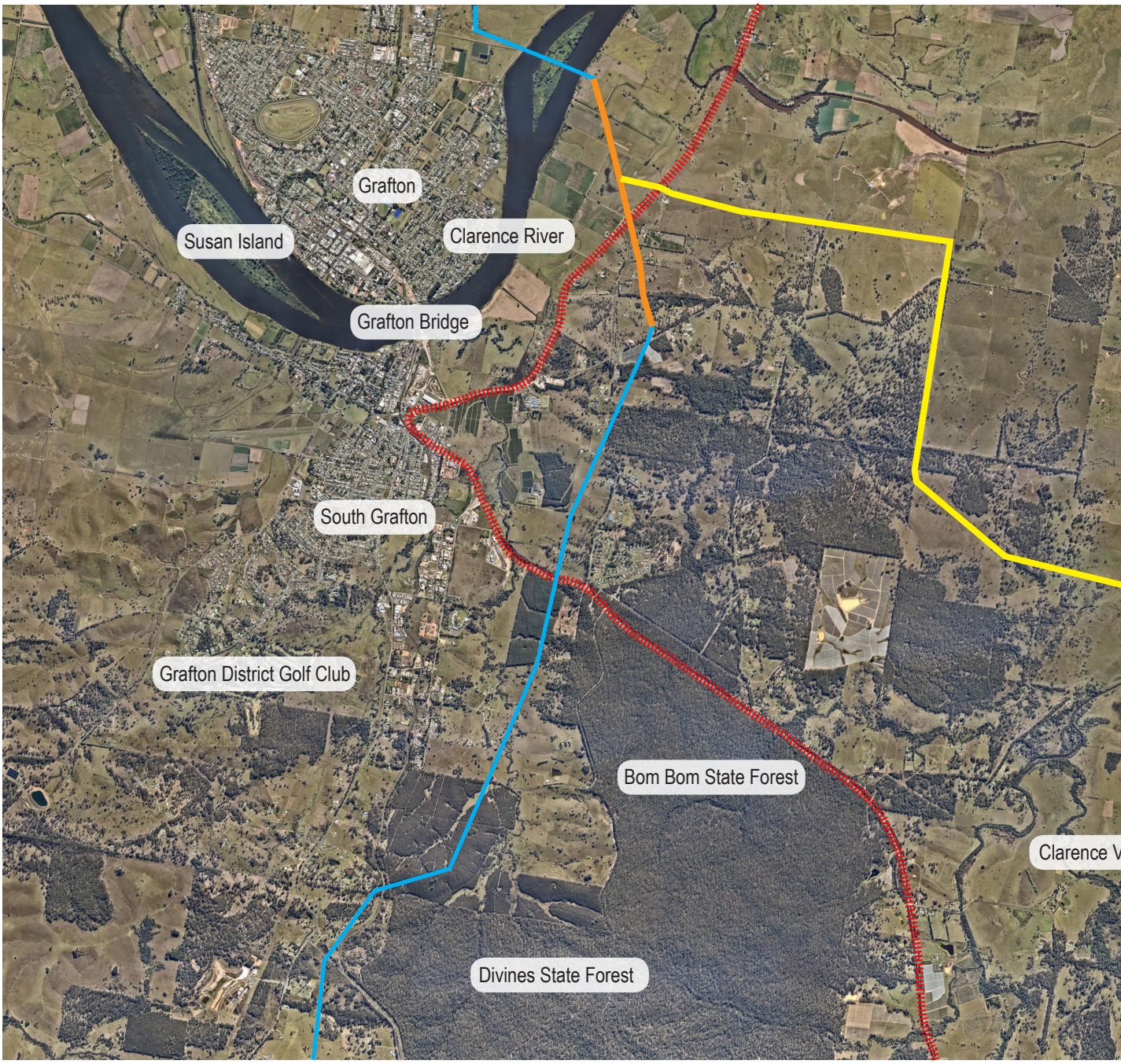
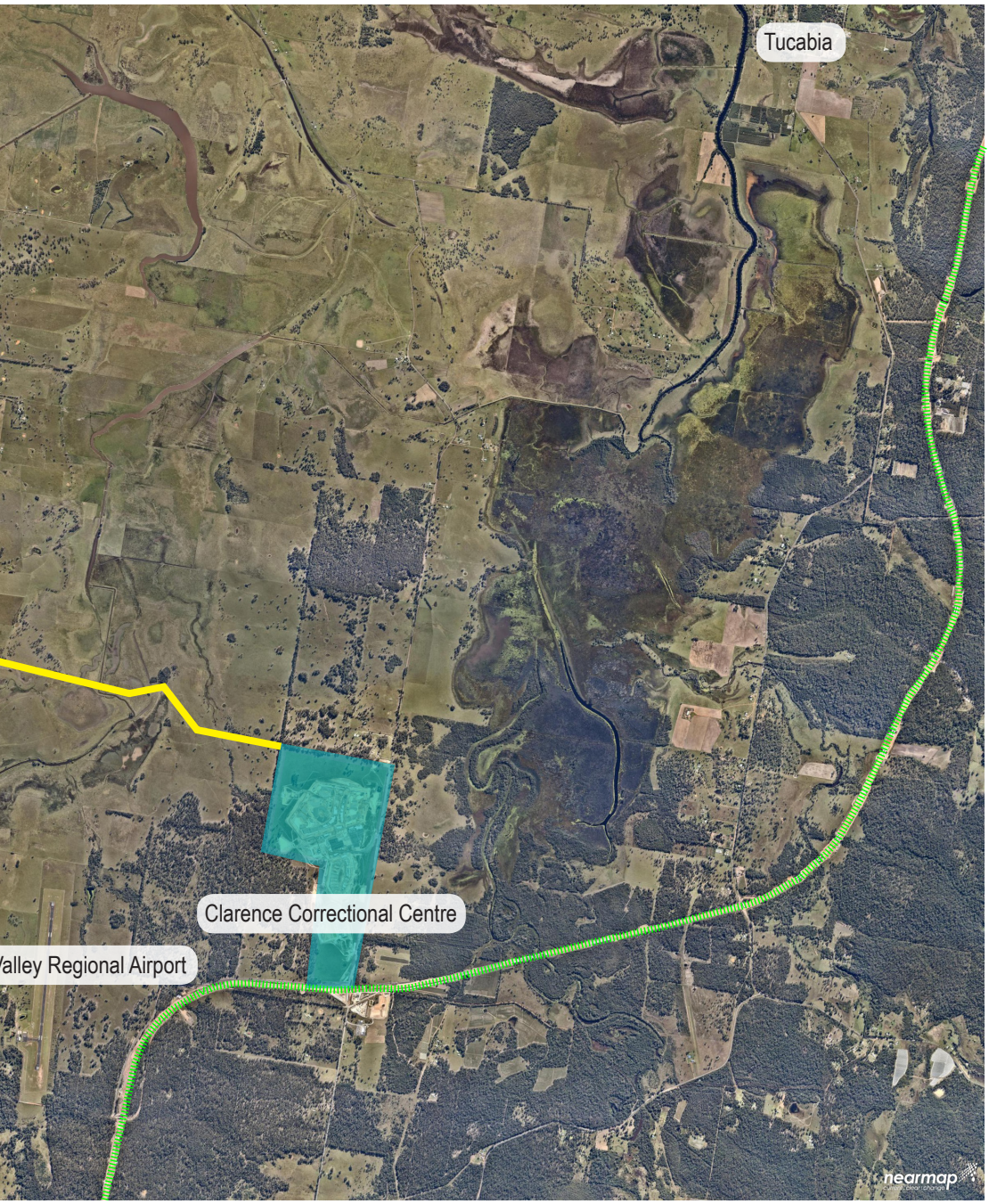


Figure 2.2 - Proposed transmission line and surrounding features.



Key

- Pacific Highway
- Existing Transmission Line
- Proposed CCC Transmission Line
- Pacific Highway Upgrade (under construction)
- Minor Works to Existing Transmission Line

0 1 2 3km

3.0 Planning Context

Memorial Park, Ulmarra.