

Western Victoria
transmission network project



FACT SHEET FEBRUARY 2021

The corridors and the next steps in determining the final route

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Introduction

The Western Victoria Transmission Network Project (WVTNP) is critical infrastructure required to unlock the renewable energy potential of western Victoria as a key Renewable Energy Zone and will help to deliver clean and affordable energy to Victorians. The project will also drive economic growth and bring new job opportunities to the region.

Victoria's energy sector is experiencing a transformation in the way we generate electricity, shifting from mainly relying on Latrobe Valley coal-fired energy sources, towards areas rich in renewable resources, such as western Victoria.

The long-term benefits of major projects like this are substantial — for consumers, for the environment, for the economy and for regional communities and development. Such projects are complex and developed over several years. They require ongoing engagement with landowners, communities, industry and government, along with significant investment, detailed technical investigations and approvals.

The WVTNP proposes the development of a new transmission line starting at Bulgana, near Stawell in Victoria's west, and covering approximately 190km to the north-western Melbourne suburb of Sydenham.

The project is being delivered by AusNet Services, through its commercial division Mondo. In December 2019, Mondo was appointed by the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) after a competitive tender. Mondo's role is to plan, develop, design, conduct community engagement, construct, own and operate the project.



Purpose of this fact sheet

This fact sheet outlines:

- How the final route will be developed for consideration and assessment as part of the Environment Effects Statement (EES);
- Where the project is currently at in that process; and
- The detail on the corridors for further assessment and the next steps.

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Determining the project route

An Area of Interest (Aoi) was identified in early 2020 based on a range of technical investigations on the land between Bulgana and Sydenham.

Following consideration of community consultation and feedback, along with early investigations, AusNet Services has now narrowed down the Aoi to corridors. These corridors will be considered, along with the output of further community consultation, to identify to a single corridor and refine a final route.

If you need further information or clarification about the corridors or on the project in general, please contact us, call 03 9021 0674 or email info@westvictnp.com.au

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Steps in the development, identification and assessment of the project route

2017

AEMO commenced an economic assessment (Regulatory Investment Test for Transmission or RIT-T).

This economic assessment is required under the National Electricity Rules for proposed consumer-funded transmission network investments likely to cost over \$6 million. The purpose was to determine the most economically efficient investment option to increase the amount of electricity that can be transported across western Victoria.

The investment option selected within the RIT-T process informed the scope of the project.

Link to RIT-T Fact Sheet

westvictnp.com.au/62122/widgets/312640/documents/189117

Link to AEMO website

aemo.com.au/initiatives/major-programs/western-victorian-regulatory-investment-test-for-transmission

2019

AEMO awards the project contract to AusNet Services.

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Early 2020

Initial desktop studies undertaken to determine the Aol.

The Area of Interest is the broad geographical area in western Victoria from which the single corridor and final route for the transmission line will be selected. The Aol is included in the EES referral.

April to November 2020

Landowner and stakeholder engagement commenced.

Area of Interest map open for feedback.

Link to Area of Interest

westvictnp.com.au/area-of-interest



August 2020

The Victorian Minister for Planning announces that an Environment Effects Statement (EES) is required for the project.

Interested public and community members provide feedback on the project (ongoing opportunity to do so as it develops through the EES).

A Technical Reference Group was convened by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) to provide advice on the scoping and adequacy of the technical studies during the preparation of the EES.

Link to How to navigate the Environment Effects Statement (EES) process

westvictnp.com.au/62122/widgets/312640/documents/183864

December 2020 – mid 2022

EES preparation and EES exhibition

The EES is an environmental impact assessment process, that assesses potential environmental effects.

Detailed heritage, environmental, technical and economic studies will be undertaken by experts. Consultation and engagement will also be undertaken with stakeholders and community during this time.

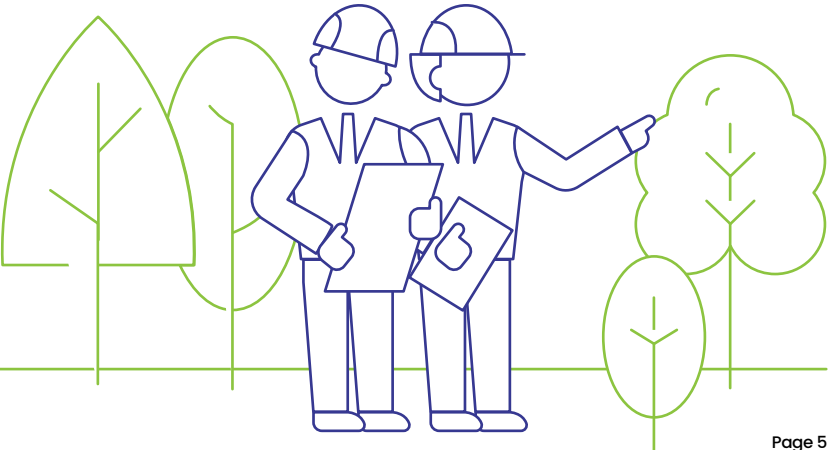
December 2020

Victorian Minister for Planning issues the EES scoping requirements.

After considering public submissions on the draft scoping requirements, the Minister for Planning issued final scoping requirements in December 2020.

For further information and to read the final scoping requirements, click here. Link to DELWP website page

planning.vic.gov.au/environment-assessment/browse-projects/projects/western-victoria-transmission-network-project



Current activities

December 2020 to February 2021

Refining of the Area of Interest.

Report back on 2020 community consultation feedback.

Identification of potential corridors.

Invitation to nominate for Community Consultation Groups

Based on additional technical studies and stakeholder feedback, corridors were identified for further investigation.

Link to the April – November 2020 Community Engagement Summary Report

www.westvictnp.com.au/62122/widgets/312640/documents/193928

Link to CCG Terms of Reference

westvictnp.com.au/get-involved

March 2021

Community Consultation Groups.

Three geographically based Community Consultation Groups (CCGs) to be formed.

The CCGs will be chaired by an independent Chairperson under an agreed Terms of Reference, with the aim of enhancing communication both within the community and between the community and the project.

Link to CCG nomination form

westvictnp.com.au/get-involved

March 2021

Community information sessions commence within corridors.

A series of community information sessions will be held in locations within the corridors.

Future activities

Mid 2021

Single preferred corridor defined based on the corridor with the least constraints.

A single corridor will be identified through additional desktop studies, further consultation as well as analysis of findings from preliminary field work.

Investigations and studies for the route options within the selected corridor commence.

Mid to late 2021

Final preferred route announced.

Following rigorous technical investigations and further consultation with stakeholders including community, a final preferred route with the least constraints will be identified.

Mid 2022

Referral to Inquiry.

A Public Inquiry will consider the EES together with the draft planning scheme amendment and public submissions. The inquiry will present its report with recommendations about the acceptability of environmental effects to the Victorian Minister for Planning. Stakeholders including community who have lodged a written submission will have the opportunity to present to the panel.

Late 2022

Victorian Minister for Planning's assessment of the environmental effects.

The Victorian Minister for Planning will consider the inquiry report and make a final assessment of the environmental impacts of the proposed project.

Early 2023

Federal Minister for Environment's decision about whether to approve controlled action under EPBC.

The Federal Minister for Environment will consider the inquiry report and State Minister's assessment on matters of national environmental significance under the Environmental and Protection Biodiversity Act 1999.

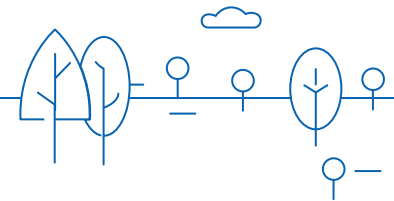
Early 2023

Victorian Permits and Approvals decisions

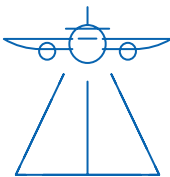
Victorian Permits and Approvals determined after consideration of the Minister's assessment including planning scheme amendment.

Assessment Measures

A range of measures are used when assessing the Area of Interest (Aoi), corridors, and the final preferred route, while achieving the technical and economic objectives of the project. The measures include:



Aboriginal heritage



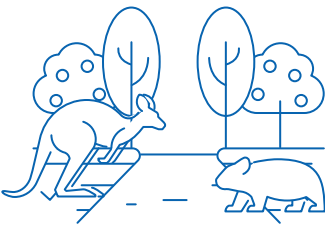
Aviation



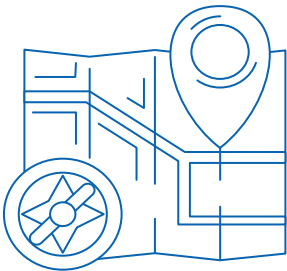
Bushfire



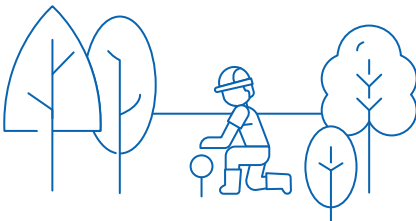
Community and stakeholder



Flora and Fauna (including parks and reserves)



Historic heritage



Landscape and visual



Land use planning including agriculture



Urban and built-up areas

The Corridors

Within the Aoi corridors have been identified for the next stages of investigation and engagement.

The priority in identifying the corridors is to recognise opportunities to minimise and mitigate the potential impact of new infrastructure on the environment and communities while delivering a project that meets its technical and economic objectives.

Community feedback received during early engagement, combined with the findings of technical investigations, have helped identify the corridors and other project alternatives, including undergrounding, that will be subject to further environmental, social and technical investigations. How the corridors were selected is explained in the Appendix (at the end of this document).

It is important to note that the final preferred route for this project has not been determined. Further consultation and detailed studies will be undertaken to determine the final route, studies will be placed on exhibition for public comment as part of the EES process.

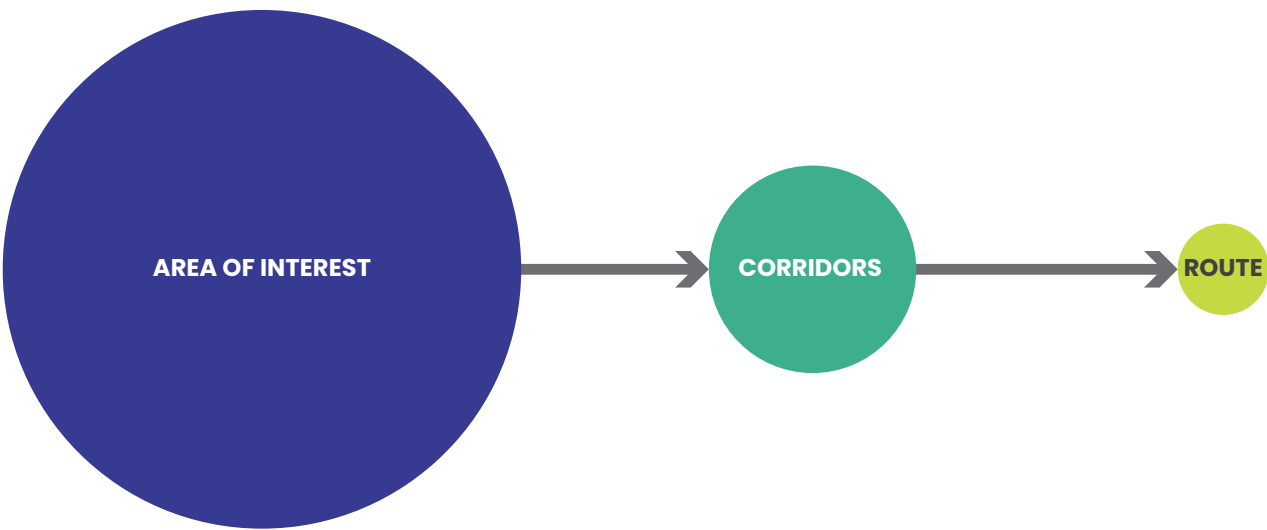
Where are the corridors located?

In some locations there is a single corridor and other locations there are alternative corridor options.

A single corridor starts at Bulgana and travels south east, based on the proposal that the new infrastructure follow the existing transmission line to Waubra.

Taking the new infrastructure from Waubra to Sydenham involves the consideration of several potential alternative corridors.

The corridors have been broken down into sections. Within some sections there are alternative options.

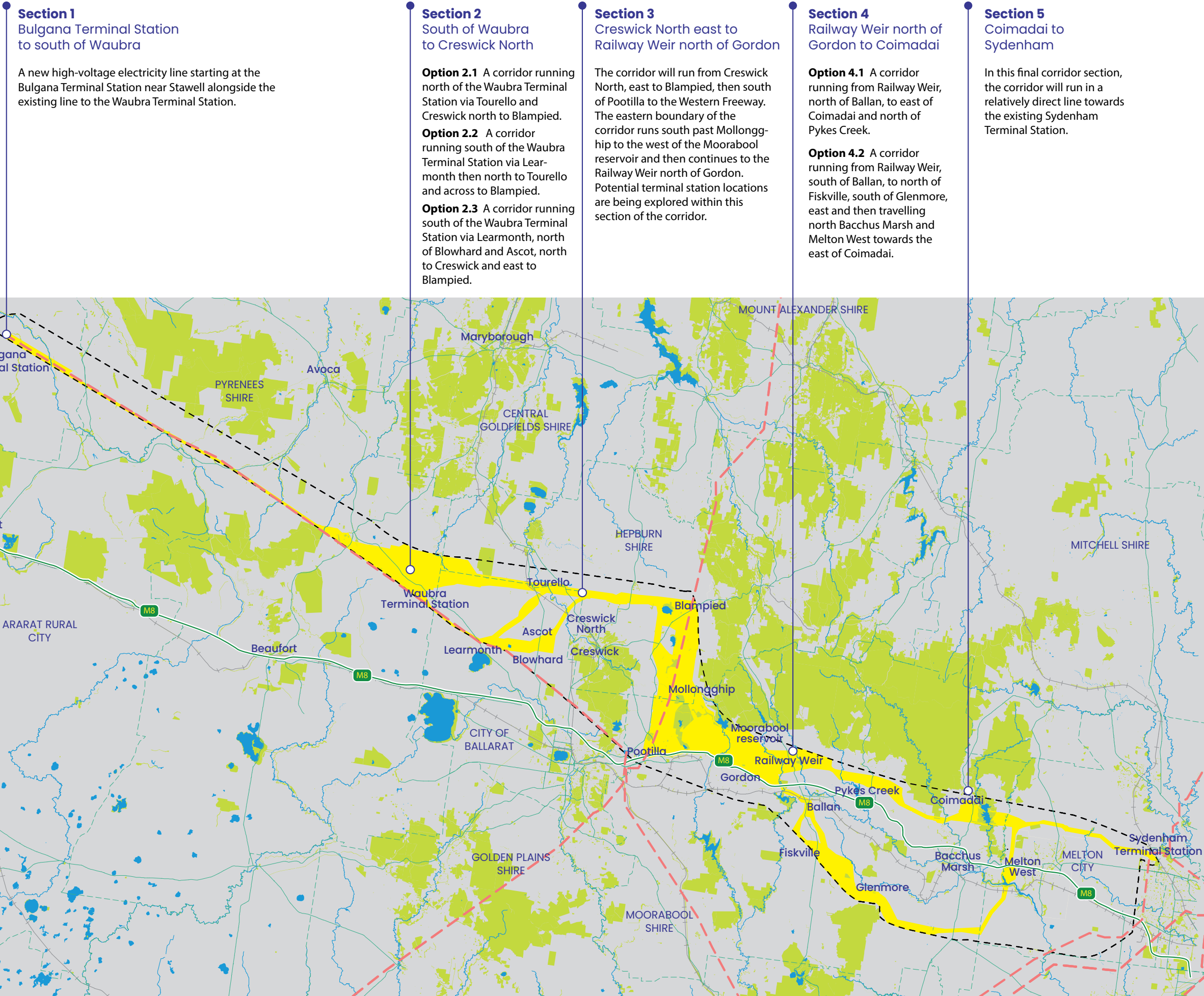


A broad geographical area being investigated to understand the constraints and opportunities to identify corridors for further investigation.

Based on the constraints and opportunities across the area of interest, corridors will be identified that vary in width for further investigation.

Further studies and engagement will be undertaken to identify a single corridor and final route. The width will be up to 100m.

Project corridors





APPENDIX

How were the corridors selected?

Next steps

The identified corridors and other project alternatives will be subject to further consideration of specific environmental effects including biodiversity and habitat, cultural heritage, landscape and visual, land use, socioeconomic, community amenity, health and safety, roads and transport, catchment values and hydrology.

Through the Community Consultation Groups and the upcoming community information sessions, the community will have the opportunity to provide feedback on the corridors and alternative options as per the specific environmental effects listed above.

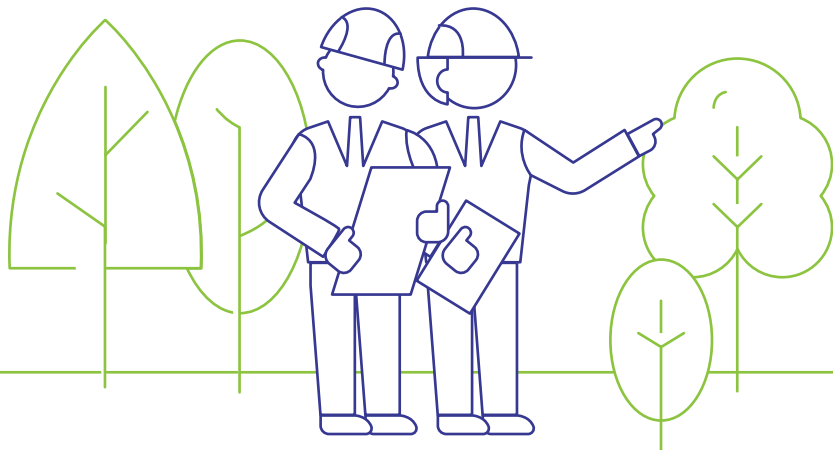
Should it become necessary to access private land for investigations, contact will be made directly with the individual landowner to discuss access arrangements, procedures, and agreements prior. Property within an identified corridor does not necessarily mean that land will have to be accessed, depending on the availability of other data sources to support technical investigations. Landowner co-operation in allowing access to specialist consultants for their technical studies will help everyone interested in the project, as it will contribute to the EES being able to present the best possible information about environmental values and potential effects.

Opportunities to stay involved

We'll continue to work hard to encourage community input, to learn from local people and provide many opportunities for everyone to help shape the project.

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Measures

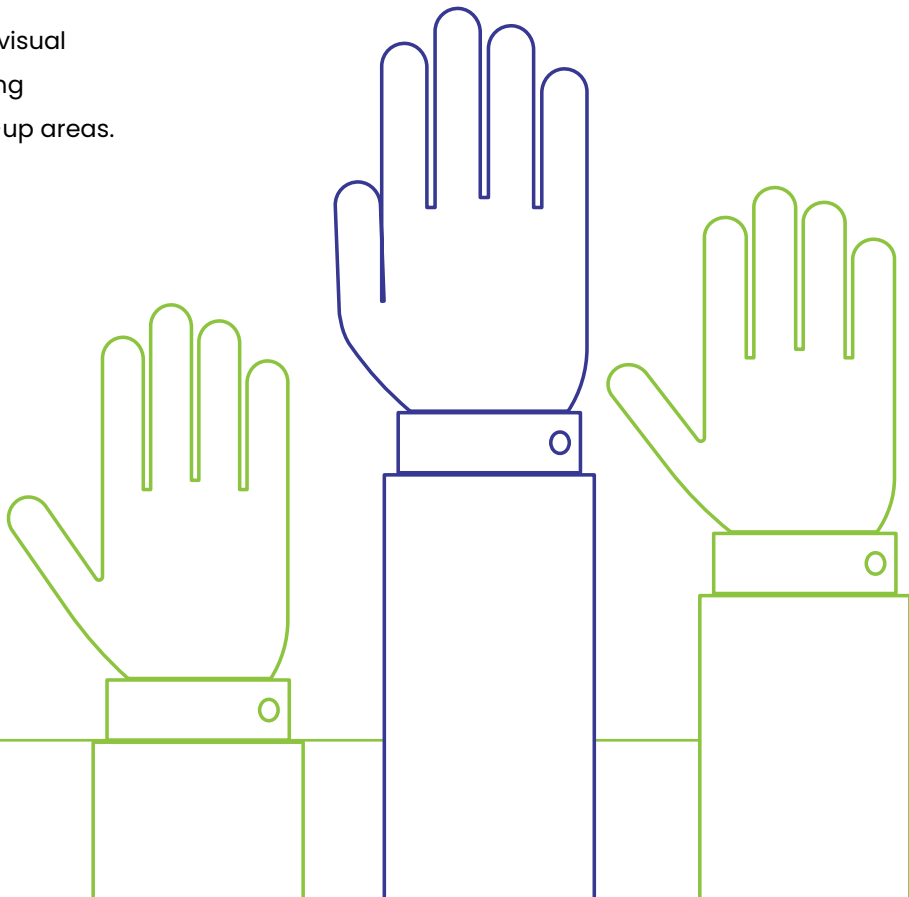
A range of measures are used when assessing the Area of Interest (Aoi), corridors, and the final route, while achieving the technical and economic objectives of the project. The measures include:

- Aboriginal heritage
- Aviation
- Bushfire
- Community and stakeholder
- Flora and fauna (including parks and reserves)
- Historic heritage
- Landscape and visual
- Land use planning
- Urban and built-up areas.

Narrowing down the Area of Interest to corridors

Using the measures above we:

- Excluded urban and built-up areas, such as Creswick, Newlyn, Ballan, Bacchus Marsh and Melton.
- Excluded large areas of forested public land that have high environmental and cultural heritage values, such as the Brisbane Ranges National Park.
- Included areas where a new transmission line could be located alongside existing electricity infrastructure, such as the Bulgana to Waubra line and the Ballarat to Horsham line.





Identifying key constraints in the Area of Interest

- Using existing data to map a range of social, physical, geographic, planning and environmental constraints within the Aol.
- Ranking these constraints from low to very high.
- Ranking work was undertaken by technical specialists within the project team providing a clear methodology to identify areas within the Aol that should be excluded. Examples of these 'high constraint' areas include the urban areas of Melton, Bacchus Marsh, Ballan, Gordon, Ballarat, and Creswick. Other 'high constraint' areas include areas that are home to a variety of native wildlife, fauna, and important visitor destinations such as Long Forest Nature Conservation Reserve, Werribee Gorge State Park and Creswick Regional Park.

Identifying the alternative corridors

- Considering the constraints outlined above, and the application of the measures via investigations done to date, corridors were identified using a mapping tool.
- The design of the alternative corridors balances the need to navigate around the most constrained areas while maintaining a relatively direct line between Bulgana and Sydenham that delivers the technical and economic objectives of the project.



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