



ATTACHMENT

IV Stakeholder and community engagement consultation report



IV

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Stakeholder and community engagement consultation report



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Acronyms and definitions

Term	Meaning
AEMO	Australian Energy Market Operator
AOI	Area of Interest
CAG	Council Advisory Group
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CCG	Community Consultation Group
CEC	Clean Energy Council
CHMP	Cultural Heritage Management Plan
Consultation Plan	Western Renewables Link EES Consultation Plan
CSEP	Community and Stakeholder Engagement Plan
Cth	Commonwealth Legislation
CVA	Cultural Values Assessment
DCCEEW	Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (Commonwealth)
DEECA	Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
Draft PSA	Draft Planning Scheme Amendment
DTP	Department of Transport and Planning (Victoria), formerly the Department of Transport and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)
EES	Environment Effects Statement
EMF	Electric and magnetic fields
EMI	Electromagnetic interference
EPA Victoria	Environment Protection Authority Victoria
EPBC Act	<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i>
ESC	Essential Services Commission
IAC	Inquiry and Advisory Committee
IAP2	International Association of Public Participation
km	Kilometre
kV	Kilovolt
LLO	Land Liaison Officer
Ministerial guidelines	Ministerial guidelines for assessment of environmental effects under the <i>Environment Effects Act (1978)</i>
RAP	Registered Aboriginal Party
RIT-T	Regulatory Investment Test for Transmission
S93	Section 93 of the <i>Electricity Industry Act 2000</i>
SOE	Statement of Expectations

Term	Meaning
The Project	Western Renewables Link
TRG	Technical Reference Group
Vic	Victorian Legislation
VNI West	Victoria to NSW Interconnector West
WRL	Western Renewables Link; formerly the Western Victoria Transmission Network Project (WVTNP)
WTOAC	Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation

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1. Introduction

1.1. About this report

This report has been prepared for the Environment Effects Statement (EES) in accordance with the scoping requirements released by the Victorian Minister for Planning in August 2023. It summarises the engagement activities that have been undertaken during the preparation of the EES, the key matters raised through stakeholder engagement activities, how the Project has responded to the matters raised, and how these matters have shaped the Project and EES technical reports. This report has been updated using data available on 1 November 2024.

Assessment of alternative options raised through public and stakeholder consultation are presented in **EES Attachment I: Project development and assessment of alternatives**.

1.2. Steps and timeframes

Stakeholder and community engagement steps and timeframes for the Project are shown in Figure 1.

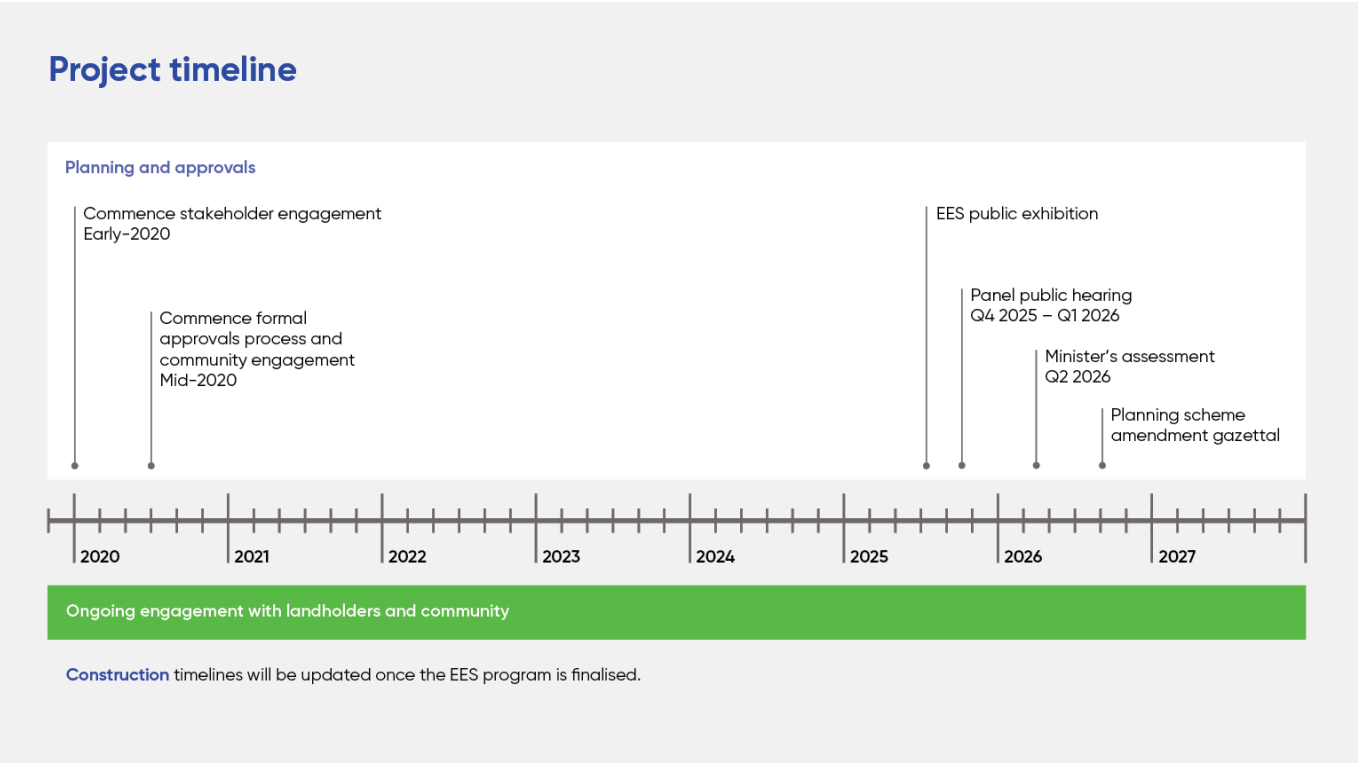


Figure 1 Steps and timeframes

2. About the Project

2.1. Project overview

The Project is a 190km overhead electricity transmission line from near Bulgana in western Victoria to Sydenham in Melbourne's north-west, proposed by AusNet Transmission Group Pty Ltd (AusNet). It will unlock renewable energy resources in western Victoria and deliver more clean energy to Victorians.

Victoria's energy network was originally built to carry energy generated in the Latrobe Valley to the rest of the state. However, Victoria's power system has changed significantly with the introduction of renewable energy and the retiring of coal-fired power stations. Western Victoria is emerging as an important renewable energy generation region.

The existing energy network needs upgrading to more efficiently connect this renewable energy to the electricity grid. The Project includes the construction of a 500kV double circuit overhead transmission line, and a new 500kV terminal station near Bulgana that will connect to the existing Bulgana terminal station site.

AusNet is preparing the EES, managing development activities, and (pending approvals) will manage the construction, operation and maintenance of the new transmission line. Broad community and stakeholder engagement activities will be ongoing throughout the development and life of the Project and targeted engagement has been undertaken and will continue to be undertaken as appropriate at each stage.

A summary of the broad components of the Project is shown in Figure 2 and the Proposed Route in Figure 3.

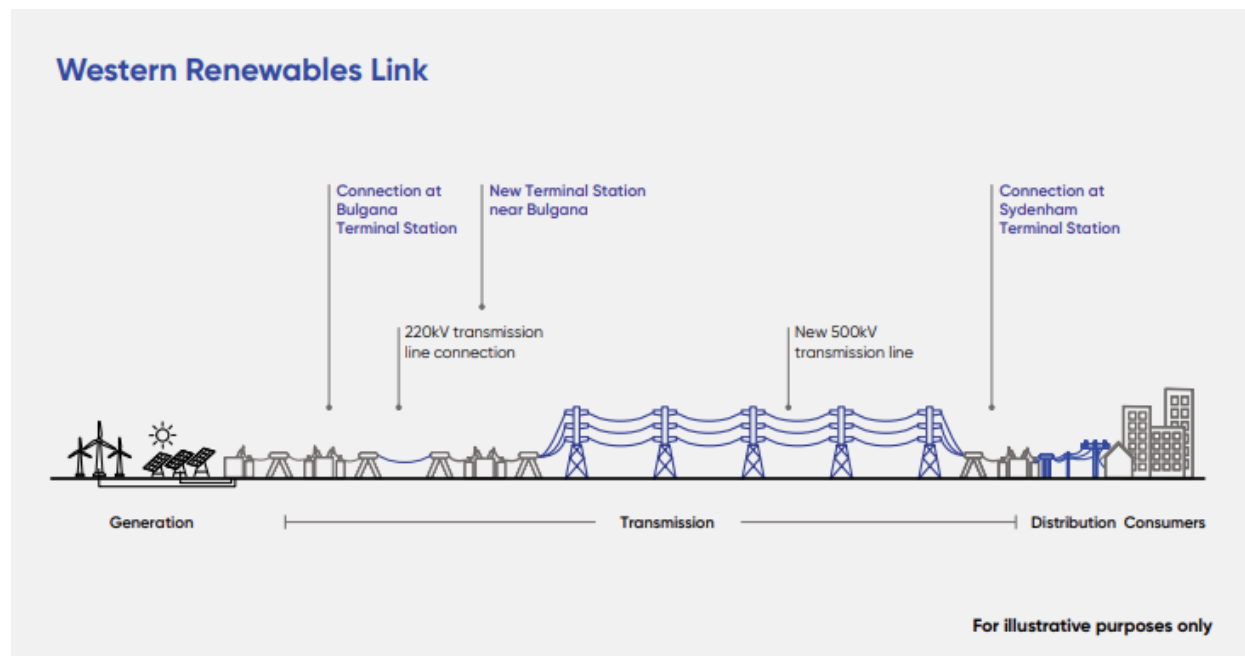


Figure 2 Project overview

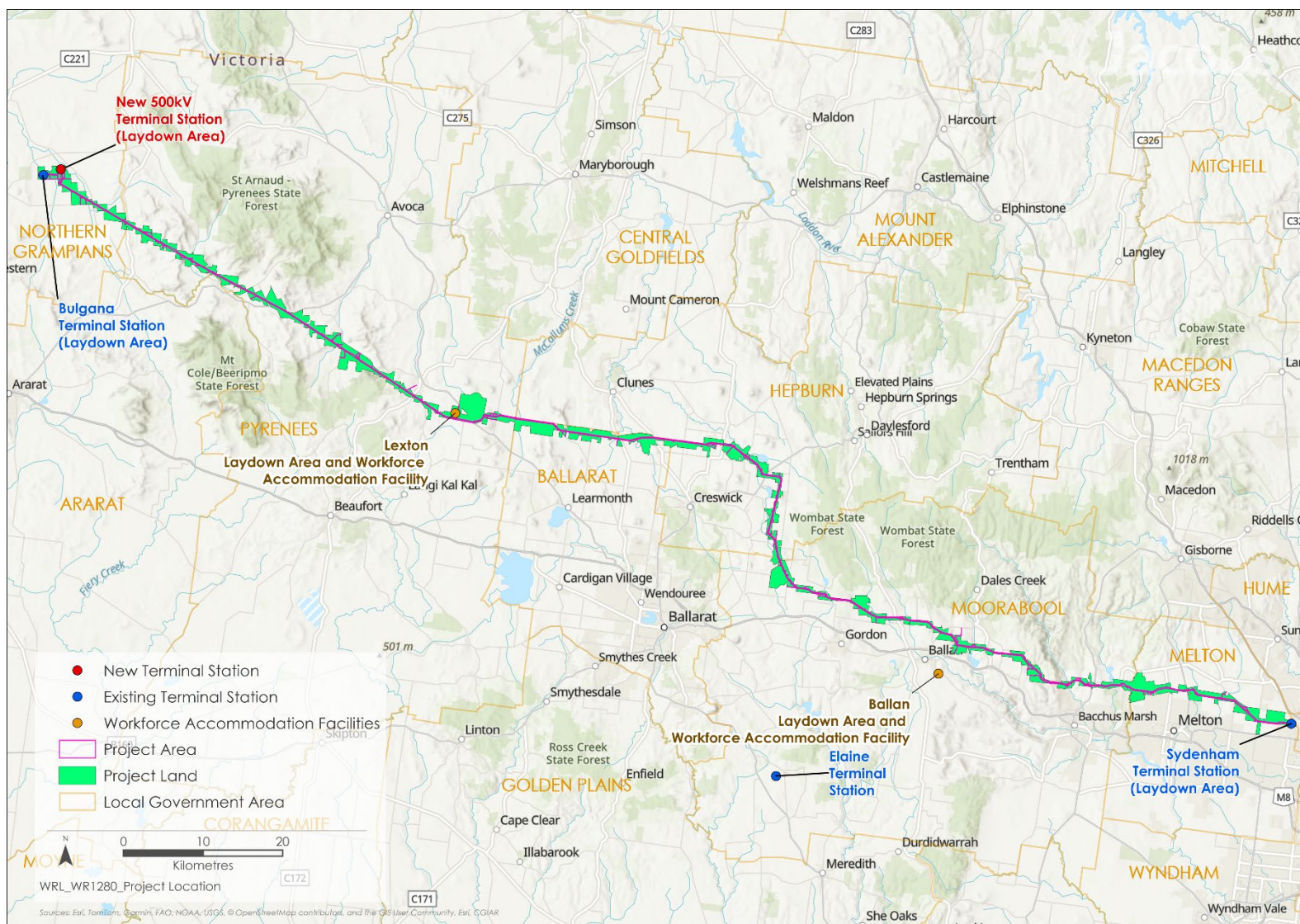


Figure 3 Proposed Route

2.2. Engagement requirements and consultation

The Project was originally referred to the former Minister for Planning under the *Environment Effects Act 1978* (Vic) (Environment Effects Act) on 9 June 2020 by AusNet and it was determined that an Environment Effects Statement (EES) was required.

The Minister accepted the referral in August 2023 and issued a decision requiring an EES for the Project.

Subsequently, the Minister set out scoping requirements describing specific matters to be investigated and documented in the EES. While the scoping requirements are intended to cover all relevant matters, the EES must also address other issues that emerge during EES investigations, especially those relevant to statutory decisions that will be informed by the assessment.

This report addresses scoping requirements specifically relating to stakeholder and community engagement, including:

- Responding to issues, including alternative options, raised through public and stakeholder consultation
- Preparing a program for community consultation, stakeholder engagement and communications proposed for implementation during the construction and operation of the Project, including opportunities for local stakeholders to seek responses to issues that might arise during Project implementation.

2.3. Technical Reference Group

In accordance with Section 8B(5) of the Environment Effects Act and the *Ministerial Guidelines for assessment of environmental effects under the Environment Effects Act 1978* (Ministerial Guidelines), the Victorian Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) convened an inter-agency Technical Reference Group (TRG) for the Project. The TRG comprises representatives of relevant state government agencies and departments, Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) and local government authorities. For a list of TRG members, see Table 2.

First formed in 2020, the TRG's role has been to advise DTP and the Project team on:

- Applicable policies, strategies and statutory provisions
- EES scoping requirements for the Project
- The design and appropriateness of technical reports for the EES
- The Project's public information and stakeholder consultation program for the EES
- Responses to issues arising from the EES investigations
- The technical adequacy of draft EES documentation
- Coordination of statutory processes.

Feedback from the TRG has been invaluable in developing the EES and corresponding EES Consultation Plan (Appendix A).

3. Engagement framework

3.1. Engagement principles

The Project is committed to delivering extensive and meaningful engagement in an open, inclusive, accessible and timely manner. Four key principles inform the approach – understanding, openness, respect and responsiveness. The principles guide the design and delivery of all Project communication and engagement activities.



Figure 4 Engagement principles

3.2. Engagement objectives

Successful coordination and integration of stakeholder, landholder and community engagement, planning and design is critical to achieving successful Project outcomes. The communications and engagement objectives for the Project are to:

- **Facilitate genuine stakeholder and community engagement**, seeking input to minimise impacts, maximise benefits and meet commitments made to the community.
- **Strengthen relationships with the community and stakeholders** to foster trust, awareness and understanding of the Project.

- **Establish and maintain social licence** to develop, construct and operate through best practice community and stakeholder engagement.
- **Provide timely information** to all stakeholders, including the design, planning and approvals, construction and operations processes.
- **Minimise impacts to stakeholders** by proactively mitigating potential impacts and promptly responding to stakeholder inputs.

These objectives are relevant for the development, construction, and operations and maintenance stages of the Project.

3.3. Engagement challenges

With no recent Victorian community experience of the development of a greenfield transmission project of its size, the Project has faced engagement challenges, including:

- **Information gathering:** Difficulties providing immediate answers to the community in the initial information gathering stages, given the Project is the first of its kind in decades.
- **Mental health:** Uncertainty about the Project and delays has impacted mental health and wellbeing in local communities.
- **Community distrust:** Distrust of the Project team and, as a result, AusNet more broadly.
- **Threats to personnel:** Including incidents that impacted the Project team's ability to engage the community.
- **Social licence:** First major transmission project in decades and varying levels of awareness about the energy transition has added to the challenge of achieving social licence.
- **Engagement fatigue:** Associated with changes to the Project scope and extended development stage, and other infrastructure builds in the region.
- **Land access:** Partly due to some people in the community feeling pressured to deny access.
- **COVID-19:** Community engagement obstacles caused by lockdowns and restrictions enforced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.3.1. Information gathering

Project engagement began in early 2020 during the development stage and focused on understanding key community points of interest and engagement preferences. The questions and feedback provided by the community during this initial engagement informed the Project team's communications and engagement approach.

Though it helps to develop the Project design, gathering information from the community does take time. While the information provided by the community was used internally by the Project team to narrow the Project's Area of Interest (AOI) and establish communication processes, the Project team experienced challenges sharing early detailed information with the community. This contributed to uncertainty in local communities, and concerns about the Project that were often based on misinformation.

To achieve continuous improvement in providing timely information to the community, the Project team has incorporated the below information sharing platforms:

- Individual Land Liaison Officers (LLOs) for each landholder along the Proposed Route
- Project website with materials that have been developed based on questions from the community
- Dedicated Project telephone hotline and email inbox
- Process requiring acknowledgement of all emails within two business days and detailed responses within 10 business days
- Regular email updates
- Online community newsletter.

3.3.2. Mental health

Uncertainty about the Project and the associated impacts on mental health and wellbeing in local communities has been a key Project concern. The Project team engaged TELUS Health (formerly Benestar) in July 2020 to provide independent, confidential counselling services and support to impacted community members.

Information about this service and other free services were published on the Community and Landholders page of the Project website and is provided in Project materials, including landholder guides and fact sheets. Representatives from TELUS Health also provided support at community engagement sessions delivered in 2020.

In July and August 2022, the Project team participated in rural health and stress training, delivered by the National Centre for Farmer Health, to improve awareness of factors impacting mental health and wellbeing in regional communities, and to develop techniques to support stakeholder interactions.

3.3.3. Community distrust

The Project team's approach to communications and engagement developed as the Project evolved. There has been a strong emphasis on timely and accurate information through the development of fact sheets, guides and webinars to satisfy people who requested more information.

3.3.4. Threats to personnel

Changes to the Project's approach to community and landholder engagement have been necessary where planned engagement activities were unable to proceed due to safety concerns or threats to Project personnel. In these instances, online engagement activities have occurred, or team members have reached out directly to individuals for one-on-one meetings in alternative settings. There has also been a strong emphasis on the development of fact sheets, guides and webinars to provide to people who requested more information.

Since March 2021, the Project team has reported security incidents relating to:

- Protests/crowds (7)
- Obstruction hazards (3)
- Physical threats (4)
- Verbal abuse (63)
- Threats involving vehicles (14)
- Social media (130)
- Other (41).

Of the 262 reported incidents since March 2021, 27 incidents have been brought to the attention of Victoria Police. This report shows records up until 1 November 2024.

3.3.5. Social licence

Social licence as a concept reflects community acceptance or approval of an organisation or project. The Project traverses many communities, with levels of acceptance, understanding and trust varying from town to town along the Proposed Route.

Feedback from several communities along the Proposed Route suggests that although people understand that the Project is needed to support Victoria's transition to renewable energy, there is strong opposition to its proposed location and overhead design.

This opposition has resulted in some stakeholders disengaging with the Project and influencing others within their community to follow. Project opposition groups have subsequently formed and run public campaigns against the Project, including:

- Regional Victoria Power Alliance (also represents people impacted by the Victoria to New South Wales Interconnector West (VNI West) project)
- Moorabool and Central Highlands Power Alliance
- Stop AusNet's Towers
- Piss Off AusNet

- Energy Grid Alliance (formerly Darley Power Alliance).

These groups have actively campaigned against the Project in its proposed form and have positioned themselves as advocates for their communities and landholders.

The Project team has engaged with project opposition groups by providing information and written responses to correspondence, and meeting directly with representatives. There have also been multiple opportunities for individuals to privately discuss their concerns with the Project team. The Project team will also implement a Community Benefit Fund alongside various other social value initiatives outlined in the Project's social value framework (Section 3.8).

3.3.6. Engagement fatigue

The Project has been engaging with stakeholders and the broader community since early 2020. Changes to the Project scope in 2023, extended development stage and consultation in the region for other infrastructure projects, have all contributed to engagement fatigue. VicGrid's Victorian Transmission Plan (VTP) and VNI West have also been actively engaging in the region.

The Project website and online resources have continued to expand and diversify to respond to the need for regular Project updates and a range of informative fact sheets. Regular consultation with industry representatives has assisted in engagement and consultation programs being delivered at times and in places that avoid other projects' engagement efforts.

3.3.7. Land access

Access to privately-owned land to undertake field surveys and technical investigations is required to support the EES process. Feedback from landholders has shown that some feel pressure from their community to deny such access to stop the Project progressing. The Project team has frequently communicated – via webinars, engagement events and landholder conversations – that providing land access is not a show of support for the Project or the Proposed Route, and that surveys and investigations may be used to avoid or minimise impacts.

Wherever possible, the Project team sought to gain voluntary landholder consent to access private properties. To succeed, LLOs explained the requirements for land access to individual landholders and addressed their concerns directly, as they arose. Formal letters were also sent to inform landholders about the land access process and to notify of upcoming land access requirements. Despite efforts by the Project team, some landholders refused to engage or allow land access.

Where landholders did not enable access to their property, S93 of the *Electricity Industry Act 2000* (Vic) was used as a last resort to gain access. Under S93(1) of the Electricity Industry Act, it is lawful for AusNet and its authorised persons to undertake surveys and other necessary activities associated with the Project in accordance with the requirements in the Act and the Essential Services Commission Land Access Code of Practice.

During any type of access to properties, the Project team works with landholders to confirm the approach, activities, timing, and any agreed protocols to be observed whilst on the land.

3.3.8. COVID-19 pandemic

In March 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Victoria entered a State of Emergency. Numerous lockdowns were in place across 2020 and 2021, severely restricting the capacity of the Project team to engage with stakeholders face-to-face. This meant early in-person engagement activities were postponed, or modified, as the Project team pivoted to COVID-safe and online engagement activities, along with traditional print and media communications.

The mandated COVID-19 restrictions for Melbourne and regional Victoria were not consistent at times in the early stages of 2020, and the 'ring of steel' between the city and regions made engagement planning challenging. When face-to-face engagement was allowed, COVID-safe measures restricted the way the community could access Project experts and information. For this reason, stakeholder input was sought via a wide range of channels, including an online engagement platform that was integrated with the Project website and supported by all-hours interactive feedback. The engagement platform included an interactive mapping tool, enabling the community to share location-based knowledge and feedback, and participate in online forums, interactive questions and answers, and online surveys.

Online and phone meetings were held wherever possible, and important forums such as the TRG (Section 3.5.1), Community Consultation Group (CCG)(Section 3.6.1) and Council Advisory Group (CAG) (Section 3.6.2) continued online.

Throughout 2021 and 2022, as Victoria embarked on a 'COVID-normal' way of living, a mixture of online and in-person engagements were undertaken to provide communities and stakeholders with multiple engagement opportunities.

3.4. Traditional Owners

The Project will be built across the traditional lands of the five RAPs shown in Figure 5.



Figure 5 Traditional Owners

The Project team has formally engaged with these RAPs and First Peoples – State Relations about the Project and the Proposed Route since August 2020. These organisations are also represented on the TRG.

Traditional Owner engagement for the Project is outlined in Table 1.

Table 1 Traditional Owner engagement overview

Form of engagement	Description
Notice of Intent (NOI) submission	Before the preparation of a Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP) commenced and before any field assessment was conducted, an NOI was submitted to the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register and the evaluating authority (a RAP or First Peoples – State Relations) for the CHMP.
CHMP inception meetings	These meetings were required as a part of the process for undertaking a CHMP. They were to introduce the evaluating authority to the Project, discuss the level of disturbance from Project-related activities to Aboriginal cultural heritage that may be present, and discuss and agree on the appropriate method for fieldwork.
CHMP Standard Assessment meetings	These meetings can be required as a part of the process for undertaking a CHMP. The results of any completed pedestrian surveys were shared with the evaluating authority and agreements made as to any further assessment (such as sub-surface testing and extent testing) to be undertaken.
TRG meetings	The TRG comprises representatives of government agencies, regional authorities, RAPs and municipal councils that have a statutory or policy interest in the Project. These meetings allowed the TRG to advise on matters that should be included in the scoping requirements for the EES, the need for and adequacy of technical reports, and the technical adequacy of the proposed EES and its response to the scoping requirements.
EES and CHMP method meetings	These meetings were undertaken with the evaluating authority to discuss the level of field assessment required for the completion of this impact assessment and to agree on a method so it could be undertaken in a manner consistent with the CHMP process.
EES workshops	These workshops were arranged to discuss the EES process and address questions or concerns from the Traditional Owners and Elders from the various RAPs. Topics included expectations of engagement from the proponent, varied levels of assessments and whether the RAP has concerns around fieldwork gaps, and expectations around participation from the TRG in reviewing EES documentation. All RAPs attended and participated in these workshops apart from Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (WTOAC), who declined the offer to attend.
Other meetings	Other meetings were undertaken relating to various matters, including the discussion of approaches for Cultural Values Assessments (CVAs).
Fieldwork (including inductions)	Fieldwork was required as a part of the process for preparing a CHMP. It was carried out with RAP and Traditional Owner representatives throughout the life of each CHMP and included comprehensive conversations on Country as well as participation in pedestrian surveys and sub surface excavation programs. Inductions have been undertaken as a part of the fieldwork days and separate to them. Site visits have also been undertaken with Traditional Owner representatives, where relevant, during site visits on Country during the preparation of CVAs.
Benefit sharing	Engagement on Traditional Owner benefits sharing has focused on raising awareness ahead of formal negotiations.
Social value initiatives	AusNet has identified several social value initiatives for RAPs and one-off engagement has occurred for each of these opportunities to discuss these initiatives.

Form of engagement	Description
Front line adaptive communication training	In October 2024, specialised training was provided to WTOAC on Country for 30 of the corporation's cultural heritage field personnel.
Liaison Officer Funding	AusNet offered each RAP additional funding to support the engagement required to develop the Traditional Owner Benefit Sharing Strategy.

Further details regarding engagement with RAPs and Traditional Owners is detailed in Appendix C.

3.5. Stakeholders

A stakeholder is an individual, group or organisation with a stake or interest in the outcome of a decision. Depending on their role or position, stakeholders may also influence Project decisions.

The Project team has undertaken extensive research and mapping to identify stakeholders along the Proposed Route, which was progressively refined from an AOI to an area approximately 100 to 170m wide, encompassing the nominal future easement (and a buffer either side) and the terminal station areas.

This stakeholder mapping process identified many geographically dispersed stakeholders, with diverse interests and concerns. These stakeholders have been categorised into the groups shown in Figure 6, with dedicated relationship managers appointed within the Project team to encourage Project input and feedback.

A full list of stakeholders and their interest in the Project is provided in Appendix D. The stakeholders shown in Figure 6 include:

- Members of the community who are impacted by the Project to varying degrees including landholders, neighbouring landholders, community members and organisations
- Government and regulatory authorities including local councils, members of parliament, and government entities
- Industry-related stakeholders including industry associations and market participants
- Groups with a specific interest in the Project including community and special interest groups, and formal opposition groups
- Additional stakeholders such as members of the TRG and representative forums.



Figure 6 Key stakeholders

Section 4.2 (Table 3) shows how engagement tools have been selected and applied to Project stakeholders.

3.5.1. Technical Reference Group

As outlined in Section 2.4, DTP convened an inter-agency TRG for the Project, comprising representatives of relevant Victorian Government agencies and departments, RAPs and local government authorities.

Members of the TRG have provided valuable feedback on the development of the EES, the EES Consultation Plan, the approach to engagement and feedback from communities and other stakeholders. Organisations represented on the TRG are listed in Table 2.

Table 2 TRG member organisations

Organisations represented on the TRG	
Country Fire Authority (CFA)	Environment Protection Authority Victoria (EPA Victoria)
Victorian Planning Authority (VPA)	First Peoples – State Relations
Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) – Energy (formerly DELWP – Energy)	Heritage Victoria
Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) – Grampians Region (formerly DELWP – Grampians Region)	Melbourne Water

Organisations represented on the TRG

DTP – Impact Assessment (formerly DELWP – Impact Assessment)	Parks Victoria
DTP – Planning (formerly DELWP – Planning)	Southern Rural Water
Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR) - Agriculture Victoria	Relevant RAPs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barengi Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation • Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation • Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation • Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation • Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation
DJPR – Regional Development Victoria	Relevant Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corangamite CMA • Glenelg Hopkins CMA • North Central CMA • Wimmera CMA • Port Phillip and Western Port CMA
DTP (formerly Department of Transport)	Relevant local councils: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Ballarat • Hepburn Shire Council • Melton City Council • Moorabool Shire Council • Northern Grampians Shire Council • Pyrenees Shire Council
Energy Safe Victoria	

3.6. Representative engagement forums

Several groups have been established by the Project team to enable structured consultation and subsequent feedback from community representatives. These groups are outlined in Section 3.6.1 to 3.6.3.

3.6.1. Community Consultation Group

The Project team formed a CCG to maximise community understanding of the Project and participation in the engagement process. The CCG aimed to provide a transparent discussion forum, enabling AusNet to better understand community concerns and make the Project the best it can be for the community. Membership to the CCG is not as demonstration of support and endorsement of the Project. Members bring a range of community views and input to the group.

In February 2021, an eUpdate was published calling for nominations for three CCGs, based on the western, central and eastern areas of the Project AOI. Ultimately, one group was formed over the AOI due to the small number of nominations received. It has been difficult to recruit and retain CCG members representing all sections of the Project.

At its inception, this group comprised 13 representatives from Ballarat, Moorabool and Melton. An independent chair was appointed, and the first meeting took place on 28 April 2021.

In the second half of 2021, after a significant number of resignations from the CCG, the group's composition and approach was reviewed by the Project team, with further invitations to join the CCG sent to representative groups along the Proposed Route. Since August 2024, six community members and council representatives have regularly attended the CCG, enabling a cross-section of community groups and interests to be represented.

Feedback from the CCG shaped how AusNet disseminated information, designed and developed the Project and conducted assessments for the EES. For example, the CCG has helped shape the engagement program by

suggesting locations for pop-ups, sharing communication preferences, reviewing Project fact sheets and providing feedback.

The CCG was formed to support the development and planning stage of the Project and is likely to cease operations prior to the construction and delivery stage of the Project. Engagement channels and groups during delivery will be considered by AusNet with its Principal Contractor.

3.6.2. Council Advisory Group

A Council Advisory Group (CAG) was established in 2020 to keep council representatives abreast of Project updates and to gather feedback for dispersal among the Project team. The group includes an officer from each of the six councils along the Proposed Route, and members of the Project team. Information sharing complements the briefings with councils and CEOs routinely offered by the Project team.

To 1 November 2024, there have been 34 meetings of the CAG, with topics ranging from Project and EES updates, through to land access, undergrounding, laydown areas, alternative approaches to construction, TRG discussions, and the CCG.

3.6.3. Energy Regional Advisory Panel

The Energy Regional Advisory Panel (ERAP) was established in 2021 to guide region specific energy and transmission projects, identify development opportunities, and address local issues and concerns. Comprising local government, business, economic, and energy leaders from Western Victoria, the ERAP focuses on social licence and community impacts. The panel offers insights on regional energy issues and social value initiatives.

The ERAP members represent local government, business, economic development and energy leaders from the Wimmera, Grampians and Central Highlands regions of western Victoria.

In addition to sharing key insights on local energy issues, ERAP members have provided valuable advice and guidance to the Project team regarding the formation and implementation of social value initiatives for the region. Their advice considers feedback from a group of landholders and farmers who have lived experience outside the Project footprint, and who review all public-facing Project materials for accuracy of information.

3.7. Diverse communities

Throughout all phases of engagement, the Project team has sought advice from local communities and councils about community needs and sought to make communications materials accessible for people of all abilities. This has included Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities, those facing time or mobility barriers, those with low literacy, or those who do not have the skills or access to technology to engage remotely.

Where required or requested, assistance has been provided to meet stakeholders' needs. This includes assistance with fact sheets and guides and provision of hard-copy materials where stakeholders face barriers to internet access. The Project team will continue to work with local government and community groups to understand the needs of their communities and adapt engagement methods appropriately.

3.8. Social value initiatives

Social value initiatives for the Project aim to meet specific community needs by addressing local issues such as energy and telecommunications reliability and housing availability. Informed by social research and broad community and stakeholder engagement, these initiatives relate to social procurement, education and community benefit sharing.

3.8.1. Benefit sharing activation streams

There are multiple ways in which benefits will be shared through the delivery of the Project, with four key activation streams (Figure 7). These streams include the Social Value Framework and initiatives, benefit sharing arrangements with Traditional Owners, the Community Benefit Fund, and Victorian Government policy arrangements that the Project will administer.

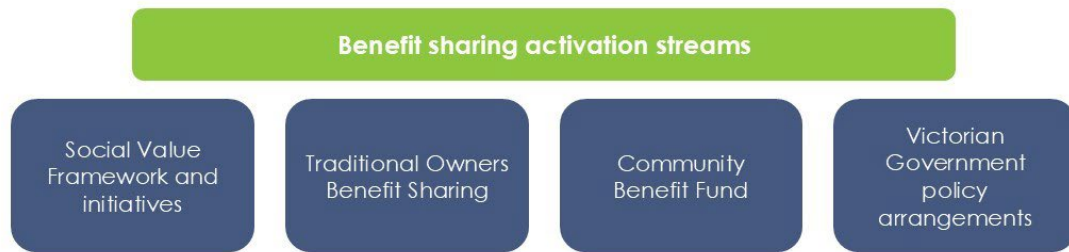


Figure 7 Activation streams

Social value initiatives for the Project aim to meet specific community needs by addressing local issues such as energy and telecommunications reliability and housing availability. Informed by social research and broad community and stakeholder engagement, these initiatives relate to social procurement, education and community benefit sharing.

The Social Value Framework operates as a list of initiatives the Project can implement in collaboration with key stakeholders. As an example of work already completed, AusNet has conducted an assessment of energy demand and use at Ballarat Community Health's seven sites. AusNet provided advice on demand management, retailer and tariff selection and the optimal mix of additional infrastructure (solar and batteries).

The Social Value Framework identifies ways in which AusNet can partner with the community to deliver long-lasting benefits. The Project team is identifying opportunities to use the Project construction stage to deliver economic and community value. Planned programs could include training and skills development programs and building energy resilience by providing support to facilitate community energy projects as well as support to emergency services, small grant programs and sponsorship programs.

3.8.2. Community Benefit Fund

Subject to community appetite, the Project team will implement a Community Benefit Fund that would be co-designed in partnership with the community and key stakeholders. The Community Benefit Fund is a way to give back to the community impacted by the Project in a way that the community concludes is equitable and meaningful, within the approved Community Benefit Fund budget.

Significant opportunities exist to partner with Commonwealth and State Government funding programs, and with identified local government expenditure, to maximise what can be achieved through the Community Benefit Fund. Exploring the leverage potential will form part of the co-design process, which will also specifically seek input from Traditional Owners, Indigenous people and young people (17 to 25 years) who are often under-represented in engagement processes.

It is likely that grants will be provided to projects or initiatives that make a positive contribution to the local community, with preference given to those that create ongoing benefits. The fund framework and assessment criteria will include input from the CCG and CAG as part of the co-design process.

The key difference between the Community Benefit Fund and the Social Value Framework is that with the Community Benefit Fund a larger level of control is handed over to the community. The co-design process will decide how and when the funds are administered. With the Social Value Framework, the initiatives are delivered in a strategic way in collaboration with the benefitting stakeholders.

3.9. EES Consultation Plan

Consultation is a key aspect of the environmental assessment process in Victoria.

The Project team has developed an EES Consultation Plan (Appendix A) outlining the Project consultation program and communication and engagement activities that will be delivered as part of the environmental impact assessment and draft Planning Scheme Amendment (PSA) process.

The EES Consultation Plan is a public document, available on the DTP website. It has been prepared in accordance with the Ministerial Guidelines and the *EES Consultation Plan Advisory Note* (DELWP, 2018) and aligns with the consultation requirements for the draft PSA, proposed as part of the Project, as outlined under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* (Vic) (Planning and Environment Act).

The EES Consultation Plan outlines the guiding principles and objectives of the Project engagement program, identifies key stakeholders, and provides an overview of planned engagement activities and timeframes until completion of the EES process.

Given the EES provides ongoing opportunities for community input, the EES Consultation Plan is reviewed and updated in response to community feedback and as appropriate throughout the development of the Project.

4. Engagement snapshot

Since engagement for the Project commenced in early 2020, the Project team has sought to raise Project awareness, provide information and gather community and stakeholder feedback and input from people living and working along the Proposed Route. A detailed list of the communications and engagement activities delivered by the Project is provided in Appendix E.

4.1. Engagement snapshot

A snapshot of engagement to 1 November 2024 is shown in Figure 8.

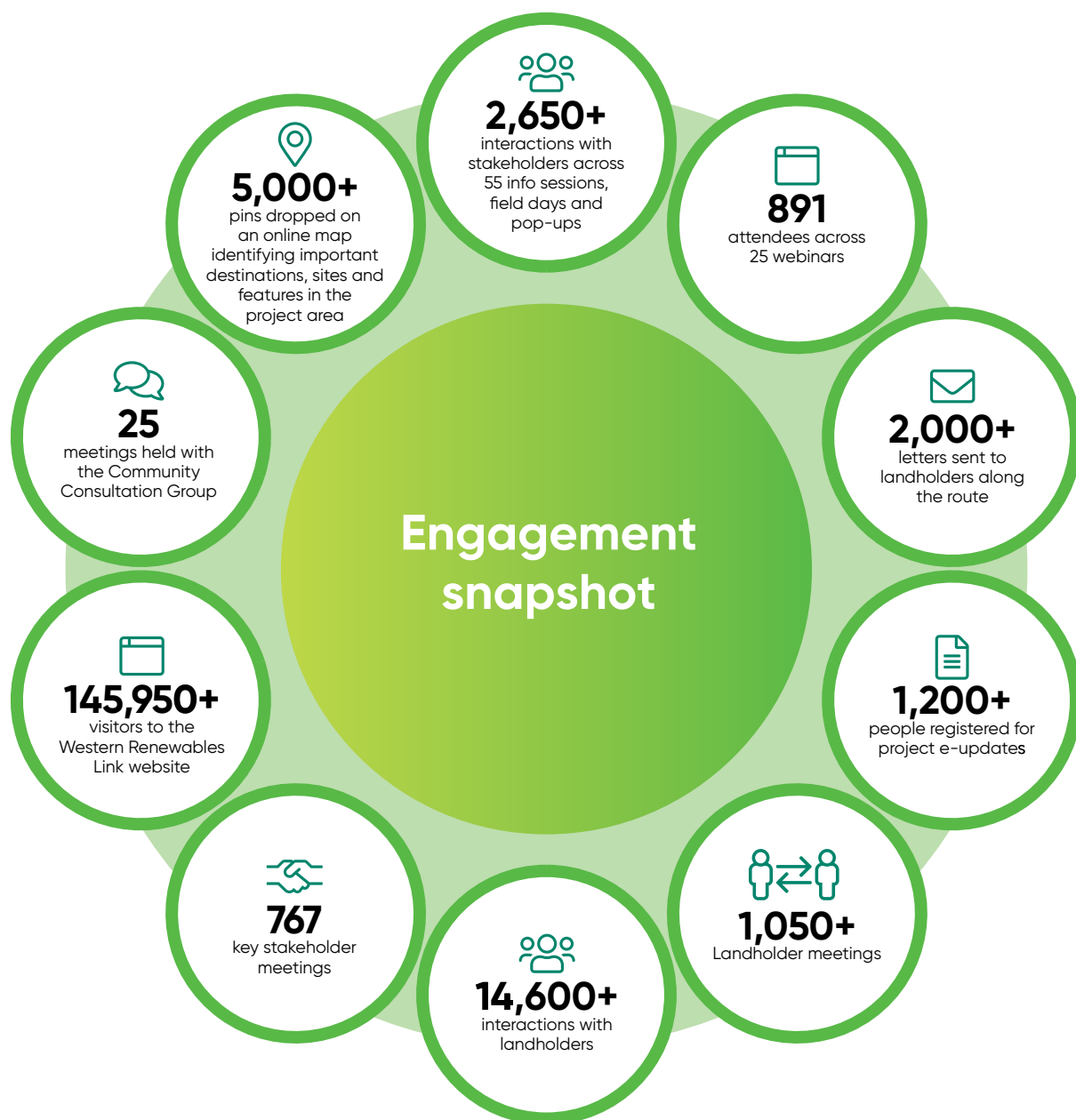


Figure 8 Engagement snapshot

4.2. Engagement activities

The Project has taken a tailored approach to stakeholder, landholder and community engagement, with the aim of ensuring participants' needs and preferences are respected. Key tools used for stakeholder, landholder and community engagement are outlined in Table 3.

Table 3 Engagement tools

Engagement tool	Description
Community consultation and advisory group meetings	<p>The three consultation and advisory groups for the Project are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Community Consultation Group Enables two-way communication between the Project and local communities. It comprises an independent Chair, Project representatives and community and council representatives of communities along the Proposed Route. Meetings provide an opportunity to discuss key Project and community issues, share updates and seek local advice. Minutes and presentations from all CCG meetings are published on the Project website. 2. Council Advisory Group Keeps council representatives abreast of Project updates and enables feedback to be gathered and shared among the Project team. Includes a team member from each of the six councils along the Proposed Route, and members of the Project team. Information sharing in this formal setting complements routine briefings with councils and CEOs. 3. Energy Regional Advisory Panel Provides guidance on regionally appropriate approaches to energy and transmission projects to identify energy development opportunities within the regions and to discuss relevant issues and concerns.
Land Liaison Officers	A dedicated team of LLOs provide one-on-one consultation with directly impacted landholders throughout all Project stages. LLOs focus on face-to-face meetings and direct email and phone channels and provide a consistent point of contact for landholders.
Drop-in and information sessions	Allow community members and landholders to speak directly with the Project team in an informal setting. The widely promoted sessions are attended by technical specialists and supported by a suite of take-home communication materials, such as fact sheets and guides.
Agriculture and industry events	Attendance at local events allows relevant stakeholders, community members and landholders to speak directly with the Project team in an informal setting.
Community discussion dinners	Discussion dinners presented an opportunity for people to meet various Project specialists, ask direct questions and talk over a meal.
Remote one-on-one meetings with technical specialists	Initially a COVID-safe pivot, these sessions are aimed at people who cannot attend in-person sessions. The remote sessions are held on Microsoft Teams and provide one-on-one access to Project specialists.
Webinars	Formal online sessions covering a range of Project-related topics. Webinars replaced face-to-face sessions during COVID-19 restrictions and are still used to provide geographically dispersed communities with broad access to a range of technical specialists. Recordings and transcripts from the webinars are posted on the Project website.
Website	A platform for community and other stakeholders to access up-to-date Project information, eUpdates, fact sheets, guides, webinars, and FAQs. Interested parties can engage directly via the website's virtual engagement room, interactive map and 'contact us' functions.

Engagement tool	Description
Virtual engagement room	Enables visitors to visually explore information about the Project at their own pace.
Project online map	Online map where layers can be toggled on or off to reveal detailed Project information. Layers include the AOI, multiple corridors, single corridor, Proposed Route (2021), updated Proposed Route (2022 and 2024), and features including Local Government Areas (LGAs), RAP boundaries and land parcels.
Social Pinpoint mapping	An interactive online mapping tool used to obtain feedback about what is important to people in their local community. Participants drop a pin on a location to comment or post a photo. Feedback from Social Pinpoint mapping is provided in Appendix F.
Fact sheets and guides	A suite of Project fact sheets and landholder guides developed to keep the community informed of key aspects of the Project. Fact sheets are published on the Project website and distributed via eUpdates and printouts at events.
Videos	Videos have been added to the Project website and virtual engagement room including 'Project Introduction', 'Designing the Project', 'Construction' and 'Farming around transmission' videos.
eUpdates	Emails sent to subscribers when Project developments occur. Visitors to the website can subscribe to receive updates to their inbox. The eUpdates are also published online.
Newsletter	External newsletter that addresses key themes and questions about the Project. Published monthly between October 2023 and April 2024 and then bi-monthly after that period.
Project hotline	A toll-free Project hotline that stakeholders can call to make Project specific enquiries and complaints. The hotline is available Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 5.30pm and is advertised on the Project website and in communications materials including fact sheets and guides.
Email and letters	<p>The Project inbox and Post Office Box allow stakeholders to email and write to the Project team. The email and postal addresses are published on the website, in Project team members' email signatures, and in communications materials including fact sheets and guides.</p> <p>Stakeholders must register to receive these emails and letters and, when they do, their individual communication preferences are recorded and used to personalise contact. Project communications are customised by audience (e.g., landholders, neighbouring landholders) with a 'landholder first' engagement approach.</p>
Letterbox drops	Distribution of communications materials to unaddressed mailboxes within 2km of the Proposed Route.
Direct engagement	Meetings, phone calls, texts and email communications with a variety of stakeholders, particularly landholders.
Government and key stakeholder briefings	Regular briefings to federal, state and local governments, members of the opposition, and Victorian public sector departments and agencies. Briefings are delivered by the Project team with topics tailored to each stakeholder.
Social media	The Project uses AusNet's social media pages to promote online and in-person engagement events via paid advertising.
Media and advertising	Local press, online and radio advertising raise Project awareness and promote upcoming activities. Media releases are distributed as needed, and responses to Project media enquiries provided where appropriate.

Engagement tool	Description
Community engagement surveys	Surveys posted at various Project stages to seek community input on a range of matters.

4.3. Engagement phases

Project engagement followed a phased process, as has been outlined in the EES Consultation Plan (Appendix A) and which has since evolved into the phases detailed in Figure 9.







	Engagement phase	Engagement purpose
	Phase 1 Early-2020 Early stakeholder engagement	Shape engagement and communications approach, including Project's understanding of issues and points of interest
	Phase 2 Apr 2020 – May 2021 AOI engagement, EES Referral lodged, commencement of EES	Engage regarding Project AOI to identify opportunities and constraints within the Project area Formal comments to inform the scoping requirements on matters to be investigated and documented in the EES
	Phase 3 Jun 2021 – Dec 2022 EES preparation, project design engagement	Single corridor engagement to inform the proposed route EES engagement regarding the proposed route and subsequent refinement of the alignment
	Phase 4 Jan 2023 – Dec 2024 Engagement regarding updated project scope, second EES referral lodged, commencement of new EES	Engage regarding changes to the Project scope and to seek feedback on local matters to inform the design and impact assessments
	Phase 5 2025-2026 EES public exhibition and Draft PSA display, IAC public hearing, Minister's assessment	Enable public to review the EES and Draft PSA and provide written submissions on the Project to Planning Panels Victoria
	Phase 6 Ongoing Landholder, stakeholder and community engagement (subject to approval)	Engage landholders, stakeholders and the community during secondary Project approvals, construction and operation

Figure 9 Engagement phases

4.3.1. Phase 1

The following table outlines engagement that was delivered in early 2020.

Table 4 Phase 1 engagement summary

Timeline	Milestones	Engagement highlights
Jan – Mar 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early stakeholder engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project hotline established Project inbox established Project website launched Initial letters sent to potentially impacted landholders Introductory correspondence sent to RAPs and Traditional Owners Initial government stakeholder Project briefings Initial key stakeholder briefings CCG formed

Stakeholder engagement commenced in early 2020, when AusNet was awarded the Project. With the planned Project launch coinciding with the COVID-19 pandemic, engagement was necessarily limited to remote activities via digital channels and written correspondence.

Online government briefings took place during this time, the CCG was formed, and introductory correspondence was sent to potentially impacted landholders, RAPs and Traditional Owners. The engagement focus was on raising awareness of the Project and its benefits. A Project hotline was established, along with a website enabling interested parties to subscribe to receive eUpdates.

4.3.2. Phase 2A and B

The following table outlines engagement that was delivered between April and December 2020.

Table 5 Phase 2A and B engagement summary

Phase	Timeline	Milestones	Engagement highlights
2A	2020: Apr-Jul	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AOI engagement Initial EES Referral lodged 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community engagement survey 6 online community sessions 8 community drop-in sessions
2B	2020: Aug-Dec	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minister for Planning requires EES Commencement of EES engagement Exhibition of initial draft EES scoping requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One-on-one meetings with landholders Local advertising Targeted letterbox drops Fact sheets published Q&A website function added eUpdates published Social Pinpoint map published on website Key stakeholder meetings TRG and CAG formed CCG re-formed

April and December 2020



4500+
unique pieces
of community
feedback
and insight



21,400+
website visits
from April to
November 2020



3500+
social pinpoint
map pins



350+
webinar attendees



170+
questions posted
on website



310+
attendees at
face-to-face
drop-in sessions

From mid-2020, engagement focused on building Project awareness and obtaining feedback on a broad geographic AOI, including identification of places of importance, and a Q&A function providing an option for people to send their questions to the Project team and receive written responses. The first Project eUpdate, '[Project Introduction: A Major Investment in Western Victoria's Future](#)' was published online in early May 2020.

A Social Pinpoint data mapping tool was opened from 15 March to 30 April 2020 to inform the Project design, specifically asking stakeholders to provide feedback on what is important to them in their local area by allowing them to drop pins to share location specific insights. The tool was used to enhance the Project team's understanding of the local area and was not intended as a full representation of important community information. Examples of insights from the Social Pinpoint mapping tool are shown in Figure 10, with further information provided in Appendix F.

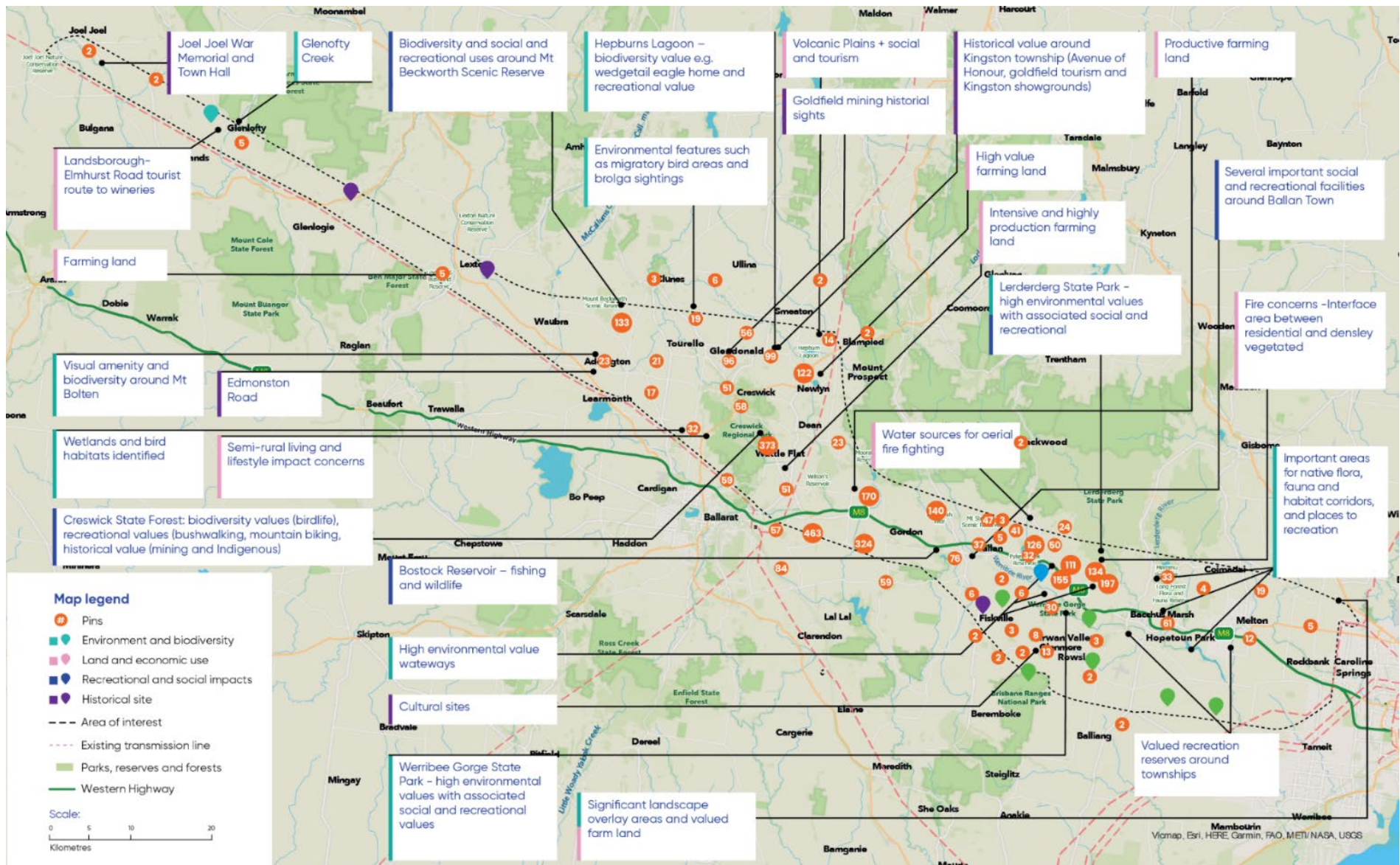


Figure 10 Examples of insights from the Social Pinpoint data mapping tool

Other engagement activities for the period included a community engagement survey and publication of a further four eUpdates between June and August 2020, including one published on 14 July 2020 to promote a series of six Project introduction webinars. The six live webinars, held throughout July 2020, focused on corridor selection, land compensation, health impacts, environmental assessment, and engineering. These sessions were instead of face-to-face engagement that could not be pursued due to COVID-19 restrictions.

When COVID-19 restrictions fluctuated throughout the second half of 2020, online engagement was complemented by eight community drop-in sessions in Stawell, Beaufort, Ballarat, Creswick, Gordon, Ballan, Darley and Melton. One-on-one meetings were held with identified landholders and broad community awareness of the Project was raised through local advertising, targeted letterbox drops and updates to the website.

In August 2020, following AusNet's lodgement of an EES referral, the Victorian Minister for Planning required the Project to prepare an EES under the Environment Effects Act. The Project then entered an environmental assessment phase. Representative forums including the TRG, CCG and CAG were formed and regular meetings scheduled. Government briefings and meetings with members of parliament also took place.

The Project team contacted landholders, government authorities and other key stakeholders within the AOI to share Project information and seek feedback. This was done via phone calls, letters and text messages. Project briefings were offered to government representatives, including interested elected officials at federal, state and local levels, and to opposition parties.

Feedback informed the draft scoping requirements for the EES, which were placed on exhibition in November 2020. To support DTP's engagement, the Project team co-hosted a community webinar with DTP to explain the purpose of the scoping requirements and submissions process.

Further eUpdates were distributed to subscribers to the end of 2020, including three in November, encouraging feedback on the EES draft scoping requirements, online information session attendance, and attendance at a separate drop-in session in Melbourne.

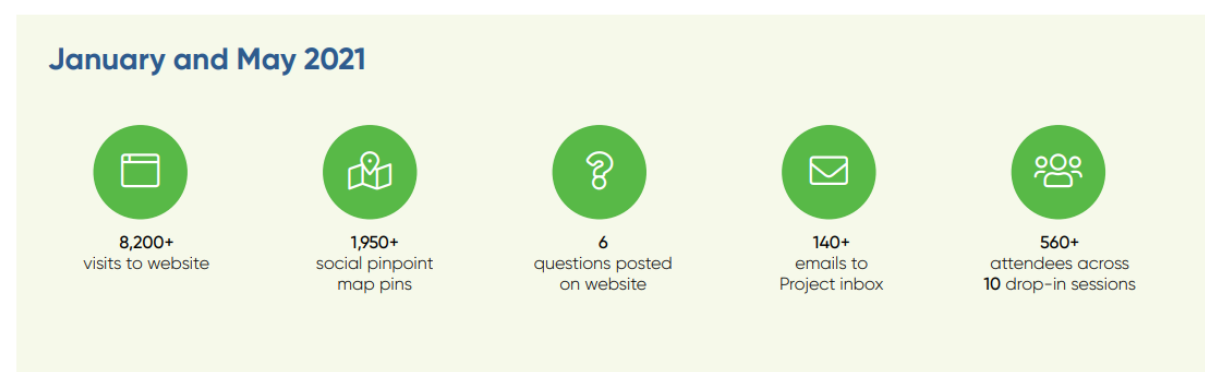
After considering public submissions on the draft scoping requirements, the Minister for Planning issued final scoping requirements in December 2020.

4.3.3. Phase 2C

The following table outlines engagement that was delivered between January and May 2021.

Table 6 Phase 2C engagement summary

Phase	Timeline	Milestones	Engagement highlights
2C	2021: Jan-May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EES preparations and technical reports engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EES Consultation Plan published 10 community drop-in sessions Online mapping tool open Direct landholder and community engagement Regular eUpdates Government, industry and representative meetings continue ERAP formed



In February 2021, the Project team published an EES Consultation Plan (Appendix A), setting out the measures the Project will take to inform the public and obtain input from stakeholders while preparing the EES.

A series of online and face-to-face engagement activities followed between March and May 2021, including an online mapping tool (open from 15 March to 30 April) enabling community members to share their knowledge about the multiple Project corridors within the AOI. Participants were asked to identify important destinations, sites, and features of the local area by dropping a pin on a specific location and leaving a comment or image.

In late March and April 2021, 10 five-hour community engagement sessions were hosted in areas surrounding the Proposed Route. Sessions were held at Newlyn, Ballarat, Gordon, Daylesford, Joel Joel, Balliang, Melton, Myrniong, Darley and Waubra. In addition to these sessions, landholders and the community could contact the Project team at any point via phone or email, or by posting a question directly to the website.

Meetings with key government departments and agencies progressed, as the development of the EES created a need for greater consultation with these stakeholders. Regular meetings with the TRG, CAG, CCG and newly formed ERAP also continued from early 2021. Consultation with councils and TRG member organisations on the draft PSA for the Project began in January 2021 and is ongoing as part of the development of the EES.

4.3.4. Phase 3A

The following table outlines engagement that was delivered between June and December 2021.

Table 7 Phase 3A engagement summary

Timeline	Milestones	Engagement highlights
2021: Jun-Dec	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Single corridor engagement Proposed Route engagement 	<p>Single corridor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposed single corridor announced Published 'Environmental Assessment and Key Project Approvals' fact sheet Updated interactive map on Project website to reflect single corridor eUpdates continued 8 webinars 54 online one-on-one meetings booked Engagement with landholders within the corridor <p>Proposed Route:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposed Route identified and announced 2 webinars on Proposed Route Launched new Project website 5 community information sessions Published fact sheets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposed Route Bushfire Underground construction Published landholder guide on Proposed Route Published EES existing condition information sheets on 9 topics 12 LLOs appointed to individual landholders within the Proposed Route <p>Other:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government, industry and representative meetings continued Invitations to join the CCG sent CCG rejuvenated with new members across the region

June and December 2021



310+
dial-ins across
eight 'single
corridor' webinars



150
questions fielded
across eight 'single
corridor' webinars



130+
phone calls to
Project hotline



700
emails to
Project inbox



60+
attendees across
two 'Proposed
Route' webinars



65+
attendees across
five community
information
sessions

After many months of community consultation and site investigations, the proposed single corridor was announced in June 2021. Information about the corridor, including a detailed map and updated fact sheets, was made available on the Project website. Communications included 603 letters, 188 emails and 568 text messages sent to landholders within the preferred single corridor.

Environmental and technical specialists presented their findings and answered questions about existing conditions at eight COVID-safe online webinars held in September 2021. The key specialist topics were agriculture, landscape and visual, biodiversity, bushfire, electric and magnetic fields (EMF), compensation and valuation, and the single corridor selection process.

Attendees were invited to ask questions in the online chat function and facilitators answered approximately 150 questions across the eight webinars. Some questions could not be answered in the time available and subsequently informed updates to the website FAQs. Following these webinars, community members were invited to speak one-on-one with technical specialists via an online meeting link. A total of 54 one-on-one meetings were booked, 40 of which occurred.

Following rigorous technical investigations and further consultation with stakeholders – including the community and landholders within the proposed single corridor – a Proposed Route was identified and announced in November 2021. Community information sessions followed in December at five locations along the Proposed Route and were attended by 67 people.

The Project website was updated in November 2021 to provide improved functionality for stakeholders and has been a critical tool for engagement and communication. Alongside the website refresh and other engagement activities, access to some private properties was undertaken to complete field surveys and investigations for the EES technical reports.

Between June and December 2021, the Project hotline and inbox continued to be a source of community feedback and insight. More than 130 phone calls and 700 emails were received from the community between June and December 2021.

During this period, the CCG was rejuvenated with new members from across the region. Invitations of expressions of interest were asked of Project opposition groups, local industry bodies (including the CFA and tourism groups) and individuals to consider joining the revitalised group. Between June and December 2021 there were seven CCG meetings. Topics discussed included: Proposed Route selection, bushfire risk, undergrounding and land access, among others.

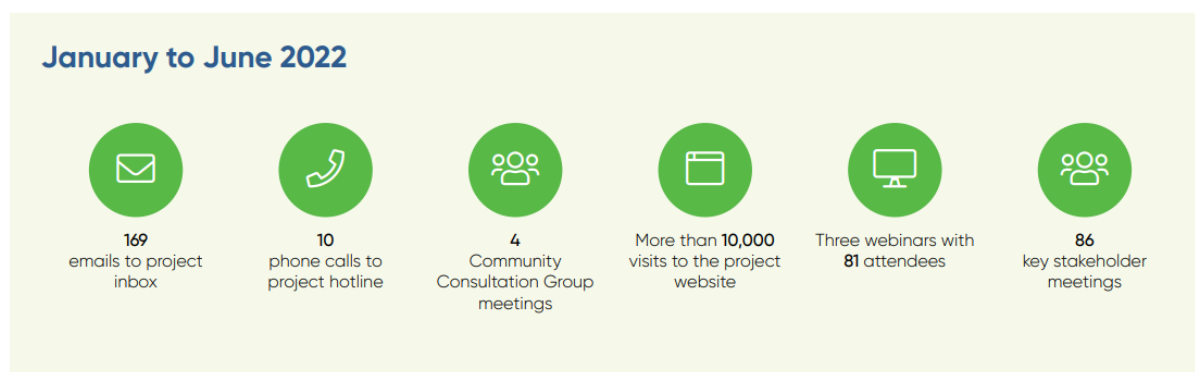
4.3.5. Phase 3B

The following table outlines engagement that was delivered between January and June 2022.

Table 8 Phase 3B engagement summary

Timeline	Milestones	Engagement highlights
2022: Jan-Jun	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposed Route EES engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated EES Consultation Plan published 3 webinars Virtual engagement room launched Project team committed to Essential Services Commission Transmission Company Land Access Statement of Expectations (SOE)

Timeline	Milestones	Engagement highlights
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project team received training on Essential Services Commission SOE Published updated Landholder Guide: Land Access, Easements and Compensation Published fact sheets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preliminary EES Information Sheet for Existing Conditions Land Use and Planning Transmission Towers and Conductors The Electricity Network: Transmission and Distribution Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) site visits with landholders Face-to-face and online meetings with landholders continued Regular eUpdates Government, industry and representative group meetings continued



Opposition groups held a rally in Spring Street, Melbourne, in March 2022 (and another in Ballarat in July 2022), protesting the Proposed Route and advocating for the transmission infrastructure to be put underground.

The Project team continued to engage the community with pop-ups held at shopping centres across the central and eastern sections of the Proposed Route between April and May 2022. Pop-ups were not organised at the western end of the Proposed Route due to AEMO's ongoing engagement process for the VNI West connection point.

Stakeholders and landholders in the Melton area were informed of an update to the Proposed Route, the Landholder Guide was updated with information on land access, easements and compensation, and new fact sheets were published on 'Preliminary EES Information', 'Existing Conditions Land Use and Planning', 'Transmission Towers and Conductors', and 'The Electricity Network – Transmission and Distribution'. Regular eUpdates were issued, and representative group and government meetings continued.

A virtual engagement room was launched in May 2022 to coincide with a series of three COVID-safe webinars where environmental and technical specialists, as well as Project team members, were available to answer questions from the public.

Also in May 2022, the Essential Services Commission released its Electricity Transmission Company Land Access Statement of Expectations (SOE). The SOE offers a framework for respectful and transparent relationships between transmission companies and landholders. After a period of review and a pause in engagement, the entire Project team undertook training on the SOE and made a commitment to work in accordance with the principles outlined within. The Project's Landholder Guide: Land Access, Easements and Compensation was subsequently updated to include information on the SOE for landholders. The SOE was implemented on 1 June 2022, while the Essential Services Commission developed an enforceable land access code.

Consultation with landholders and neighbouring landholders continued to be undertaken to refine the Proposed Route. This continued throughout the first half of 2022, with landholders consulted on the Proposed Route, impacts to their land use and operations, tower locations, micro-siting and the easement and compensation valuation process.

Neighbouring landholder engagement focussed on the landscape and visual assessment, with the Project team arranging field visits with several neighbouring landholders. The aim of the field visits was to assess the potential visibility and visual impact of the proposed infrastructure and mitigation measures that may help reduce the Project's visual impact. Landholder and neighbouring landholder consultation informed updates to the Proposed Route.

4.3.6. Phase 3C

The following table outlines engagement that was delivered between July and December 2022.

Table 9 Phase 3C engagement summary

Timeline	Milestones	Engagement highlights
2022: Jul-Dec	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landholder engagement regarding Proposed Route changes, site investigations, compensation Updated Proposed Route stakeholder and community engagement VNI West investigations announcement by AEMO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project team informed stakeholders and landholders of updated Proposed Route Letters sent to landholders with tower location and compensation information Published new Landholder Guide: Land access for field surveys and investigations Published fact sheets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated Project Overview Updated Proposed Route Overview Published updated map on website Regional visit by CEOs of AEMO and AusNet 4 community drop-in sessions (including Coghills Creek community afternoon) 7 community discussion dinners 1 webinar Attended Elmore Field Days Project team informed landholders of AEMO's VNI West investigations Issued eUpdate with information about potential Project changes In-person and remote meetings with landholders continued LVIA site visits with neighbouring landholders Commencement of compensation negotiations Government, industry and representative group meetings continued



Following AEMO's announcement that it was investigating options to connect the proposed VNI West to the Project at a location further west than the originally proposed terminal station north of Ballarat, the Project team pivoted to keeping stakeholders, landholders and the community abreast of AEMO's progress.

From June to August 2022, stakeholders and landholders in the following areas were informed of an update to the Proposed Route for the Project in their area. These landholders and stakeholders were informed prior to the information being made available more broadly.

- Waubra to Glendonald
- Bolwarrah
- Mt Steilglitz to Korjamnunnip
- Myrniong
- Darley military camp area
- Merrimu Reservoir

After contacting landholders and stakeholders, and publishing updates to the Proposed Route on the Project website, a series of community engagement events were held. These included three community drop-in events and six community discussion dinners. A further dinner in Melton and a community afternoon in Coghill Creek were added to the program at the community's request.

At the conclusion of these events, the Project team hosted a community webinar. During the webinar, Project and technical specialists answered questions from the community, reported back on the information sessions, and presented on construction of overhead transmission infrastructure.

Meanwhile, the CEOs of AEMO and AusNet visited the region to meet with stakeholders and landholders along the Proposed Route. The visit comprised two events:

1. A renewable energy transition forum moderated by the Chair of the Grampians New Energy Task Force, which focused on the implications and opportunities for western Victoria in the energy transition
2. A meeting with representatives from Stop AusNet Towers to hear direct feedback from the group.

Project personnel attended the Elmore Field Days in October 2022, where about 240 people engaged with the Project stand.

Throughout early December 2022, the Project team made phone calls to inform landholders and neighbouring landholders of AEMO's investigation into options for the connection of VNI West. Where calls went unanswered, text messages, emails or hardcopy letters were sent. An e-Update was issued on 9 December 2022 with information about the potential change to the connection location.

Also in December, landholders with property on the Proposed Route were given property specific Project information, including:

- Landholder consultation plans
- Information about landholder participation fees
- Property Specific Details forms
- Land Access Consent templates
- Additional information about the Option for Easement process and compensation.

Neighbouring landholder engagement during this phase was focussed on landscape and visual assessments.

4.3.7. Phase 4A

The following table outlines engagement that was delivered between January and June 2023.

Table 10 Phase 4A engagement summary

Timeline	Milestones	Engagement highlights
2023: Jan-Jun	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VNI West investigations into options to connect to the Project at a location further west than the Project's original proposed terminal station location to the north of Ballarat VNI West Project Assessment Conclusions Report and requirement for a new terminal station near Bulgana and increase to 500kV 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Published new Landholder Guide: Option for Easement Process and Compensation Published fact sheets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transmission Line Construction Biosecurity In-person and remote landholder meetings continued Letterbox drop to dwellings within 2km of the Proposed Route between Bulgana and Dean to inform of release of VNI West Consultation Report and encourage engagement with AEMO Attended Wimmera Field Days Second regional visit by CEOs of AEMO and AusNet Regular eUpdates Advertised shopping centre pop-ups in local newspapers and online 8 pop-ups Presented to local councils and CCG on Option for Easement and compensation process Hosted industry night for organisational landholders and interested parties on Option for Easement and compensation process Government, industry and representative body meetings continued



In February 2023, the Victorian Minister for Energy and Resources used powers under the *National Electricity (Victoria) Act* to issue an order (NEVA order) that conferred functions on AEMO to assess alternate options to the preferred option identified in the Post-Acceptance Data Review. AEMO then undertook an updated Regulatory Investment Test for Transmission (RIT-T) assessment of VNI West that considered several new options that connected VNI West to the Project further west than originally proposed.

From January to June 2023, consultation with community and landholders focused on AEMO's investigation into options to connect VNI West to the Project. Following the release of a Consultation Report by AEMO, in February 2023, the Project team continued to engage landholders between Bulgana and north of Ballarat to discuss the implications of a changed terminal station site and uprate to 500kV from Bulgana to north of Ballarat. This included landholders potentially impacted by a change in the Proposed Route to the north of Waubra.

AEMO Victorian Planning (AVP) and Transgrid published a Consultation Report on the further analysis undertaken for VNI West on 23 February 2023. The report outlined a new proposed preferred option for the VNI West connection to the Project, near Bulgana, and invited stakeholder submissions throughout March and April 2023, during a six-week consultation period. To inform landholders and neighbouring landholders of the release of the Consultation Report, the Project team sent letters to letterboxes 2km either side of the Proposed Route between Bulgana and Dean. The letter invited recipients to engage directly with AEMO on the VNI West connection point. The Project team also emailed landholders and neighbouring landholders.

Project personnel attended the Wimmera Field Days in March 2023, where 175 people engaged with the Project. The Project stand included maps of the updated Proposed Route and fact sheets, and the Project team was available to answer questions.

Meanwhile, a new Landholder Guide: Option for Easement process and compensation was published on the Project website. Copies were mailed in hardcopy or emailed to some landholders. The document expanded on the easement acquisition and compensation process. The Project team presented on the Option for Easement and compensation process to local councils along the Proposed Route (a further presentation followed at the June 2023 CCG meeting) and hosted an industry night for organisational landholders and interested parties along the Proposed Route.

New AusNet CEO Tony Narvaez and AEMO CEO Daniel Westerman visited the region in March 2023 to meet with community representatives and discuss transmission. During a scheduled meeting at Dean Recreation Reserve, a crowd of more than 60 farmers and residents protested the Project.

In late-April and May 2023, the Project team held eight pop-up stalls in local shopping centres, including Bacchus Marsh, Wendouree, Taylors Lakes and Melton. The stalls were advertised in the local newspapers, online and on the Project website.

Meanwhile, because of community feedback, AVP investigated moving the connection point between VNI West and the Project. AVP confirmed in the VNI West Project Assessment Conclusions Report in May 2023 that the proposed transmission line should connect at Bulgana instead of north of Ballarat. This meant the Project terminal station planned for north of Ballarat would no longer be required. Instead, a new terminal station would be planned near Bulgana and capacity from north of Ballarat to Bulgana increased to 500kV. AusNet continued working with impacted landholders and communities to confirm what the proposed change meant for them.

4.3.8. Phase 4B

The following table outlines engagement that was delivered between July and December 2023.

Table 11 Phase 4B engagement summary

Timeline	Milestones	Engagement highlights
2023: Jul-Dec	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement regarding changes to the Project scope Second EES referral lodged Minister for Planning announces new EES decision made Engagement regarding Hepburn Lagoon southern option 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hosted MacPherson Park tenants and community information session LLOs notified individual landholders along the Proposed Route Relevant landholders advised they are no longer on the Proposed Route Postcard letterbox drop to dwellings within 2km of Proposed Route Project advertising including advertorials in local and regional newspapers, social media and digital advertisements Published updated website content Published updated fact sheets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landholder Compensation and Payments Permitted Vehicle and Equipment Heights Published CFA Firefighting and transmission line FAQs Attended Elmore Field Days Published video on Option for Easement 13 eUpdates 3 Project newsletters

Timeline	Milestones	Engagement highlights
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 community information sessions held along the Proposed Route 3 shopping centre pop-ups 2 community webinars Presented Option for Easement proposals to approx. 70% of landholders along the Proposed Route Government, industry and representative group meetings continued



Engagement between July and December 2023 focused on providing landholders and the community with information about changes to the scope of the proposed Project and the impact of these changes on the EES. As a result of these changes, in August 2023 AusNet referred the Project to the Victorian Minister for Planning for a new decision on the assessment requirements under the Environment Effects Act. The Minister accepted the new referral and subsequently issued a new decision requiring an EES for the modified Project.

In September 2023, the confirmation of the Hepburn Lagoon southern option as the Proposed Route was communicated to landholders and stakeholders. At this time, landholders along the Hepburn Lagoon northern option were notified that they would no longer be on the Proposed Route. The Project team worked closely with impacted landholders so that they were notified individually ahead of the broader communication.

The Project team attended the Elmore Field Days in early October 2023, yielding more than 200 Project interactions. The Project booth displayed maps of the updated Proposed Route and fact sheets. The Project team was available throughout the three days to respond to community questions and concerns.

Community information sessions followed and were held along the Proposed Route at Ararat, Stawell, Waubra, Ballarat, Bacchus Marsh and Melton. The sessions were widely promoted to encourage community members to learn about recent changes and discuss other key issues such as undergrounding, landholder compensation, bushfire risk, and farming around the transmission line.

A community information session at Newlyn was cancelled due to a planned protest and an alternative online session was made available for locals to discuss any specific concerns about the Project, as well as general Project and EES updates.

Three pop-up information stands held in regional shopping centres in November 2023 were supported by personnel with expertise in undergrounding, biodiversity, bushfire, electric and magnetic fields, compensation and valuation, visual impact, and Project design.

For community members unable to attend an information or pop-up session, webinars on 2 November and 28 November 2023 provided Project and EES updates and the opportunity for attendees to ask questions of technical specialists. A combined total of nearly 50 community members attended the two independently facilitated webinars, with recordings from the session published on the Project website.

A range of communications activities and materials were produced to support community engagement. They included postcard letterbox drops within 2km of the Proposed Route, advertorials, advertising in local and regional newspapers, updated website content, social media and digital advertising, updated Project fact sheets, eUpdates to subscribers, and a new Project newsletter.

Throughout this phase, the Project team continued to work directly with landholders on changes to the Proposed Route to the north of Waubra. Option for Easement proposals were presented to most landholders, with \$10,000 Landholder Professional Fees payments made available to help fund the process of reviewing and negotiating the Option for Easement.

4.3.9. Phase 4C

The following table outlines engagement that was delivered between January and June 2024.

Table 12 Phase 4C engagement summary

Timeline	Milestones	Engagement highlights
2024: Jan-Jun	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Farming around the transmission line engagement Proposed Route update (north of Waubra) Neighbouring landholder engagement EES engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued presenting Option for Easement proposals to landholders along the Proposed Route (99% complete) Published new fact sheets on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Terminal stations EES Draft PSA Attended Wimmera Field Days Published updated EES Consultation Plan Published updated fact sheet 'Permitted Vehicle and Equipment Heights' Published updated Landholder Guide: Land access for field surveys and investigations Published new Landholder Guide: Easement safety and permitted activities Published Project transmission line video Launched Project transmission line webpage 2 community webinars Published updated interactive map to reflect Proposed Route north of Waubra Commenced targeted program for neighbouring landholders 5 eUpdates 3 Project newsletters Government, industry and representative group meetings continued Announced delivery of \$940,000 of in-kind services to Ballarat West Employment Zone (\$500,000), Ballarat Community Health (\$70,000) and North Ballarat Precinct Structure Plan (\$370,000)

January to June 2024



32
emails to project
information inbox



7
phone calls



14,529
visits to the project
website



47
key stakeholder
meetings



4
Council Advisory
Group meetings



2
Community
Consultation Group
meetings



60
meetings held with
landholders



227
phone calls and
150 text messages
to landholders



753
emails and
197 letters to
landholders



4,000
information
packs mailed
to neighbouring
landholders



35
attendees across
two community
webinars



170
interactions at
the Wimmera
Field Days

Engagement between January and June 2024 focused on providing information about farming around the transmission line and updates to the Proposed Route north of Waubra. Ongoing community engagement activities were supported via webinars, direct meetings, letters, phone calls and emails to stakeholders. Engagement activities and Project updates were communicated through a range of channels including mail, email, phone calls, social media, eUpdates and newsletters.

In February 2024, three new fact sheets were published to reflect changes to terminal stations, the EES and draft PSA. An updated EES Consultation Plan and accompanying fact sheet was published in March 2024.

Project team members attended the Wimmera Field Days in early March 2024, with more than 170 people visiting the Project stand. The booth displayed the updated Proposed Route and key fact sheets. The Project team was available throughout the three days to answer questions and address concerns.

In response to questions around what can and cannot be done around the transmission line, the Project team delivered a 'Farming with the Western Renewables Link' communications and engagement program. The aim was to provide accurate information to inform the community that, in most cases, farming around the transmission line is possible. The program included publication of a new 'Landholder Guide: Easement safety and permitted activities', a Project transmission line video, 'Permitted Vehicle and Equipment Heights' fact sheet, dedicated webpage and two community webinars attended by 35 community members.

Following this, the Project team released an updated Proposed Route north of Waubra, with flow-on council engagement and meetings with the CCG. Informed by field surveys, investigations and landholder feedback, the updated Proposed Route was detailed in an 'Updated Proposed Route north of Waubra' fact sheet and a revised map reflecting the change.

In June 2024, the Project team wrote to approximately 4,000 neighbouring landholders via post to share the following resources:

- A new dedicated webpage on the Project website with information specifically for neighbouring landholders including an interactive map
- A new dedicated fact sheet that responded to the most common questions heard from neighbouring landholders
- A registration form allowing people to register as neighbouring landholders and express interest in a residential visual impact assessment.

By the end of June 2024, an Option for Easement had been presented to 99 per cent of landholders along the Proposed Route, with LLOs and landholders discussing the proposals and design improvements to the operational outcomes associated with tower and access track locations.

4.3.10. Phase 4D

The following table outlines engagement that was delivered between July and November 2024.

Table 13 Phase 4D engagement summary

Timeline	Milestones	Engagement highlights
2024: Jul-Nov	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Proposed Route update (Bulgana terminal station works)Neighbouring landholder engagementEES engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Published updated website contentPublished updated fact sheet:<ul style="list-style-type: none">Updated Proposed RoutePublished updated Landholder Guide: Easement Safety and Permitted ActivitiesPublished new field surveys and investigation information sheets on Aboriginal cultural heritage, historic heritage, flora, fauna, and visual impactProject advertising including advertorials in local and regional newspapers, social media and digital advertisements8 community pop-up sessionsAttended Elmore Field DaysOngoing meetings with landholders and neighbouring landholdersGovernment, industry and representative group meetings continued



Between July and November 2024, Project communications and engagement activities focused on:

- Updated Proposed Route (Waubra update)
- New terminal station near Bulgana update
- EES field survey and investigations information sheets
- Draft PSA
- Neighbouring landholder residential visual impact assessments
- Ongoing landholder engagement

A range of materials supported these efforts, including advertorials, advertising in local and regional newspapers, social media posts, geotargeted advertising via Instagram and Facebook, Project newsletters, videos and updates. A community survey, yielding more than 100 responses, was open for two months during this phase.

In August 2024, the Project team provided an update about the proposed terminal station works near the existing Bulgana terminal station site and other updates to the Proposed Route in response to feedback from landholders and technical specialists. New materials to support this process included an eUpdate, an 'Updated Proposed Route' fact sheet, a revised online map and FAQs. Key stakeholders, landholders and neighbouring landholders were first to receive the new information, ahead of its public release.

The main face-to-face engagement campaign was completed in September and October 2024 and included pop-up sessions in each LGA along the Proposed Route, including Creswick, Ballarat, Stawell, Beaufort, Bacchus Marsh, Melton, Watergardens and Lexton. A Ballan session was cancelled due to protests that were planned and associated security concerns.

Project team members attended the Elmore Field Days in early October 2024 with more than 180 people engaging with the Project stand. The booth displayed the updated Proposed Route, EES field survey findings and key fact sheets about the Project. The Project team was available throughout the three days to answer questions and address community concerns.

4.3.11. Phase 5

The following table outlines anticipated key milestones for future stages of the Project in 2025 and 2026.

Table 14 Phase 5 anticipated milestones

Timeline	Milestones
2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none">EES public exhibition and draft PSA displayInquiry and Advisory Committee (IAC) public hearingMinister's assessment

The Project EES will be exhibited for public comment for at least 40 business days, at which time the draft PSA will be published with the EES. Concurrent to the public exhibition period, the Minister for Planning will appoint an independent Inquiry and Advisory Committee (IAC). The IAC will hold an inquiry into the environmental effects of the Project where it will review the EES and public submissions and report its findings and recommendations to the Minister for Planning. The IAC will also be an advisory committee appointed to review the draft PSA and any public comments received. The IAC will include its recommendations on the draft PSA in its report to the Minister for Planning.

The public exhibition period and inquiry will allow members of the public to review the EES and provide submissions on the Project that will inform the IAC in making its recommendations to the Minister for Planning. The public will also be able to comment on the draft PSA at this time. At the conclusion of the hearing, the IAC will deliver a written report to the Minister with recommendations to inform the Minister's assessment.

Community engagement activities, in line with the EES exhibition and IAC process, will be undertaken throughout this period to inform interested parties on key elements in the EES.

4.3.12. Phase 6

The following table outlines anticipated key milestones for future stages of the Project from 2026 onwards.

Table 15 Phase 6 anticipated milestones

Timeline	Milestones
Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Project deliveryProject operationsOngoing engagement subject to Project approval

If the Minister's assessment of the Project EES concludes that the environmental effects can be acceptably managed, the Project team will then ask the Minister to prepare, adopt and approve the draft PSA consistent with the Minister's assessment, without further formal notice, under Section 20(4) of the Planning and Environment Act.

If the Project is approved by decision-makers following their consideration of the Minister's assessment, the Project team will continue to consult with the community and stakeholders during secondary approvals, construction and operation. A separate document will be prepared detailing the approach to consultation throughout the construction stage.

The Project team will work with the Principal Contractor so that all communications and engagement aligns with the Project's core values. The Principal Contractor will have dedicated communications and engagement teams that will work closely with landholders, stakeholders and the community to uphold these core values.

5. Overview of feedback

The landholders, broader community and stakeholders have played an important role in shaping the development of the Project. The Project has changed significantly since initial engagement started in 2020, with feedback from stakeholders often leading to direct change.

The feedback gathered has helped influence:

- Engagement approach and communication channels
- Design development
- Proposed Route of the transmission line
- Development of the EES
- Proposed Environmental Performance Requirements (EPRs)
- Proposed construction management planning.

5.1. Responding to community input

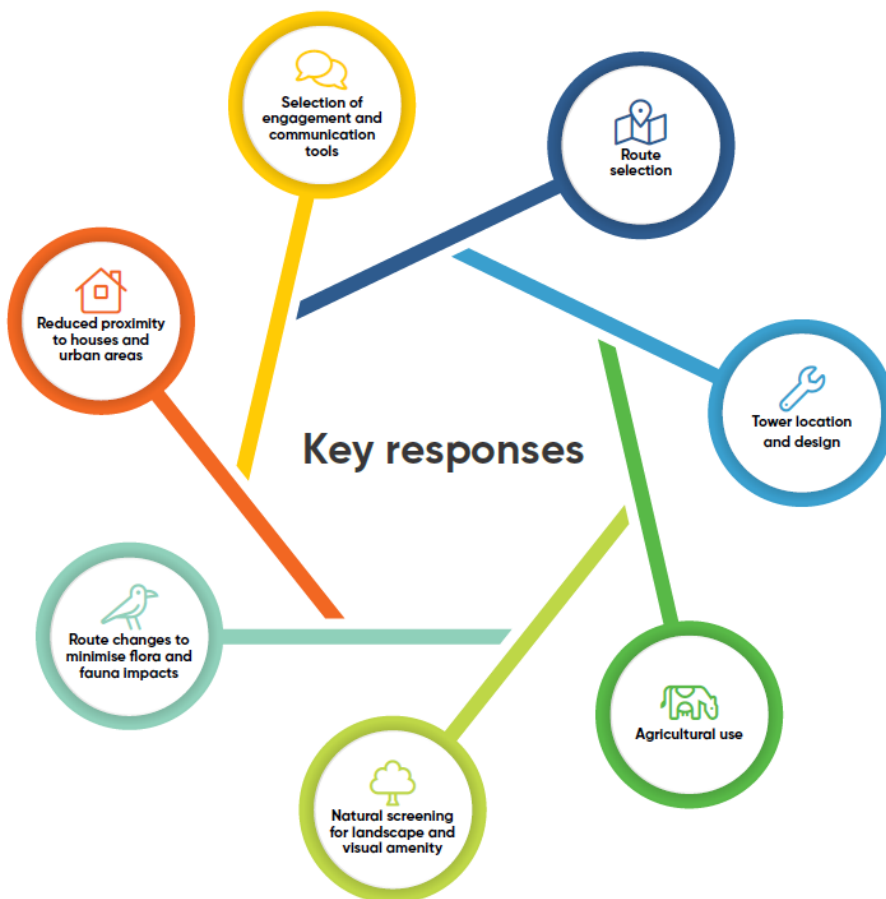


Figure 11 Key responses

The Project team has sought to understand and address, where possible, stakeholder and community feedback throughout all phases of engagement and in the preparation of the EES. Key Project responses to feedback are shown in Figure 11.

Consultation with landholders, combined with feedback from stakeholders and the broader community, has influenced the Project. This important input about their local areas included key social and recreational assets, productive farming areas, tourism assets, liveability aspects, Aboriginal cultural heritage and historic heritage sites.

The key instances where the Project has been adjusted based on feedback are summarised in Table 16.

Table 16 Project responses

Feedback	How we have responded
Route selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on community input, including through Social Pinpoint data and early investigations, the AOI was narrowed to an identified corridor to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exclude 'high constraint' areas such as Creswick, Newlyn, Ballan, Gordon, Bacchus Marsh, Myrniong and Melton Exclude large areas of forested public land that have high environmental and cultural heritage values (such as Long Forest Flora and Fauna Reserve, Werribee Gorge State Park and Creswick Regional Park) Include areas where a new transmission line could be located alongside existing electricity infrastructure (such as the Bulgana to Waubra line and Ballarat to Bendigo line). Using the Western Freeway to co-locate the Project was investigated by technical specialists in response to community feedback. They found there is insufficient space in the road reserves of the Western Freeway, and it would constrain future road expansion plans for the road that rely on the available space. The Proposed Route identification process included avoiding and minimising impacts raised by the community and stakeholders, in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large areas of forested public land and other areas of significant vegetation, such as grasslands with high environmental value Landscape and visual amenity for residents and tourists Sites of Aboriginal cultural heritage significance Productive agricultural land Heritage sites including 'avenues of honour' and historic homesteads Biolinks created by Landcare and other community groups Urban and built-up areas, urban growth areas, rural residential subdivisions and more densely populated areas. Input from landholders, community, stakeholders and technical specialists has informed the development of the proposed routes being assessed in the EES. Based on landholder and community feedback, and technical specialist advice, the proposed terminal station was relocated from north of Ballarat to Bulgana. Refinements have also been made at a localised and individual property scale in consultation with landholders including between Waubra and Glendaruel (near Tourello), between Bolwarrah and Gordon, and Mt Steiglitz to Korjamunnip Creek. At MacPherson Park, the Proposed Route was moved to align with the park's northern boundary, to minimise impacts to community groups and businesses in surrounding areas, sporting fields, the urban area and local school campus. The communities, stakeholders and landholders along the Project corridor provided feedback that an underground transmission line should be considered, particularly where the visual impact of an overhead line is a community concern. Acknowledging the community's advocacy for undergrounding, AusNet:

Feedback	How we have responded
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Commissioned an independent investigation into underground construction and released an Underground Construction Summary on the Project website in November 2021 - Provided presentations and briefings by technical specialists to councils, TRG, CAG and CCG.
Tower location and design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on landholder feedback, towers were moved in several locations to align the Proposed Route with internal fences, cultivated paddocks and paddock headland areas. This reduced impacts on agriculture and optimised access tracks. • Implemented lower single circuit towers in the design around MacPherson Park to reduce impacts to the Melton Aerodrome. • AusNet recognises that bushfires are a serious concern in regional Victoria. Landholders and the community have told the Project team that they are concerned the Project may impact firefighting efforts in their area. <p>Potential impacts to fire risk and firefighting efforts are a critical consideration for the planning and design of the Project and AusNet engages regularly with the relevant authorities, including the CFA.</p> <p>In 2021, AusNet released two fact sheets on managing fire risk and existing bushfire conditions, hosted a bushfire webinar, and addressed bushfire concerns via in-person engagement sessions. In October 2023, the Project team published the CFA's 'Firefighting and Transmission Lines' information sheet on the Project website.</p>
Agricultural impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjusted tower locations on individual properties in consultation with landholders to reduce impacts on agricultural operations, including irrigation. • Provided greater-than-required minimum clearances to improve land use and farming opportunities within easements. This resulted in increased ground to conductor clearances to enable continued use of most farming machinery and vehicles (such as harvesters and large sprayers) within easements along the Proposed Route. • Added the use of drones as a permitted activity because of landholder and stakeholder feedback that drones are critical to the operation of many agricultural properties.
Natural screening for landscape and visual amenity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Near Myrniong, the Proposed Route was moved north-east, further away from the town, which reduced the visual scale of towers in views from the town and reduced impacts to views from Mt Blackwood Road. These changes also reduced impacts on areas of Aboriginal cultural heritage sensitivity.
Route changes to minimise flora and fauna impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In response to stakeholder suggestions, the Proposed Route was realigned further north along the southern boundary of Merrimu Reservoir to avoid native vegetation and ecological values at Long Forest Flora and Fauna Reserve, as well as reducing impacts to residential properties in the area.
Reduced proximity to houses and urban areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At MacPherson Park, the Proposed Route was moved to align with the park's northern boundary to minimise impacts to community groups and businesses in surrounding areas, sporting fields, the built-up residential area and local school campus.

Feedback	How we have responded
Selection of engagement and communication tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivered targeted communication materials and engagement programs and activities. For example, one-on-one meetings with subject matter specialists and topic-specific fact sheets that responded to stakeholder and community requests for information.

5.2. Feedback themes and Project response

The key feedback themes shown in Figure 12 have been used to group feedback received from the community and stakeholders throughout the engagement.



Figure 12 Key feedback themes

Tables 17 to 27 outline the Project response to the key feedback themes shown in Figure 12.

Project development and Proposed Route selection

Table 17 Project development and Proposed Route selection

What we heard	Project response	Location in the EES
A lack of acceptance for the RIT-T process and questions on why the Project is needed	<p>Following the launch of the Project website in early 2020, eUpdates, dedicated web pages and FAQs were developed to introduce the Project and build stakeholder awareness of the Project rationale. This was supported by five community webinar sessions in July 2020 that invited community questions on the Project.</p> <p>In December 2020, AusNet released an eUpdate and fact sheet on the RIT-T process to address community concerns that the process was not transparent enough. AEMO also provided information on their website detailing the RIT-T process for the Project and published findings of their assessment of the need for the Project.</p> <p>Concerns and complaints received by AusNet on the RIT-T process were shared with AEMO.</p>	EES Chapter 2: Project rationale
Benefits are largely for Melbourne, not the region traversed by the transmission line	<p>The Project provides a range of benefits for all Victorians, as described in Chapter 2: Project rationale.</p> <p>In western Victoria, AusNet is consulting with the local community to determine a range of benefit sharing programs addressing the region's social, economic and environmental needs. Planned programs include a Community Benefit Fund to provide opportunities for community input into the Project's legacy, so that it makes a positive contribution to the region.</p> <p>AusNet has consulted with the CCG, CAG and local communities on the development of regional initiatives.</p>	EES Attachment IV: Stakeholder and community engagement consultation report EES Chapter 2: Project rationale
Requests for existing infrastructure corridors to be used where possible	<p>Opportunities to co-locate existing infrastructure have been considered as part of the Project corridor and route selection process. The Proposed Route uses existing infrastructure corridors from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bulgana to Waubra: The Proposed Route runs to the north of the existing Ballarat to Horsham transmission line Glendonald to Mount Prospect: The Proposed Route runs largely parallel and adjacent to roads, following property boundaries Mount Prospect to Dean: The Proposed Route runs parallel to the existing 220kV Ballarat to Bendigo transmission line. 	EES Chapter 5: Project development EES Chapter 6: Project description EES Attachment I: Project development and assessment of alternatives EES Attachment II: Assessment of feasibility for an underground 500kV transmission line for Western Renewables Link
Requests for the transmission line to follow the Western Highway	<p>AusNet commissioned independent experts to assess the feasibility of using the Western Highway as a corridor for either underground or overhead construction. The independent experts identified significant constraints with following the Western Highway. This information was included in the Underground Construction Summary report, which was published on the Project website in November 2021.</p>	EES Attachment II: Assessment of feasibility for an underground 500kV transmission line for Western Renewables Link
Concerns for the Project's impact on specific buildings, structures or land	<p>The route selection process included avoiding or minimising impacts to properties and land uses. AusNet gathered information from landholders, community, industry and government to understand the potential impacts and opportunities in the planning, approvals and design stages. This was done through community information</p>	EES Chapter 5: Project development EES Attachment I: Project development

What we heard	Project response	Location in the EES
uses on individual properties	<p>sessions, webinars, Social Pinpoint data mapping, CCG, in-person and remote meetings.</p> <p>LLOs were employed and allocated to landholders along the Proposed Route to address concerns or questions about the Project. Micro-siting of the towers has enabled landholder requests to be considered where practicable, to avoid or minimise impacts on individual properties.</p>	<p>and assessment of alternatives</p> <p>EES Chapter 12: Land use and planning</p> <p>Technical Report E: Land Use and Planning Impact Assessment</p> <p>Technical Report H: Agriculture and Forestry Impact Assessment</p>
Requests for information on the proposed infrastructure, including alternative structures	<p>A Project description and overview of key elements is included in the EES, with information on the assessment of alternative options. The EES includes a Project description chapter and reports on undergrounding and alternatives.</p> <p>AusNet and technical specialists have presented on route selection, undergrounding and alternative construction approaches via webinars and presentations to the TRG, CCG, CAG and councils.</p>	<p>EES Chapter 1: Introduction</p> <p>EES Chapter 6: Project description</p> <p>EES Attachment II: Assessment of feasibility for an underground 500kV transmission line for Western Renewables Link</p> <p>EES Attachment I: Project development and assessment of alternatives</p>
Concerns regarding the undefined location of the Proposed Route of the transmission line in 2020	<p>The community and key stakeholders were invited to submit feedback on the AOI, corridor options, single corridor and the Proposed Route as outlined in Section 4.</p> <p>As refinements to the Project corridor and Proposed Route were made, fact sheets and eUpdates were published on the Project website to explain the route selection process, the updates, and to invite community feedback. Webinars and community information sessions were also held regarding the corridor and route selection process.</p>	EES Chapter 5: Project development
Concerns regarding the decision-making process to determine a preferred route and a lack of consideration for community feedback	<p>Stakeholder and community feedback was integral to the refinement of the Project design, including the Proposed Route.</p> <p>In February 2021, AusNet published the fact sheet 'Corridors and the Next Steps in Determining the Final Route' and met with CCG, CAG, TRG and government stakeholders. The fact sheet supported previously published information on how the Project corridors were developed in partnership with key stakeholders.</p> <p>Throughout 2021, AusNet gathered information from landholders, community, industry and government to understand the potential impacts and opportunities in the planning, approvals and design stage of the Project. The community was invited to participate through information sessions, webinars, online mapping tools and Q&As.</p> <p>In June 2021, AusNet released a fact sheet identifying the preferred single corridor, explaining how it was selected, and summarising the advantages and disadvantages of each corridor to support the selection. The fact sheet was supported by an eUpdate, two webinars and offers to meet with technical specialists online to ask questions.</p> <p>In November 2021, AusNet published a fact sheet on the 'Proposed Route Overview'. It included the route selection criteria and</p>	EES Chapter 5: Project development

What we heard	Project response	Location in the EES
	<p>referenced how community and stakeholder feedback informed the selection. This fact sheet was supported by an eUpdate and two webinars introducing the Proposed Route.</p> <p>In December 2021, AusNet held a webinar on the Proposed Route selection, and Project constraints in Darley, Hepburn Lagoon and Melton. Webinar attendees were able to pose questions to technical specialists, and landholders were encouraged to talk to their LLO.</p> <p>In August 2022, AusNet published an 'Updated Proposed Route Overview' fact sheet detailing how feedback from engagement, field work and technical reports were informing route refinements at a localised and individual property scale.</p> <p>In August 2023, AusNet shared further updates to the Proposed Route in response to changes to the Project scope resulting from AEMO's VNI West RIT-T.</p>	
Requests for information about how the Project's impacts will be considered and assessed	<p>AusNet and DEECA (formerly DELWP) shared information on the EES process and how the Project impacts will be considered. This included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requesting input on the draft scoping requirements • Online information sessions regarding the EES process • Publishing the EES Consultation Plan (March 2021) • Publishing an 'Environmental and Key Project Approvals' fact sheet (June 2021) • Presentations to the TRG, CCG and CAG on the EES process • Updates on environmental studies for the Project via eUpdates, EES information sheets, webinars and one-on-one meetings with specialists • Publishing website content on the planning and approvals process for the Project <p>As part of the development of a draft PSA for the Project, AusNet also sought input on the planning assessment process for the Project through the TRG and individual meetings with councils.</p>	<p>EES Chapter 3: Legislative framework and approval requirements</p> <p>EES Chapter 4: EES assessment framework and approach</p> <p>EES Attachment III: Draft Planning Scheme Amendment</p>
Concern that proper consideration has not been given to an underground option	<p>The EES considered undergrounding (full and partial) as an alternative option to an overhead line. Project investigations concluded that overhead construction is the most appropriate solution.</p> <p>In November 2021, an 'Undergrounding Construction Summary' fact sheet was published, documenting work undertaken to investigate the undergrounding of the line. Presentations and briefings by technical specialists were also held with councils, TRG, CAG and CCG.</p> <p>In early 2024, Moorabool Shire Council confirmed that it disputes the characterisation of underground as an unsuitable design solution and that AusNet's underground report is based on technical design options that are not agreed between council and AusNet. Engagement regarding the Project design is ongoing.</p>	EES Attachment II: Assessment of feasibility for an underground 500kV transmission line for Western Renewables Link
Strong preference for the full transmission line (or sections of the line) to be placed underground	<p>The strong preference for undergrounding of the transmission line has been noted and, in accordance with the final scoping requirements, the EES has considered undergrounding (full and partial) as an alternative to an overhead line. Information on the undergrounding studies undertaken has been shared with the community.</p>	EES Attachment II: Assessment of feasibility for an underground 500kV transmission line for Western Renewables Link

Table 18 Jobs and economy

What we heard	Project response	Location in the EES
<p>Concern about impacts to local businesses</p> <p>Concern about impact on the McCain Foods operation in Wendouree</p>	<p>A detailed technical report on the Project's economic impacts has been undertaken as part of the EES.</p> <p>The Project has been designed to avoid, as far as practicable, direct and indirect impacts on local businesses. Community and key stakeholders concerned about the impacts of the Project on local businesses have been invited to participate in one-on-one meetings with specialists, community information sessions and Q&As.</p>	<p>EES Chapter 14: Economic</p> <p>Technical Report G: Economic Impact Assessment</p>
<p>Concern that economic impacts cannot be mitigated fully, even with compensation being paid</p>	<p>A detailed technical report on the Project's economic impacts has been undertaken as part of the EES. The proposed Environmental Management Framework for the Project includes management measures to mitigate economic impacts.</p>	<p>EES Chapter 14: Economic</p> <p>Technical Report G: Economic Impact Assessment</p> <p>EES Chapter 29: Environmental Management Framework</p>
<p>Project's impact on aviation activities in the region including crop spraying</p> <p>Concern about the effects of the Project on low flying activities</p> <p>Concern about potential impacts on Bacchus Marsh and Melton aerodromes, including future expansion plans</p>	<p>A detailed technical report on the Project's impact on aviation activities has been undertaken as part of the EES, focussing on analysing the construction, operation and decommissioning of the Project as a potential aviation obstacle.</p> <p>Community and key stakeholders were consulted to support Technical Report J: Aviation Impact Assessment and have been invited to participate in one-on-one meetings with specialists, community information sessions and question and answer sessions.</p> <p>EPRs are proposed to mitigate potential impacts of the Project on Melton Aerodrome.</p>	<p>EES Chapter 16: Aviation</p> <p>Technical Report J: Aviation Impact Assessment</p>
<p>Concern about a drop in farm values, which may affect access to capital</p>	<p>Where impacts to farms are unavoidable, landholders who have an easement on their property will be compensated either under the Options for Easement agreement, or in accordance with the <i>Land Acquisition and Compensation Act 1986</i> (Vic), so that they are no worse off financially. The compensation framework includes consideration of a range of factors including loss of market value and highest land use potential (known as 'highest and best use'), loss of use of part of the land, loss of additional value specific to the landholder, and disturbance during construction and development. This compensation offer is designed so that landholders are no worse off financially because of having an easement on their property.</p>	<p>Technical Report H: Agriculture and Forestry Impact Assessment</p>

Table 19 Construction

What we heard	Project response	Location in the EES
Suitability of local roads to support heavy vehicles used for construction	A detailed technical report on the Project's transport impacts has been completed as part of the EES.	EES Chapter 20: Transport Technical Report P: Transport Impact Assessment
Concerns for residents and business from the effects of construction (i.e., changes to local traffic conditions and access routes, disruptive noise, access to essential services)	Community and key stakeholders concerned about the impacts of the Project on their business or home have been invited to participate in one-on-one meetings, community information sessions and Q&A sessions. The potential construction impacts of the Project have been assessed by all disciplines contributing to the EES.	EES Chapter 6: Project description EES Chapter 18: Air quality EES Chapter 19: Noise and vibration EES Chapter 20: Transport EES Chapter 29: Environmental Management Framework Technical reports A to T
Concern about noise from blasting activities during construction	Blasting is not anticipated to be required to construct the towers or any other elements of the Project.	EES Chapter 19: Noise and vibration
Concern about the rehabilitation of temporary access tracks and hardstands	Before construction activities begin, the Project team will meet with landholders to discuss the planned activities, agree on access arrangements and negotiate any site-specific construction measures (such as temporary fencing or moving livestock). All areas used during construction will be remediated after, unless an alternative agreement has been reached with the landholder.	EES Chapter 6: Project description EES Chapter 29: Environmental Management Framework
Concern about the location and management of laydown areas and worksites	Temporary laydown areas are required for the Project's construction. The proposed temporary laydown areas are identified and assessed in the EES. AusNet will communicate with neighbouring landholders about associated local traffic requirements. The Project team published an updated 'Transmission Line Construction' fact sheet in November 2024, with information about the need for temporary laydown areas and their purpose. The fact sheet noted that two of the laydown areas include land associated with the existing terminal stations at Bulgana and Sydenham.	EES Chapter 6: Project description EES chapters 8 – 29 Technical reports A to T

Engagement and consultation process

Table 20 Engagement and consultation process

What we heard	Project response	Location in the EES
Concerns AusNet was withholding information and not adequately responding to community questions about the Project	Community concerns have been raised about the engagement process, particularly in relation to the early stages of the Project development when technical information to respond to community questions was not available. Since then, the Project team has sought to provide comprehensive technical information via fact sheets, landholder guides, preliminary EES information sheets, webinars and via technical specialists at community information sessions and one-on-one meetings.	EES Attachment IV: Stakeholder and community engagement consultation report
Adequacy of access to engagement activities for individuals and groups in the community who do not have internet access or skills	The Project team has undertaken a range of in-person and online engagements. During COVID-19 lockdowns and travel restrictions, the focus was on virtual engagement. When restrictions were lifted, community and stakeholder engagement sessions were held in person, along the Proposed Route and virtually (August to September 2022 and October to November 2023).	EES Attachment IV: Stakeholder and community engagement consultation report

Land impacts

Table 21 Land impacts

What we heard	Project response	Location in the EES
Concerns about impacts on property values including residential, agricultural and horticultural properties	LLOs have worked with landholders to understand land use and property activities, Project-related impacts, easement requirements and potential for compensation. In November 2021, the Project team released a Landholder Guide with information about land access, easements and compensation. This guide was updated based on community feedback in 2022 and 2023. As part of the EES, the Project team has considered mitigation measures to avoid and minimise land use and socioeconomic impacts associated with impacts on property values.	EES Chapter 12: Land use and planning EES Chapter 15: Agriculture and forestry Technical Report E: Land Use and Planning Impact Assessment Technical Report F: Social Impact Assessment Technical Report G: Economic Impact Assessment Technical Report H: Agriculture and Forestry Impact Assessment
Adequate and fair compensation to those impacted	The Project team engaged with landholders regarding compensation valuations for the right to acquire an easement on their property for the proposed Project from August 2023. In March 2023, a guide to the option for easement process and compensation was published, followed by a fact sheet on landholder compensation and payments in November 2023. The Project team has established a detailed compensation process that considers value, severance, special value and disturbance. Landholders are also compensated for disturbances to their property and operations, including sheds, fencing and crops. The fundamentals of the compensation process have been shared in the Landholder Guide. LLOs also support landholders through the easement acquisition and compensation valuation process. To assist in the fair negotiation of easements and compensation, AusNet has committed to reimbursing the reasonable cost of independent legal advice and valuation advice landholders may obtain. Landholders	

What we heard	Project response	Location in the EES
	<p>are encouraged to seek their own valuations, which will be paid for by the Project.</p> <p>So that compensation is fair and fully considers the impact of the easement on properties, a qualified valuer will undertake all compensation valuations. Landholders will have opportunities to discuss the impact of the easement on their property with the valuer and provide information to assist in determining the compensation payable.</p>	
Complaints and concerns regarding land access	<p>The Project team sought to minimise interruption to landholders by making efforts to reduce the level of private land access required for physical surveys and investigations. This included using aerial imagery, undertaking surveys on adjacent and/or representative public land, sourcing survey results and data from other neighbouring projects or land, and prioritising land access based on EES assessment and approval requirements.</p> <p>In mid-2020, information was published on why land access was required, the type of studies and investigations needed, and landholders' rights. Throughout 2021 and 2022, this information was updated to include AusNet's obligations, the Essential Services Commission's SOE, the survey activities and next steps.</p> <p>The Landholder Guide, first released in November 2021, provided a complete summary of the land access process, and LLOs were employed and allocated to individual landholders.</p>	EES Attachment IV: Stakeholder and community engagement consultation report

Agriculture

Table 22 Agriculture

What we heard	Project response	Location in the EES
Uncertainty about whether farming activities can continue under the transmission line	<p>To provide early certainty, the Project team fast-tracked engineering studies to address this concern early in the EES process. The studies confirmed that farming can continue under the transmission line, including growing crops within the easements.</p> <p>In July 2021, guidelines were published to clarify the activities and operation of machinery that will be permitted along the easement. Information was redistributed in November 2021 via the Landholder Guide. In September 2023, the Project team published a 'Permitted Vehicle and Equipment Heights' fact sheet to address community concerns and outline the differences between the existing AusNet transmission network height clearances and restrictions, and those proposed for the Project.</p>	EES Chapter 15: Agriculture and forestry Technical Report H: Agriculture and Forestry Impact Assessment
Impact of the Project on productivity of farming properties Concern about having to change farming practices or buy new machinery to accommodate the Project	<p>A detailed technical report on the Project's impact on agriculture and forestry has been completed as part of the EES. As part of this assessment, the Project's potential impacts on existing agriculture and forestry land uses and business operations have been considered.</p> <p>Key stakeholders and the community were invited to participate in one-on-one meetings, information sessions and Q&As; and the services of an independent agriculture and forestry specialist have been made available to landholders.</p> <p>As a result of landholder and community feedback, the Project has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designed the proposed 500kV transmission line with a higher minimum ground clearance of 15m. This will allow vehicles and equipment of up to 5m in height to travel and operate within the transmission line easement. In addition, vehicles and equipment 	EES Chapter 12: Land use and planning EES Chapter 15: Agriculture and forestry Technical Report H: Agriculture and Forestry Impact Assessment

What we heard	Project response	Location in the EES
Concern regarding the impact on current and future agriculture, crops and animal products produced by the region	<p>with a height of between 5 and 8.6m may be permitted to travel and operate under the transmission line, subject to an AusNet safety assessment. This information was included in the 'Permitted Vehicle and Equipment Heights' fact sheet, published in September 2023.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Added the use of drones as a permitted activity to provide an additional way for farmers to spray (e.g., for pests) if traditional delivery is unavailable. <p>Farming activities under the transmission line was also a key consultation topic for community information sessions and webinars throughout October and November 2023.</p>	
Project's impact on farming businesses with organic certification / impact on organic certification of local producers	<p>An overarching Property Access Management Plan (PAMP) will be developed to detail the process and procedures to be followed to access landholders' properties for investigation, construction, operation and decommissioning of the Project. The PAMP will cover landholder notification procedures and biosecurity requirements including sanitisation, registers and monitoring.</p> <p>In April 2023, the Project team published a biosecurity fact sheet with information on biosecurity and the controls that had been implemented to prevent impacts to land use and harm to individuals and the environment.</p>	
Concern for the welfare of livestock near the transmission line	<p>As part of the EES, the agriculture and forestry technical specialist considered potential disruption to livestock during the construction, operation and decommissioning of the Project. The electromagnetic interference (EMI) and electric and magnetic fields (EMF) specialists also considered potential impacts to livestock. Community and key stakeholders were also invited to participate in one-on-one meetings, information sessions and Q&As. The Project team also hosted a webinar in September 2021 to address concerns regarding EMF.</p>	<p>EES Chapter 12: Land use and planning</p> <p>EES Chapter 17: EMI and EMF</p> <p>Technical Report H: Agriculture and Forestry Impact Assessment</p> <p>Technical Report L: EMI and EMF Impact Assessment</p>
Concerns that the Project Area contains high value agricultural land that supports many agricultural businesses	<p>Route selection sought to avoid or minimise impacts on properties and land uses, including agricultural land uses.</p> <p>The Project team gathered information from landholders, community, industry and government to understand the potential impacts and opportunities in the planning, approvals and design stages. This was done through community information sessions, webinars, Social Pinpoint data mapping, the CCG, in person and remote meetings.</p> <p>As part of the EES, the potential impacts on high-value agricultural land and associated businesses have been assessed.</p>	<p>EES Chapter 12: Land use and planning</p> <p>EES Chapter 15: Agriculture and forestry</p> <p>Technical Report H: Agriculture and Forestry Impact Assessment</p>

Landscape and visual amenity

Table 23 Landscape and visual amenity

What we heard	Project response	Location in the EES
Concern about the visual impact that the Project would have on the	<p>A detailed technical report on the Project's landscape and visual impacts has been undertaken as part of the EES.</p> <p>As part of the preparation of the LVIA, technical specialists considered Social Pinpoint data collected from stakeholders and the community on locations and areas of significance. Landscape and visual technical specialists participated in community drop-in</p>	<p>EES Chapter 11: Landscape and visual</p> <p>Technical Report D: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment</p>

What we heard	Project response	Location in the EES
local landscape, including key view lines identified in the Social Pinpoint data	<p>sessions, webinars and one-on-one meetings to further understand concerns and collaborate on appropriate mitigation measures.</p> <p>As part of the LVIA, alternative solutions have been identified and evaluated to help avoid and minimise potential impacts.</p>	<p>EES Attachment I: Project development and assessment of alternatives</p> <p>EES Attachment II: Assessment of feasibility for an underground 500kV transmission line for Western Renewables Link</p>
Concerns for the impact of the Project on the internet, mobile phone, everyday household equipment and mobile agricultural equipment	<p>A detailed technical report on the Project's impacts has been undertaken as part of the EES, including investigations into radio interference from the proposed transmission line.</p> <p>The Project team held a webinar in September 2021 to better inform the community on the risks and impacts of EMI and EMF. A technical specialist also attended community information sessions in December 2021 and a community drop-in session in Brown Hill in August 2022.</p> <p>The FAQs on the Project website also provide publicly available information on EMI and EMF, including advice from the World Health Organisation and the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency.</p>	<p>EES Chapter 17: EMI and EMF</p> <p>Technical Report L: EMI and EMF Impact Assessment</p>
Concern about the impact the Project would have on the 'country lifestyle' that attracted people to the region	<p>Throughout 2021, the Project team gathered information from landholders, community, industry and government to understand the potential impacts and opportunities in the planning, approvals and design stages of the Project. The community was invited to participate through information sessions, webinars, online mapping tools and Q&As.</p> <p>As feedback has been received on the Proposed Route, information has been shared with the Project team for consideration. In assessing the potential effects of the Project as part of the EES, technical specialists collected data on the existing environment and likely trends affecting local amenity.</p>	<p>EES Chapter 11: Landscape and visual</p> <p>EES Chapter 12: Land use and planning</p> <p>EES Chapter 21: Social</p> <p>Technical Report D: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment</p> <p>Technical Report E: Land Use and Planning Impact Assessment</p> <p>Technical Report F: Social Impact Assessment</p>
Physical division of local communities by the new transmission line	<p>The Project team gathered information from landholders, community, industry and government to understand the potential impacts and opportunities in the planning, approvals and design stages. This was done via community information sessions, webinars, Social Pinpoint data mapping, CCG, in person and remote meetings.</p> <p>In selecting the Proposed Route, the Project team sought to maximise distances to houses and other sensitive facilities and avoid severing or separating large areas of properties. LLOs were employed and allocated to landholders along the corridor to address individual concerns.</p>	<p>EES Chapter 5: Project development</p> <p>EES Chapter 6: Project description</p> <p>EES Chapter 12: Land use and planning</p> <p>EES Chapter 21: Social</p> <p>Technical Report E: Land Use and Planning Impact Assessment</p> <p>Technical Report F: Social Impact Assessment</p>

What we heard	Project response	Location in the EES
Importance of old cypress tree shelter belts along property boundaries and roadways	<p>The route selection process included avoiding windbreak plantings and shelter belts or designing to reduce impacts where unavoidable. This included old cypress tree shelter belts along property boundaries and roadways.</p> <p>Where information, such as shelter belts, has been shared with the Project team, the information has been referred to technical specialists for consideration as part of the EES. The Proposed Route avoids windbreak plantings where practicable.</p>	EES Chapter 5: Project development

Health and safety

Table 24 Health and safety

What we heard	Project response	Location in the EES
Concern about the health implications of living and working near High Voltage (HV) transmission structures, especially in relation to EMF	<p>AusNet recognises community concerns regarding the health implications of living and working near high voltage transmission structures and the associated EMF. In line with EES scoping requirements for the Project, AusNet will avoid (or minimise where avoidance is not possible) adverse effects for community amenity, health and safety.</p> <p>A detailed technical report on the Project's EMI and EMF impacts has been undertaken as part of the EES. The Project team has informed the community of associated risks and impacts via a webinar (September 2021), and via community information sessions (December 2021) and drop-in sessions in Brown Hill and Melton in August 2022. The FAQs on the Project website also provide EMF resources published by the World Health Organisation, and Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency.</p>	EES Chapter 17: EMI and EMF Technical Report L: EMI and EMF Impact Assessment
Concerns about the impacts of EMI and EMF on system controlling tanks for Smeaton water supply	<p>AusNet will avoid (or minimise where avoidance is not possible) adverse effects for community amenity, health and safety. As part of the EES, a technical report has investigated the potential impacts of EMI and EMF. In Smeaton, there is a section of the Project near Smeaton Hill that has been considered in this assessment.</p>	EES Chapter 17: EMI and EMF Technical Report L: EMI and EMF Impact Assessment
Concern that compensation will be insufficient to cover costs for landholders who want to move buildings to avoid potential health risks	<p>The health and safety aspects of the Project have been assessed in detail, with appropriate controls in place to protect human health.</p> <p>Compensation will be paid to landholders where an easement is acquired over their property. The fundamentals of the compensation process have been shared in the Landholder Guide. LLOs also support landholders with the easement acquisition and compensation valuation process.</p>	EES Chapter 17: EMI and EMF EES Chapter 18: Air quality EES Chapter 19: Noise and vibration Technical Report I: Air Quality Impact Assessment Technical Report L: EMI and EMF Impact Assessment Technical Report O: Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment

What we heard	Project response	Location in the EES
Noise and vibration impacts to people, wildlife and livestock	Detailed technical reports into the Project's noise and vibration impacts have been undertaken as part of the EES, including assessment of the potential impacts of noise and vibration on livestock and wildlife.	EES Chapter 19: Noise and vibration Technical Report A: Biodiversity Impact Assessment Technical Report H: Agriculture and Forestry Impact Assessment Technical Report O: Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment
Concern about increased risk of bushfire to properties and communities	AusNet acknowledges that bushfire, and any impact on firefighting effort, is a significant concern for communities along the Proposed Route and continues to speak with stakeholders about this concern.	EES Chapter 13: Bushfire EES Chapter 6: Project description Technical Report K: Bushfire Impact Assessment
Concerns associated with tower collapse leading to ignition	Through Project development, design and planning, the Project team has consulted with stakeholders and the community regarding bushfire risks. This has included direct engagement with the CFA, Forest Fire Management Victoria, the Grampians Regional Emergency Management Planning Committee and councils.	
Potential for transmission line to prevent or reduce effectiveness of planned or hazard reduction burning to manage bushfire fuels and fire conditions	A detailed technical report of the Project's potential bushfire impacts has been undertaken as part of the EES. To respond to community concerns about bushfire, the Project team released the fact sheet 'Managing Fire Risk', hosted a bushfire webinar (September 2021), and addressed bushfire concerns via in-person engagement sessions.	
Access to firegrounds by emergency services and/or egress from firegrounds ahead of an approaching bushfire	In October 2023, the Project team published the CFA's 'Firefighting and the transmission line' information sheet on the Project website. The FAQs provide information on aerial firefighting, smoke and electrical safety risks and recommended vegetation types for under the transmission line. AusNet's bushfire technical specialist directly engaged with community members via a webinar, one-on-one virtual consultations, and in-person meetings. AusNet will work with Emergency Management Victoria and the CFA so that aerial firefighting can operate in the vicinity of the high-voltage transmission line, as has been done for other transmission lines across Victoria.	
Bushfire risks associated with the transmission line	AusNet has guidance materials, procedures manuals and other documentation that workforce personnel and the Principal Contractor are required to follow for the safe construction, operation and decommissioning of the transmission line, terminal stations and associated infrastructure. A number of these documents are required by regulatory authorities (such as Energy Safe Victoria) and are subject to approval by these authorities.	
Questions about how critical aerial and ground firefighting services would operate with the transmission line		

Social and community

Table 25 Social and community

What we heard	Project response	Location in the EES
Concern about visual and physical impacts on the use of public land, including for recreational uses and community events, and as gathering places	<p>Detailed technical reports into the Project's land use and planning, social, and landscape and visual impacts have been undertaken as part of the EES.</p> <p>The Project has been designed to avoid, as far as practicable, valued community land uses and public infrastructure. Where impacts cannot be avoided, the Proposed Route has been set back from sensitive land uses as much as possible.</p> <p>Specialists gathered information from landholders, community, industry and government to understand the Project's potential impacts. This was done through community information sessions, webinars, Social Pinpoint data mapping, the CCG, in-person meetings and online.</p>	<p>EES Chapter 11: Landscape and visual</p> <p>EES Chapter 12: Land use and planning</p> <p>EES Chapter 20: Transport</p> <p>EES Chapter 21: Social</p>
Concern about impacts on people's enjoyment of the natural environment	<p>Stakeholder and community members concerned about the impacts of the Project on the social, land use, landscape and visual and community amenity have been invited to participate in one-on-one meetings with specialists, information sessions and Q&As.</p> <p>The Project team has engaged with councils as well as community and tenant groups of council facilities to better understand concerns, providing feedback shared with Project specialists to inform assessments, particularly regarding MacPherson Park and the Coimadai War Memorial area.</p>	<p>Technical Report D: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment</p> <p>Technical Report E: Land Use and Planning Impact Assessment</p>
Concern about impacts on specific community infrastructure and facilities	<p>Where there are potential impacts, technical specialists have proposed management measures.</p>	<p>Technical Report F: Social Impact Assessment</p> <p>Technical Report P: Transport Impact Assessment</p>
Concern about impacts on local council land use strategies and policies, strategic and community projects, significant places and valued land uses	<p>The Project team has engaged with councils and listened to their concerns. Consultation with land managers and authorities responsible for the implementation of relevant strategic land use plans and policies has informed the development of the Project planning approval documentation. This includes the conditions in the Incorporated Document proposed as part of the draft PSA for the Project.</p>	
Visual impacts are a risk for the tourism industry within the region	<p>The potential impacts on tourism businesses, including visual impacts, were considered in the EES and will be managed and mitigated through a range of measures, including landscaping and screening with vegetation.</p> <p>Community and key stakeholders concerned about the impacts of the Project on tourism and their businesses have been invited to participate in one-on-one meetings with specialists, information sessions and Q&As.</p>	<p>EES Chapter 11: Landscape and visual</p> <p>EES Chapter 21: Social</p> <p>Technical Report D: Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment</p> <p>Technical Report F: Social Impact Assessment</p>

What we heard	Project response	Location in the EES
Potential for strong family histories and ties to farming properties to be disrupted	When raising concerns about the Project's potential effect on agriculture, visual amenity and health and safety, investigations found that community members typically did so in terms of factors associated with the experience of place attachment. For example, many indicated their family had lived in an area, or on a particular property, for generations. Community members concerned about the potential for the Project to disrupt strong family histories and ties to farming properties have been invited to participate in one-on-one meetings with specialists, information sessions and Q&As.	EES Chapter 21: Social Technical Report F: Social Impact Assessment

Valued places and heritage

Table 26 Valued places and heritage

What we heard	Project response	Location in the EES
Concern about impacts to Glenpedder Homestead in Greendale and Darley Military Camp	The Historical Heritage Impact Assessment considers the potential impact of the Project on historical heritage values.	EES Chapter 10: Historical heritage Technical Report C: Historical Heritage Impact Assessment
Concern about whether the Project could impact the proposed UNESCO World Heritage nomination of the Victorian Central Goldfields	<p>The Project crosses the former Berry Deep Leads Mining Landscape north of Creswick. This area is situated within a wider area that is the subject of the proposed United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) serial nomination of the Central Victorian Goldfields to the World Heritage List.</p> <p>Technical Report C: Historical Heritage Impact Assessment considers the possible nomination of the Central Victorian Goldfields for inscription in the UNESCO World Heritage list and provides assessment of the likely Project impacts.</p>	
Concern about impact of the Project on heritage sites and features including Avenues of Honour, 1800s flour mills, gold mining and geological sites	<p>The avoidance of historic heritage sites informed route selection and played an important role in selecting the Proposed Route. The Proposed Route of the transmission line, the location of the towers and construction related infrastructure largely avoids any direct physical impact on heritage places.</p> <p>Social Pinpoint data recorded heritage places and sites in the region and was used in the development of Technical Report C: Historical Heritage Impact Assessment. Community and key stakeholders were also invited to participate in one-on-one meetings with specialists, community information sessions and Q&As.</p> <p>The assessment considered all known heritage places, including those not formally recognised or protected.</p>	
Concern about impacts to known areas and features that are sensitive for Aboriginal cultural heritage and that hold Aboriginal cultural values	<p>AusNet has worked closely with RAPs and Traditional Owner groups across the Project to identify tangible and intangible cultural heritage values. The avoidance of Aboriginal cultural heritage sites informed route selection and played an important role in selecting the Proposed Route.</p> <p>Technical Report B: Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment identified the key activities that have potential to impact Aboriginal Cultural Heritage throughout the construction, operation and decommissioning stages of the Project.</p>	EES Chapter 9: Aboriginal cultural heritage Technical Report B: Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment

What we heard	Project response	Location in the EES
<p>Concern about the potential for impacts on previously unidentified Aboriginal cultural heritage values</p> <p>Concern about visual impacts from the presence of Project structures on cultural landscapes and features, especially waterways</p>	<p>CVAs have been completed for each RAP area that the Project intersects. These CVAs identify broader tangible and intangible values through consultation with the relevant Aboriginal stakeholders, and relevant oral history and broader values incorporating landscapes, biodiversity, and contemporary values.</p> <p>Nine CHMPs are being prepared for the Project, to identify and manage Aboriginal Cultural Heritage values within the Project Area. Key stakeholders and the community have also been invited to participate in one-on-one meetings with specialists, information sessions and Q&As.</p> <p>The Project team will implement all practicable measures to avoid, minimise or mitigate potential cultural heritage impacts during the construction, operation and decommissioning stages. This includes selecting a construction method, using well-tested industry controls and consulting with RAPs, Traditional Owner groups, First Peoples – State Relations, local councils and landholders to avoid or mitigate impacts to known and previously unidentified Aboriginal cultural heritage values.</p>	
<p>Questions about the level of engagement being undertaken with Aboriginal people and communities</p>	<p>The Project team has formally engaged with RAPs, Traditional Owner representatives and First Peoples – State Relations as part of the development of the Project. This includes inception and introductory meetings, regular discussions about the EES and CHMP cultural heritage impact assessment methodologies, CVAs, conducting field investigations and fieldwork result meetings.</p> <p>The RAPs and Traditional Owner groups were integral to identifying and understanding traditional and contemporary Aboriginal cultural heritage matters, so they could then be factored into Technical Report B: Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment.</p>	<p>EES Chapter 9: Aboriginal cultural heritage</p> <p>Technical Report B: Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment</p>

Biodiversity and water

Table 27 Biodiversity and water

What we heard	Project response	Location in the EES
<p>Questions about how much vegetation clearance will be required to construct the Project and how this will be minimised and monitored</p> <p>Concern about impacts on important remnant roadside vegetation, riparian corridors, hollow-bearing trees and habitat for native fauna</p>	<p>The avoidance of native vegetation has been an important design parameter for the Project. Technical Report A: Biodiversity Impact Assessment describes how the Project team sought to avoid impacts to native vegetation and provides an assessment of the potential impacts to native vegetation.</p> <p>In November 2021, the Project team published a preliminary biodiversity EES information sheet for existing conditions, with a summary of the existing conditions identified by a technical specialist for biodiversity within the AOI. Key stakeholders and the community were invited to participate in one-on-one meetings with technical specialists, information sessions and Q&As.</p> <p>A biodiversity webinar was also held in September 2021, covering the Project's approach to investigations, community contributions to the study and key biodiversity risks and values.</p> <p>In August 2023, the Project team published a series of EES field survey and investigations information sheets that included the approach to identifying and surveying flora and fauna within the Project Area.</p>	<p>EES Chapter 8: Biodiversity and habitat</p> <p>Technical Report A: Biodiversity Impact Assessment</p>

What we heard	Project response	Location in the EES
Concern about fragmentation of habitat	The fragmentation of habitat and potential impacts on fauna movement for dispersal and migration is an important ecological impact. Technical Report A: Biodiversity Impact Assessment provides a full assessment of the Project's potential fragmentation impacts.	
Questions about potential impacts to revegetation projects and established and establishing Biolinks	As part of the stakeholder engagement undertaken for Technical Report A: Biodiversity Impact Assessment , Landcare groups, government agencies and councils were consulted to support the preparation of the impact assessment and inform the development of the Project. Biodiversity restoration projects, biodiversity corridors, biolinks and conservation reserves were considered in the assessment.	
Concern about impacts to threatened flora and fauna species	Beginning in 2020, extensive ecological field work was undertaken to record the presence of threatened flora and fauna species. This field work was conducted in accordance with applicable guidelines developed by national and state scientific committees and advice and input from relevant Commonwealth and Victorian Government departments. Technical Report A: Biodiversity Impact Assessment provides a full assessment of the impacts to threatened flora and fauna species recorded in the Project Area, including those with the potential to occur but not recorded through field work.	
Concern about impacts to other fauna species, including kangaroos, wombats, platypus, bats, broilgas and raptors	Biodiversity includes the full range of species in the area, not just those listed as threatened. Technical Report A: Biodiversity Impact Assessment includes a full assessment of biodiversity values, with Social Pinpoint data also considered.	
Concern about collision and electrocution risks for birds	An Avian Collision Risk Review was completed as part of the Technical Report A: Biodiversity Impact Assessment . The assessment considered the risks potentially posed by the Project relating to collision or electrocution of birds.	
Impact on National Parks, State Parks and Nature Conservation Reserves and ecologically significant areas	The avoidance of ecologically significant areas has been an important design parameter for the Project. The Project team sought to avoid large areas of native vegetation and habitat, and easements that fragment national and state parks. Technical Report A: Biodiversity Impact Assessment provides a full assessment of how the Project team sought to avoid such impacts.	
Identification of specific biodiversity values, including threatened flora locations and places such as Long Forest Nature Conservation Reserve (also known as the Long Forest Nature Flora and Fauna Reserve)	Key stakeholders and community members interested in biodiversity impacts have been invited to participate in one-on-one meetings with specialists, information sessions and Q&As. A biodiversity webinar was held (September 2021) to address AusNet's approach to investigations, community contributions to the study, and key biodiversity risks and values.	

What we heard	Project response	Location in the EES
Need to avoid impacts on high value waterways	<p>Technical Report T: Surface Water Impact Assessment identified high value waterways, reaches, or catchment characteristics and considered the Project's potential impacts on these waterways.</p> <p>Specialists gathered information from landholders, community, industry and government to understand the potential impacts. This was done through community information sessions, webinars, Social Pinpoint data mapping, the CCG, in-person meetings and online. Community and key stakeholders were invited to participate in one-on-one meetings with specialists, information sessions and Q&As.</p>	<p>EES Chapter 25: Surface water</p> <p>Technical Report T: Surface Water Impact Assessment</p>
<p>Concern about runoff and erosion impacts on waterways</p> <p>Management of flood impacts, if structures are located within a floodplain</p>	<p>Detailed technical reports into the Project's surface water and groundwater impacts have been undertaken as part of the EES.</p> <p>The potential surface water impacts were identified and assessed, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential damage to stream beds and banks (and associated flora and fauna) • Impacts to any high value wetlands, waterways, protected species and ecosystems • Degradation of surface water quality • Possible flood impacts to properties, the environment, people and infrastructure 	<p>EES Chapter 23: Contaminated land</p> <p>EES Chapter 24: Groundwater</p> <p>EES Chapter 25: Surface water</p> <p>EES Chapter 26: Greenhouse Gas</p>
<p>Concern about possible impacts on spring-fed dams used by potato farmers near Bungaree</p> <p>Managing risks to groundwater quality</p>	<p>The groundwater assessment reviewed the Project's design specifications against existing known hydrogeological conditions to identify whether any works, activities or structures could be expected to impact the watertable, groundwater, or flow processes.</p> <p>Specialists gathered information from landholders, community, industry and government to understand the potential impacts. This was done via community information sessions, webinars, Social Pinpoint data mapping, the CCG, in-person and remote meetings. Community and key stakeholders were also invited to participate in one-on-one meetings with specialists, community information sessions and Q&As.</p>	<p>Technical Report M: Greenhouse Gas Impact Assessment</p> <p>Technical Report R: Contaminated Land Impact Assessment</p> <p>Technical Report S: Groundwater Impact Assessment</p> <p>Technical Report T: Surface Water Impact Assessment</p>
Concerns about potential for groundwater contamination at terminal station sites due to storage of oils	<p>Some equipment at terminal station sites – such as transformers – contain oil and are contained within a bunded area. The design for the storage of oils includes an oily water treatment downstream so that any water exiting from the terminal station site is clean and within the guidelines of EPA Victoria. In the event of system maintenance or failure, there is a main valve that can be closed to prevent water exiting the site if required.</p>	

What we heard	Project response	Location in the EES
Possibility of encountering groundwater bores and other watering systems during construction	<p>Technical Report S: Groundwater Impact Assessment reviewed the Project's design specifications against existing known hydrogeological conditions to identify whether any works, activities or structures could be expected to impact the watertable, groundwater, or flow processes.</p> <p>The physical presence of above ground infrastructure has the potential to compress underlying material, resulting in less aquifer storage capacity, which raises the watertable and impacts existing groundwater bores (users). Due to the expected footprint of the terminal station sites and towers, compared to the regional extent of most aquifers in the Project's study area, any change to water level is expected to be limited and short-term.</p> <p>Geotechnical due diligence prior to works will sufficiently mitigate the possibility of encountering groundwater bores and other watering systems during construction of terminal station sites or tower footings.</p>	<p>EES Chapter 24: Groundwater</p> <p>EES Chapter 25: Surface water</p> <p>Technical Report R: Contaminated Land Impact Assessment</p> <p>Technical Report S: Groundwater Impact Assessment</p> <p>Technical Report T: Surface Water Impact Assessment</p>
Concerns about the greenhouse gas emissions associated with the construction and operation of the transmission line	<p>Technical Report M: Greenhouse Gas Impact Assessment has been undertaken as part of the EES. The assessment has quantified the predicted emissions from the construction, operation and decommissioning of the Project.</p>	<p>EES Chapter 26: Greenhouse Gas</p> <p>Technical Report M: Greenhouse Gas Impact Assessment</p>

6. Key feedback by section

6.1. Section 1: Bulgana to Waubra

The key feedback themes from Section 1: Bulgana to Waubra include:

- **Agriculture:** farming practice impacts
- **Land impacts:** using existing easements
- **Health and safety:** cumulative impacts (from existing 220kV line and wind farms) including EMF and visual impact
- **Valued places and heritage:** Aboriginal cultural heritage sites
- **Jobs and economy:** economic development opportunities.

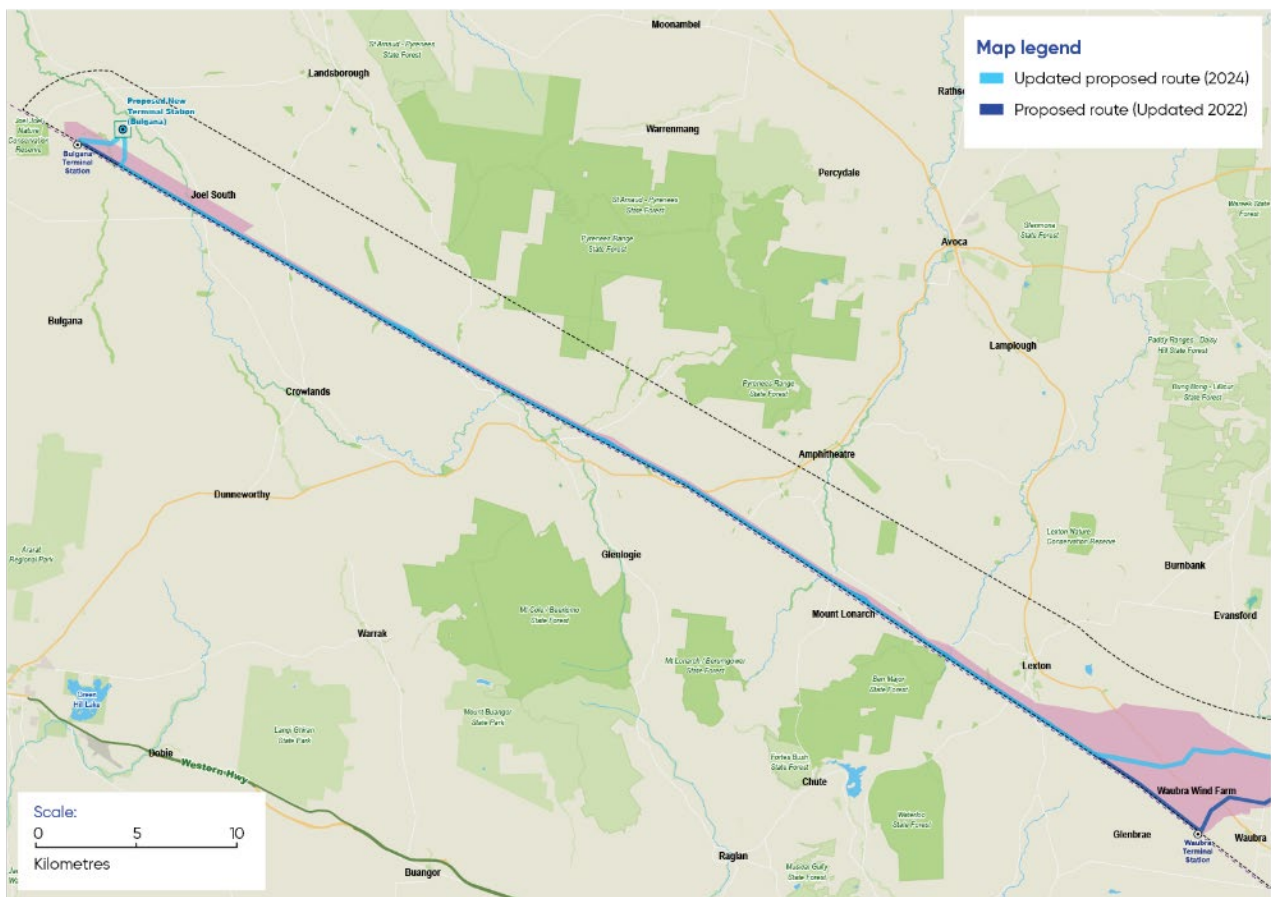


Figure 13 Section1: Bulgana to Waubra

6.2. Section 2: Waubra to Glendonald

The key feedback themes from Section 2: Waubra to Glendonald include:

- **Project development and Proposed Route selection:** advocacy for undergrounding, Proposed Route selection and tower placement
- **Agriculture:** land use and operational impacts, including the use of irrigation equipment and aerial spraying, loss of land, biosecurity and risks to potato growing region
- **Health and safety:** EMF, human health, bushfire risk and impact on firefighting operations
- **Landscape and visual amenity:** impacts on viewpoints of Mount Bolton and Mount Beckworth
- **Biodiversity and water:** impacts on groundwater supply
- **Valued places and heritage:** Aboriginal cultural heritage sites.

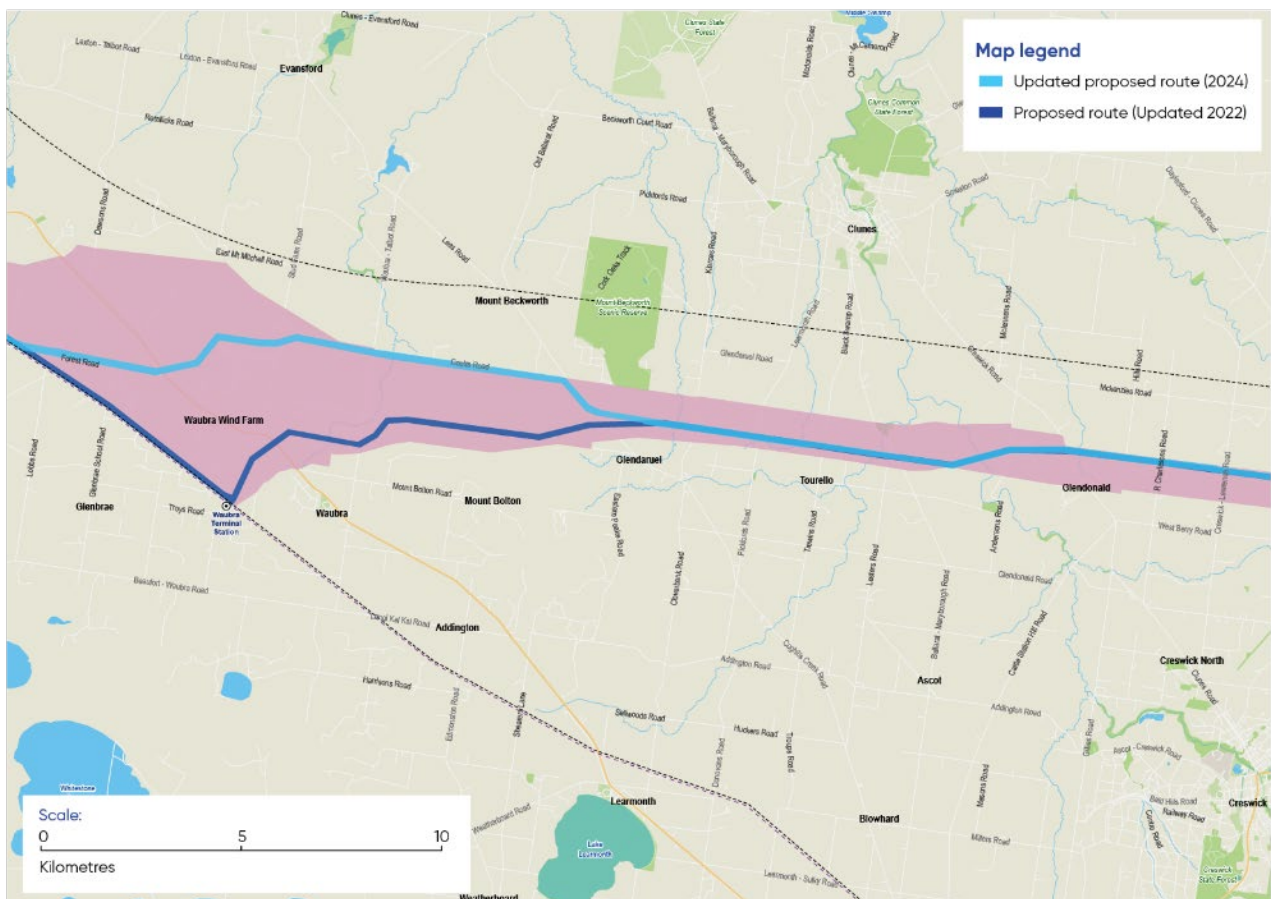


Figure 14 Section 2: Waubra to Glendonald

6.3. Section 3: Glendonald to Mount Prospect

The key feedback themes from Section 3: Glendonald to Mount Prospect include:

- **Project development and Proposed Route selection:** former terminal station proposed location, advocacy for undergrounding, Proposed Route selection and tower placement
- **Agriculture:** land use and operational impacts, including the use of irrigation equipment and aerial spraying, loss of land, biosecurity and risks to potato growing region
- **Health and safety:** bushfire risk and impact on firefighting operations
- **Landscape and visual amenity:** impacts on viewpoints of Mount Prospect and Hepburn Lagoon
- **Biodiversity and water:** impacts on groundwater supply, flora and fauna impacts
- **Valued places and heritage:** Aboriginal cultural heritage sites and historic gold mining sites
- **Social and community:** proximity to houses, tourism impacts, cumulative impacts of new transmission line developments, and new renewable generators.

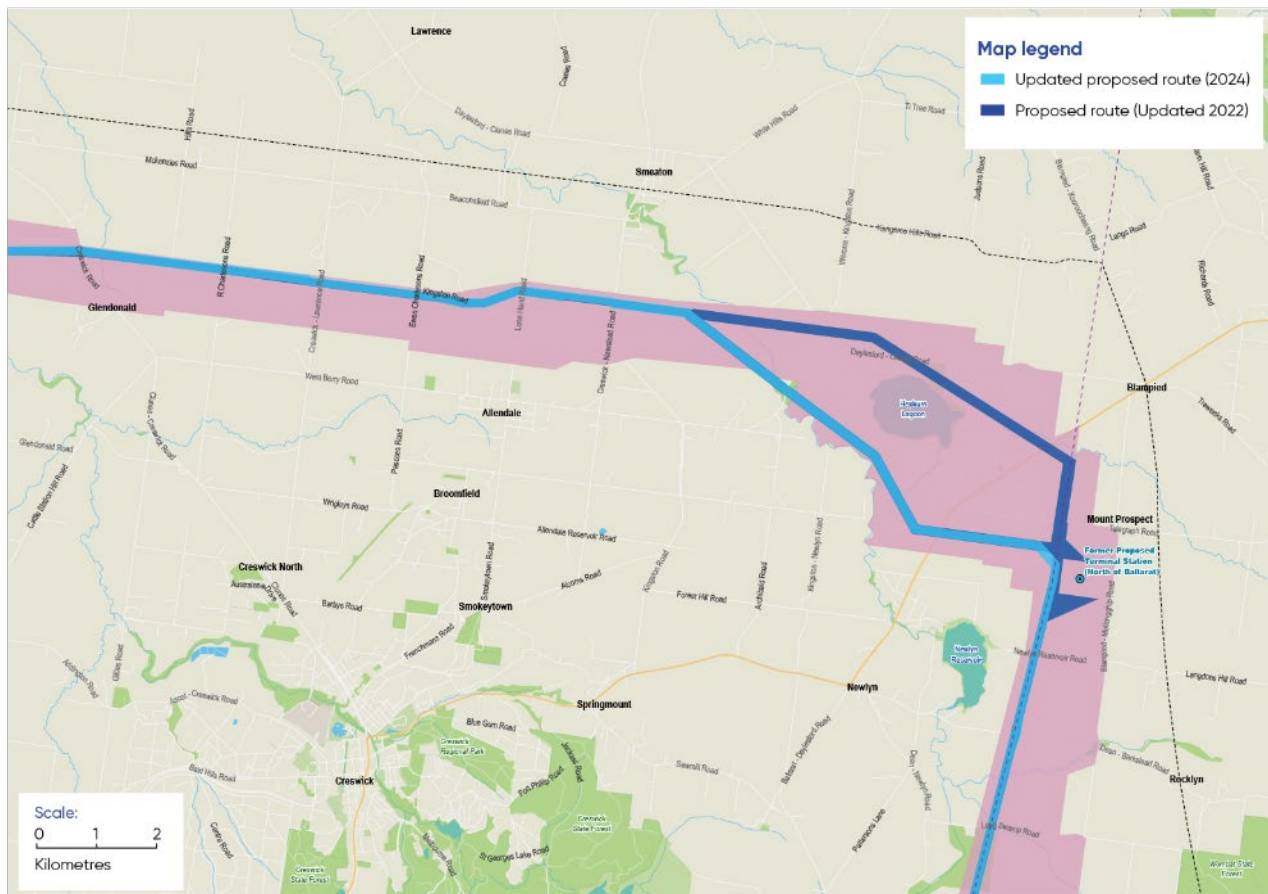


Figure 15 Section 3: Glendonald to Mount Prospect

6.4. Section 4: Mount Prospect to Long Forest

The key feedback themes from Section 4: Mount Prospect to Long Forest include:

- **Project development and Proposed Route selection:** terminal station proposed location, advocacy for undergrounding, and Proposed Route selection
- **Agriculture:** land use and operational impacts, including the use of irrigation equipment and aerial spraying, horticulture impacts
- **Health and safety:** bushfire risk and impact on firefighting operations, including EMF and visual impact
- **Landscape and visual amenity:** impacts on views from Darley and Lerderderg State Park
- **Biodiversity and water:** impacts on groundwater supply, flora and fauna impacts such as impacts on the Wombat State Forest and Lerderderg State Park
- **Valued places and heritage:** Aboriginal cultural heritage sites, historical sites including Darley military camp and former mining sites, and historical values around Kingston township (Avenue of Honour)
- **Social and community:** proximity to houses, impact on rural amenity and lifestyle, community facilities at Merrimu Reservoir, proximity to social and recreational facilities (Coimadai Primary School) and townships of Darley and Myrning
- **Land impacts:** property devaluation
- **Jobs and economy:** impact on quarry operations.



Figure 16 Section 4: Mount Prospect to Long Forest

6.5. Section 5: Long Forest to Sydenham

The key feedback themes from Section 5: Long Forest to Sydenham include:

- **Project development and Proposed Route selection:** advocacy for undergrounding
- **Landscape and visual amenity:** impacts on local viewpoints
- **Valued places and heritage:** Aboriginal cultural heritage sites, historical heritage sites including homesteads
- **Social and community:** proximity to houses, impact on residential land uses in peri-urban areas, urban growth boundary, impact on community facilities in the MacPherson Park area including school, sporting fields and aerodrome
- **Land impacts:** property devaluation
- **Jobs and economy:** Equine industry impacts including horse breeding and trainers.

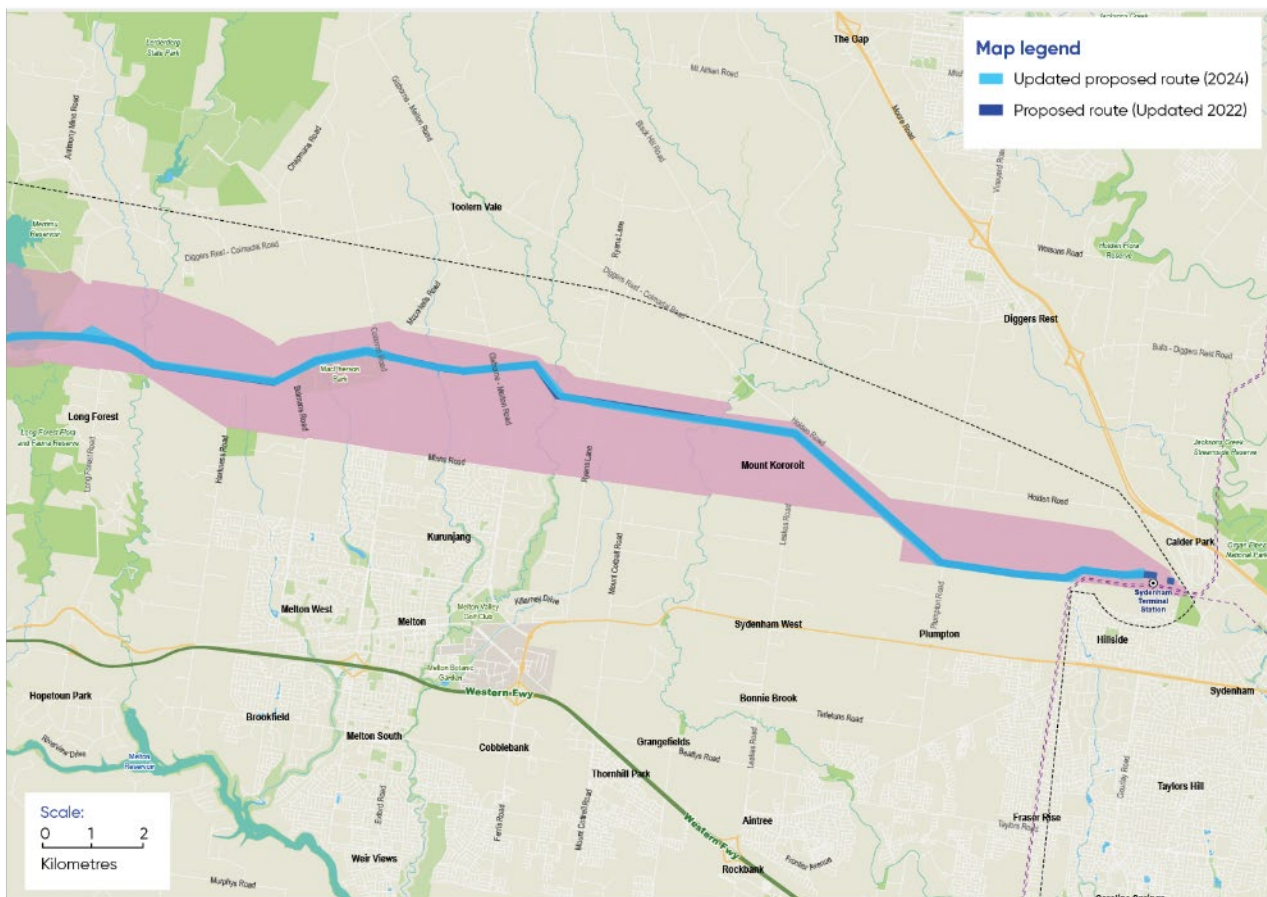


Figure 17 Section 5: Long Forest to Sydenham

7. Next steps

7.1. Measurement and evaluation

The Project team is committed to continuous improvement of stakeholder, landholder and community engagement throughout the life of the Project, including the EES process and the construction and operation stages (subject to Project approval). The Project team will monitor and audit findings throughout the Project, including with the Principal Contractor. Information collected will support the planning and delivery of future engagement activities.

Monitoring the effectiveness of engagement will occur at regular intervals through a range of measures. Examples of the types of measures include:

- Compliance with enquiries and complaints protocols
- Regular reviews of engagement plans
- Lessons learned processes
- Tracking of opportunities and issues
- Data review of Project website analytics and media coverage

AusNet completes a social license assessment annually to gauge progress. This assessment includes both qualitative and quantitative data from within the Project's LGAs but also across Victoria. This data is used to inform engagement efforts for the following year and is planned to continue throughout the construction period. Feedback is also regularly sought through the CCG, as well as via periodic online surveys.

Data will be captured as part of the EES program such as participation, reach and effectiveness of communication and engagement during the relevant stages. This will enable the Project to report against achieving engagement objectives. Data will be analysed as part of the subsequent social license assessment.

7.2. Future engagement

If the Project is approved by decision-makers following their consideration of the Minister's assessment, the Project team will continue working closely with the community and stakeholders – including landholders and neighbouring landholders – during secondary approvals, construction and operation.

AusNet is committed to undertaking best practice engagement during delivery of the Project so that community and stakeholders have meaningful opportunities to participate in the Project. Future engagement will help to minimise the potential impact of the Project's construction and operation on those living in and around the Project Area.

Underpinning the approach adopted by the Principal Contractor during construction and operation will be AusNet's key values and principles – understanding, openness, respect and responsiveness. The principles will guide the design and delivery of all Project communication and engagement activities and opportunities that complement AusNet's own activities.

For the construction stage, EPR EM5 requires that the Principal Contractor develop communications and stakeholder engagement management plans, while EPR EM7 requires development and implementation of a complaints management system. These EPRs are shown in Table 28. During operation, AusNet's existing communications and stakeholder engagement system (including complaints management system), which applies to all of AusNet's transmission network assets, will be adopted.

Table 28 EPRs

Code	Details	Project component	Stage
EM5	<p>Develop and implement a Communications and Stakeholder Engagement Management Plan</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prior to commencement of construction, develop and implement a Communications and Stakeholder Engagement Management Plan (CSEMP) to guide communication and engagement activities during construction to enable timely and accurate provision of information and address matters required by other EPRs. 2. The CSEMP should be consistent with the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) core values and outline: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Engagement principles and objectives b. Project stakeholders with a likely interest in the Project, including (but not limited to) landholders, residents of local and regional communities, business owners, business and industry associations, aerodromes, road users, visitors, local Councils and community facility managers c. Communication and engagement tools that provide: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Early and ongoing information and notification about details and timing of proposed works to local communities and stakeholders ii. Opportunities for affected community members to input to the identification of mitigation and management controls for such things as noise and vibration, property access, construction dust and visual impacts d. Process and procedure for recording, managing, and resolving complaints received regarding the Project, in accordance with the Complaints Management System (EPR EM7) e. Process and procedure for consulting with landholders that agree to engage on specific property access requirements (EPR EM4) f. Procedures to access independent and confidential mental health support services available to landholders and surrounding landholders g. Procedures for regular review, monitoring, reporting, evaluating, and updating the CSEMP, including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Surveying and direct sampling of community and stakeholder views on the effectiveness and responsiveness of communication and engagement ii. Updating the CSEMP in response to continued community complaints about environmental and social issues. 3. Principal contractors must prepare a CSEMP for their package of works that will also apply to any of their sub-contractors. 	All	Construction
EM7	<p>Develop and implement a Complaints Management System</p> <p>Prior to commencement of construction, develop and implement a process for recording, managing, and resolving complaints received from affected stakeholders as part of the CSEMP (EPR EM5). The complaints management arrangements must be consistent with Australian Standard AS/NZS 10002: 2014 Guidelines for Complaints Management in Organisations and the Essential Services Commission Land Access Code of Practice.</p>	All	Construction

In accordance with the Project's Environmental Management Framework (Chapter 29: Environmental management framework), the CSEMP and complaints management system for construction will be reviewed and approved by AusNet to align with AusNet's key values and principles, and commitment to undertaking best practice engagement during delivery of the Project. They will also be reviewed and verified by the Independent Environmental Auditor.

Communication tools that will continue to be used in the construction stage include the Project website, inbox and hotline (which will have its hours extended to operate 24/7), eUpdates, fact sheets, social media and videos. Engagement techniques such as a dedicated LLO for each landholder, community information sessions and pop-ups, webinars and face-to-face meetings will also be retained.

Constant monitoring and evaluation of the communications and engagement approach, activities and tools will continue to occur throughout the Project lifecycle, with improvements made wherever possible. A fair, transparent and responsive enquiries and complaints process exists and will continue during the construction stage. AusNet and the Principal Contractor will respond in a professional and prompt manner.

Appendix A: EES Consultation Plan

See Project website: www.westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/EES-Consultation-Plan-May-2025.pdf

Appendix B: Traditional Owners

Table 29 Traditional Owners

Registered Aboriginal Parties
Area 1: Barenji Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (BGLCAC)
Area 2: Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation (EMAC)
Area 3: Non-RAP area (represented by BGLCAC, EMAC and Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation)
Area 4: Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation
Area 5: Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation
Area 6: Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation

Appendix C: Traditional Owner engagement

While there is no current Victorian Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) Community Benefits Plan specifically for Traditional Owners, AusNet understands that the Victorian Government has committed to co-designing a benefits plan with Traditional Owners that will be legislated as part of the Victorian Transmission Investment Framework. Consultation is understood to be commencing in late-2024 on a specific Traditional Owners REZ Community Benefits Plan. It is anticipated that the Traditional Owners REZ Community Benefits Plan will not be finalised until late-2025.

AusNet has commenced the development of a proposed Traditional Owners Benefits Sharing Strategy, which includes policy principles from the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP 2007) and Pupangarli Marnmarnepu ('Owning our Future' – Aboriginal Self-Determination Reform Strategy 2020-2025). Early engagement has commenced at both a RAP CEO to Project leader level, and officer to officer level. It is anticipated that engagement activities will accelerate throughout 2025.

Table 30 Traditional Owner engagement activities (to 1 November 2024)

Stakeholder group	Inception meeting	Standard assessment meeting	Complex assessment meeting	TRG meetings	EES v CHMP Methodology meetings	EES Workshops	Other meetings	Fieldwork (inc. inductions)
Barengi Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation	25/08/20 (CHMP17 313)	16/02/2021 (CHMP1731 3)	08/02/2023 (CHMP173 13)	08/12/20 20 (TRG#3)	01/07/2022	18/10/2024	07/09/20 21 (CVA)	Oct-Nov 2020
	01/09/20 (CHMP17 312)	2/03/2021 (CHMP1731 2)		17/02/20 21 (TRG#4)			01/02/20 22 (CVA)	Apr-Sep 2021
				22/06/20 22 (TRG#16)				Feb-Sep 2022
								Sep 2023
							24/08/20 23 (220kV to 500kV uprate and	Nov 2023
								Feb-Apr 2024

Stakeholder group	Inception meeting	Standard assessment meeting	Complex assessment meeting	TRG meetings	EES v CHMP Methodology meetings	EES Workshops	Other meetings	Fieldwork (inc. inductions)
				21/09/2023 (TRG#20)			design change overview)	28/09/2021 (CVA)
				01/02/2024 (TRG#23)			11/04/2024 (new 500kV terminal station at Bulgana – methodology)	
Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation	18/08/2020 (CHMP17311)	16/02/2021 (CHMP 17311)	18/10/2022 (CHMP 18101)	08/12/2020 (TRG#3)	01/07/2022	18/10/2024	28/01/2022 (CVA)	Oct-Nov 2020
	01/09/2020 (CHMP 17312)	01/09/2020 (CHMP 17312)		17/02/2021 (TRG#4)			11/03/2022 (Briefing)	Apr-Dec 2021
	19/08/2021 (CHMP18101)			22/06/2022 (TRG#16)			24/08/2023 (220 to 500 kV uprate and design change overview)	Jan-Sep 2022
				21/09/2023 (TRG#20)				Jan-Jun 2023
				01/02/2024 (TRG#23)				Aug-Dec 2023
								Jan-Jun 2024
								29/09/2021 (CVA)
Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation	23/10/2020 (CHMP17321)	04/03/2021 (CHMP 17321)	12/04/2023 (CHMP17321)	08/12/2020 (TRG#3)	01/07/2022	18/10/2024	19/01/2022 (CVA)	Oct-Nov 2020
	01/09/2020 (CHMP 17312)	02/03/2021 (CHMP 17312)		17/02/2021 (TRG#4)			14/04/2022 (CVA)	Apr-Sep 2021
				22/06/2022 (TRG#16)			8/09/2022 (CVA)	Mar-Sep 2022
				21/09/2023 (TRG#20)			24/08/2023 (220 to 500 kV uprate and design change overview)	Sep-Nov 2023
				01/02/2024 (TRG#23)				Jan 2024
								29/09/2021 (CVA)

Stakeholder group	Inception meeting	Standard assessment meeting	Complex assessment meeting	TRG meetings	EES v CHMP Methodology meetings	EES Workshops	Other meetings	Fieldwork (inc. inductions)
Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation	09/08/2021 (CHMP 18108) 16/08/2021 (CHMP 18108)	28/04/2022 (CHMP 18108)	-	08/12/2020 (TRG#3) 17/02/2021 (TRG#4) 22/06/2022 (TRG#16) 21/09/2023 (TRG#20) 01/02/2024 (TRG#23)	01/07/2022 13/08/2021	-	11/10/2021 (Briefing) 18/10/2021 (Cultural awareness training) 14/01/2022 to 05/06/2024 (Regular update meetings) 31/10/2023 (220 to 500 kV uprate and design change overview)	Jan 2022 - Jan 2023 Jul 2023 Oct- Dec 2023 Jan-Feb 2024 May-Jun 2024
Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation	13/08/2021 (CHMP 18111)	09/12/2021 (CHMP 18111)	17/05/2022 (CHMP 18111) 09/12/2022 (CHMP 18111)	08/12/2020 (TRG#3) 17/02/2021 (TRG#4) 22/06/2022 (TRG#16) 21/09/2023 (TRG#20) 01/02/2024 (TRG#23)	13/08/2021 01/07/2022	15/10/2024	16/03/2022 (CVA) 16/05/2022 (CVA) 20/06/2022 (CVA) 12/01/2023 (CVA) 05/04/2023 (Briefing) 27/06/2023 (Briefing) 10/08/2023 (220 to 500 kV uprate and design change overview)	Sept-Nov 2021 Jan-Dec 2022 Jan-Oct 2023 21/02/2022 (CVA) 16/03/2022 (CVA) 2 (CVA) 2 (CVA)

Stakeholder group	Inception meeting	Standard assessment meeting	Complex assessment meeting	TRG meetings	EES v CHMP Methodology meetings	EES Workshops	Other meetings	Fieldwork (inc. inductions)
First Peoples – State Relations	01/09/2020 (CHMP 17312)	02/03/2021 (CHMP 17312)	12/04/2023 (CHMP 17321)	01/07/2022	-	15/10/2024 18/10/2024	26/09/2023 (220 to 500 kV uprate and design change overview)	Oct-Nov 2020 Apr-Sep 2021 Feb-Mar 2022 Jul 2022 Feb 2023 Aug and Sep 2023

Table 31 Traditional Owner engagement

Engagement title	Attendees	Dates	Information
Senior Executive Engagement	RAP CEO and Project General Manager	Oct to Nov 2024	At November 2024, meetings have been held with four of the five RAPs. A meeting is still to occur with Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation.
Officer to Officer meetings	Project Regional and Industry Interface Director, Project Traditional Owners Engagement Specialists, other Project and AusNet staff (as required), RAP Officer staff	Ongoing	Regular meetings are held with all five RAPs at officer-to-officer level. These meetings provide opportunities for project updates, discussions on potential project funding (including social value initiatives) and building relationships between organisations. Meetings with each RAP occur in line with the RAPs preference. Frequency of meetings is varied.

Appendix D: Stakeholder groups

Table 32 Stakeholder groups

Local Councils and local government organisations	
City of Ballarat	Hepburn Shire Council
City of Melton	Moorabool Shire Council
Northern Grampians Shire Council	Pyrenees Shire Council
Ararat Rural City Council	Peri-Urban Group of Councils
Rural Councils Victoria	Lead West
Central Highlands Regional Partnership	Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance
Murray River Group of Councils	Peri-Urban Group of Councils
Rural Councils Victoria	
Member of Parliament	

Federal Member for Ballarat	Federal Member for Mallee
Federal Member for Gorton	Federal Member for Wannon
Shadow Minister for Environment and Climate Change	Shadow Minister for the Environment and Water
Shadow Minister for Planning and Heritage	Shadow Minister for Climate Change and Energy
Member for Western Metropolitan Region Vic (Upper House x 5)	Shadow Minister for Environment and Climate Change
Member for Western Victoria (Upper House x 5)	Shadow Minister for Planning and Heritage
Minister for Energy and Resources	Minister for the Environment
Minister for Treasurer of Victoria	Minister for Aboriginal Affairs
Minister for Industry and Innovation	Minister for Climate Action
Minister for Local Government	Minister for Suburban Development
Minister for Planning	Minister for Regional Development
Premier's Office	Minister for Water
Shadow Minister for Energy and Renewables	State Member for Bunninyong
State Member for Kororoit	State Member for Ripon
State Member for Macedon	State Member for Sydenham
State Member for Melton	State Member for Wendouree
State government entities	
Agriculture Victoria	Southern Rural Water
Department of Justice and Community Services	Country Fire Authority (CFA)
City West Water	Corangamite Catchment Management Authority
Department of Transport and Planning (DTP)	DEECA Grampians
Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) Barwon South-West	DTP Impact Assessment Unit
DEECA Energy (VicGrid)	DEECA Port Phillip
Department of Education and Training	Department of Premier and Cabinet
Department of Health and Human Services	DEECA
Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions	Environment Protection Authority Victoria
Energy Safe Victoria	Department of Treasury and Finance
Essential Services Commission	VicTrack
Emergency Management Victoria	First Peoples – State Relations
Forest Fire Management Victoria	Heritage Victoria

Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority	Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority
Melbourne Water	Regional Roads Victoria
Invest Victoria	Regional Development Victoria
Municipal Association of Victoria	Western Water
National Trust (Victoria)	Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Partnership
Victorian Planning Authority	Wimmera Catchment Management Authority
Regional Development Victoria Grampians	Greater Western Water
Central Highlands Water	Parks Victoria
Commonwealth government entities	
Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner	National Centre for Sustainability (Federation University)
Australian Energy Regulator	Australian Energy Market Commission
Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency	Federation University
Community and special interest groups	
Clunes Landcare Waterways Group	Bunanyung Landscape Alliance
Ballarat Climate Action Network	Bushwalking Victoria Prospect Global
Ballarat Environment Network	Cardigan Windermere Landcare Group
Ballarat Renewable Energy and Zero Emissions	Lal Lal Environmental Protection Association
Birdlife Ballarat	Lexton Landcare Group
Birdlife Australia	Loddon Mallee New Energy Taskforce
Grampians New Energy Taskforce	Melton Environment Group
Grow West	Pentland Hills Landcare Group
Hepburn Wind (Hepburn Community Wind Park Co-Operative)	Pinkerton Landcare and Environment Group
Moorabool Catchment Landcare Group	Project Platypus (Upper Wimmera Land Care)
Sustainable Hepburn Association	Regional Sustainability Alliance Ballarat
Moorabool Environment Group	Rowsley Landcare Group
Moorabool Landcare Network	Save Wattle Flat
Toolern Vale Landcare Group	Wimmera Development Association
Upper Mount Emu Landcare	Wombat Forest Care
Victorian National Park Association	Friends of Brisbane Ranges
Creswick and District Historical Society	Friends of Black Hill Reserve
Ballarat Bushwalking and Outdoor Club	Friends of Paddock Creek
Ballarat Field Naturalists Club	Friends of the Grampians
Ballarat Group of Fire Brigades	Friends of the Lerderderg

Buloke and Northern Grampians Landcare Network	Friends of Werribee Gorge and Long Forest Mallee
Eureka Orienteers	Goldfields Track Association
Creswick and District Historical Society	Great Dividing Trail Association
Darley Power Fight	Kingston and District Power Alliance
Energy Grid Alliance	Lal Lal Falls Advisory Committee
Mollongghip Community Energy	Stop AusNet Towers
Macpherson Park Users	Coimadai Avenue of Honour Restoration Society Inc
Moorabool and Central Highlands Power Alliance	Transitions Creswick
Piss Off AusNet	Lions Clubs along the route
Waubra Community Foundation	Country Women's Associations along the route
Waubra Wind Farm Community Fund	Friends of the Werribee River through Bacchus Marsh
Industry and market participants	
Woolnorth Wind Farms	Acciona
Wind Prospect	Global Power Generation
Tilt Renewables	Neoen
RES Australia	Pacific Hydro
Windlab	Infigen
Victorian Network Businesses	Energy Retailers
Transmission Network Service Providers	Energy Networks Australia
Energy Consumers Australia	
Industry associations	
Australian Energy Council	Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance
Victorian Goldfields Tourism	Clean Energy Council
Potato Growers Association (AusVeg)	Committee for Ballarat
RE Alliance	Victorian Farmers Federation
Media outlets	
ABC Ballarat (Online)	Moorabool News
Ballarat Courier	Moorabool Online
Four Corners	The Age
Herald Sun	WIN Ballarat
A Current Affair	Stock and Land
Hepburn Advocate	The Weekly Times
Ballarat Times	Ararat Advertiser
Melton and Moorabool Star Weekly	

Appendix E: Communication and engagement activities

Engagement activities (to 1 November 2024)

Table 33 Overview of engagement activities

Session	No. of attendees
September to November 2020	
Stawell 30 September 2020, 2 to 6.30pm Stawell Bowling Club, 5-7 Napier St, Stawell	5
Beaufort 1 October 2020, 2 to 6.30pm Beaufort Football Club, 39 Park St, Beaufort	5
Ballarat 6 October 2020, 2 to 6.30pm CE Brown Reserve, Dowling St, Wendouree	23
Creswick 8 October 2020, 2 to 6.30pm Mount Prospect Tennis Club, 35 Bridge St, Creswick	65
Gordon 14 October 2020, 2 to 6.30pm Gordon Recreation Reserve, 18 Willunga Ave, Gordon	58
Ballan 15 October 2020, 2 to 6pm Ballan Football Club, Atkinson/Cowie St, Ballan	78
Darley 21 October 2020, 2 to 6pm 22 October 2020, 2 to 6.30pm Darley Park Sports Club Cnr Grey and Fitzroy St, Darley	51 30
Melton 24 November 2020, 3 to 7.30pm 25 November 2020, 3 to 7.30pm Melton Community Hall, 238 High Street Melton	38 9
March 2021	
Newlyn 15 March 2021, 2 to 7pm, Newlyn Community Complex, Midland Hwy, Newlyn	118
Ballarat 16 March 2021, 2 to 7pm, Miners Rest Community Hall, 2 Market St, Miners Rest	52
Gordon 17 March 2021, 2 to 7pm, Gordon Recreation Reserve, Main St, Gordon	76
Daylesford 18 March 2021, 2 to 7pm, Daylesford Town Hall, 76 Vincent St, Daylesford	22

Session	No. of attendees
Joel Joel 22 March 2021, 2 to 7pm, Joel Joel Hall, 214 Joel South Road, Joel Joel	11
Balliang 23 March 2021, 2 to 7pm, Balliang East Soldiers Memorial Hall, 3211 Bacchus Marsh/Geelong Road, Balliang East	41
Myrniong 24 March 2021, 2 to 7pm Myrniong Hall, 6 Short St, Myrniong	92
Darley 29 March 2021, 2 to 7pm, Darley Park, Fitzroy and Grey St, Darley	120
Waubra 30 March 2021, 2 to 7pm, Waubra FNC, 2091 Sunraysia Hwy, Waubra	37
Melton 31 March 2021, 2 to 7pm, Melton Community Hall, 238 High St, Melton	101
December 2021	
Waubra 6 December 2021, 1 to 7pm, Waubra FNC, 2091 Sunraysia Hwy, Waubra	12
Miners Rest 7 December 2021, 1 to 7pm, Miners Rest Community Hall, 2 Market St, Miners Rest	4
Darley 10 December 2021, 2 to 7pm, Darley Hub Pavilion, 3340/182 Hallett's Way, Darley	17
Melton 11 December 2021, 10am to 4pm, Kurunjang Community Hub, 35 Mowbray Crescent, Kurunjang	19
Miners Rest* 12 December 2021, 10am to 4pm, Miners Rest Community Hall, 2 Market St, Miners Rest	15
* There was a last-minute change to the venue at Miners Rest because of a planned protest at the originally proposed location.	
August - September 2022	
Brown Hill (Ballarat) 19 Aug 2022	16
Waubra (community discussion dinner) 22 Aug 2022	9
Joel Joel 23 Aug 2022	9
Joel Joel (community discussion dinner) 23 Aug 2022	3

Session	No. of attendees
Toolern Vale (Melton) 20 Aug 2022	15
Myrniong* 29 Aug 2022	4
*While Myrniong was advertised as a 'dinner' no participants registered so the decision was made to run the event drop-in style.	
Bacchus Marsh (community discussion dinner) 30 Aug 2022	16
Creswick (community discussion dinner) 31 Aug 2022	6
Melton (community discussion dinner) 1 Sept and 6 Sept 2022	14 6
Coghills Creek (community discussion dinner) 10 Sept 2022	22
October 2023	
Ararat 9 Oct 2023	4
Waubra 11 Oct 2023	8
Stawell 12 Oct 2023	11
Ballarat 17 Oct 2023	8
Bacchus Marsh 25 Oct 2023	25
Melton 31 Oct 2023	24

Table 34 Webinar topics and attendees

Topic	Attendees
July 2020	
Community Q&A 4 July 2020, 10am	357 attendees across six webinars
Community Q&A 7 July 2020, 6pm	
Community Q&A 9 July 2020, 6pm	
Community Q&A 11 July 2020, 10am	
Community Q&A 14 July 2020, 6pm	
Community Q&A	

Topic	Attendees
16 July 2020, 6pm	
November 2020	
EES Draft Scoping requirements 12 November 2020	59
September 2021	
Single corridor selection process 17 September 2021 11am	33
Single corridor selection process 17 September 2021 7pm	47
Biodiversity 21 September 2021 7.30 to 8.30pm	35
Electric and magnetic fields 23 September 2021 7.30pm to 8.30pm	30
Compensation and valuation 22 September 2021 7.30pm to 8.30pm	66
Bushfire 28 September 2021 7.30 to 8.30pm	34
Agriculture 29 September 2021 7.30 to 8.30pm	33
Landscape and visual 30 September 2021 7.30 to 8.30pm	33
November 2021	
Proposed route 30 November 2021 7 to 8.30 pm	41
December 2021	
Proposed route 2 December 2021 7 to 8.30 pm	22
May 2022	
Land use and planning 2 May 2022	
EES process 5 May 2022	81 attendees across 3 webinars
General Q&A 12 May 2022	
September 2022	

Topic	Attendees
Project overview and construction 8 September 2022	32
November 2023	
Project overview 2 November 2023	30
Project overview 28 November 2023	17
March 2024	
Farming with WRL transmission lines 25 March 2024 11am	25
Farming with WRL transmission lines 25 March 2024 7pm	10

Table 35 Community and shopping centre pop-up sessions

Session	Interactions
Bacchus Marsh 28 April 2023	67
Wendouree 5 May 2023	81
Taylor's Lakes 10 May 2023	63
Melton 17 May 2023	55
Wendouree 16 November 2023	13
Bacchus Marsh 23 November 2023	22
Stawell 27 November 2023	7
Creswick 2 September 2024	3
Ballarat 4 September 2024	1
Stawell 9 September 2024	6
Beaufort 11 September 2024	5
Bacchus Marsh 18 September 2024	44
Melton 23 September 2024	16
Watergardens 23 September 2024	21

Session	Interactions
Lexton 7 October 2024	4

Table 36 Attendance at field days

Field day	Interactions
Elmore Field Days 4 to 6 October 2022	240
Wimmera Field Days 7 to 9 March 2023	170
Elmore Field Days 3 to 5 March 2023	213
Wimmera Field Days 5 to 7 March 2024	174
Elmore Field Days 1 to 3 October 2024	185

Communication tools and materials

Table 37 Fact sheets, guides and videos added to the Project Document Library

Document Name	Description	Date Published	Updated	Link
How the Project route will be determined	Outlines the AOI and how the final Proposed Route would be determined.	Jun 2020		westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/How-the-project-route-will-be-determined-June-2020.pdf
The approach taken to reduce fire risk	Outlines the approach taken to reduce fire risk in response to community concerns.	Aug 2020		westernrenewableslink.com.au/news/transmission-lines-and-bushfire/
Project Design Overhead Transmission Line	Describes type of overhead infrastructure proposed for the Project.	Sep 2020		westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/Project-Design-Overhead-Transmission-Lines_September-2020.pdf
Electric and Magnetic Fields (EMF) and Health	Developed in response to community concern about living near EMFs.	Sep 2020		westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/Electric-and-Magnetic-Fields-EMFs-and-Health_September-2020.pdf
Landholder Guide: Land Access, Easements and Compensation	Provides additional information on land access easements and compensation for landholders and communities. Released in response to landholder requests for information specific to issues that impact them.	Sep 2020	5 Nov 2021 1 Jun 2022	westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/Landholder-guide-Land-access-easements-and-compensation-June-2022.pdf
EES Process	Describes the EES process as it relates to the Project.	Sep 2020	22 May 2024 22 Jul 2024	westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/Environment-Effects-Statement.pdf
The Role of the RIT-T Process in the Development of the Project	Explains RIT-T process that shaped the Project scope and AEMO's role in the Project. It also included information on how undergrounding was considered by the RIT-T process, other overhead options considered in the RIT-T, and at what point in the process other impacts will be considered.	3 Dec 2020		westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/Regulatory-Investment-Test-for-Transmission-RIT-T-process-in-the-development-of-the-WVTNP-%E2%80%93-December-2020.pdf
The Corridors and the Next Steps in Determining the Final Route	Outlines the multiple corridors and how the proposed route will be developed for assessment as part of the EES.	24 Feb 2021		westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/The-corridors-and-the-next-steps-in-determining-the-final-route-February-2021.pdf
Transmission Corridor	Outlines the single corridor and how the proposed route will be developed for assessment as part of the EES.	30 Jun 2021		westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/Transmission-corridor-June-2021.pdf

Document Name	Description	Date Published	Updated	Link
Environment and Key Project Approvals	Outlines the EES process, purpose, engagement phases and key Project approval requirements.	24 Jun 2021	13 Jul 2022	westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/Environment-and-key-project-approvals-June-2021.pdf
Project Overview	Outlines why the Project is needed, the Project timeline and the development of the Project to date.	30 Jun 2021	26 Aug 2022 22 Sep 2023 22 Jul 2024 27 Aug 2024	westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/Project-Overview.pdf
Land Access for Environmental and Engineering Studies	Explains the rationale for access to people's property for land surveys, the type of studies that will be conducted and the process to access properties.	31 Jul 2021	13 Jul 2022	westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/Fact-sheet-%E2%80%93-Land-access-for-environmental-and-engineering-studies-FA_R1.pdf
Preliminary EES Information Sheet for Existing Conditions – Historic Heritage	Provides a summary of the historic heritage within the AOI.	8 Nov 2021	14 Jul 2022	westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/Existing-Conditions-Historic-Heritage-November-2021.pdf
Preliminary EES Information Sheet for Existing Conditions – Landscape and Visual	Provides a summary of the existing landscape and visual amenity within the AOI.	8 Nov 2021	14 Jul 2022	westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/Existing-Conditions-Landscape-and-Visual-November-2021.pdf
Preliminary EES Information Sheet for Existing Conditions – Biodiversity	Provides a summary of the existing conditions identified for biodiversity within the AOI.	8 Nov 2021	14 Jul 2022	westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/Existing-Conditions-Biodiversity-November-2021.pdf
Preliminary EES Information Sheet for Existing Conditions - Geology and Contaminated Land	Provides a summary of the existing conditions identified for geology and contaminated land within the AOI.	8 Nov 2021	14 Jul 2022	westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/Existing-Conditions-Geology-and-Contaminated-Land-November-2021.pdf
Preliminary EES Information Sheet for Existing Conditions: Agriculture and Forestry	Provides a summary of the existing conditions identified for agriculture and forestry within the AOI.	8 Nov 2021	14 Jul 2022	westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/Existing-Conditions-Agriculture-November-2021.pdf
Managing Fire Risk – Electricity Transmission Network	Provides general information about managing fire risk across the electricity transmission network.	20 Nov 2021		westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/AusNet-Services-Managing-Fire-Risk-%E2%80%93-Electricity-Transmission-November-2021.pdf

Document Name	Description	Date Published	Updated	Link
Proposed Route Overview	Outlines the proposed route for the Project.	26 Nov 2021	18 Aug 2022	westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/Proposed-route-overview-November-2021.pdf westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/Updated-proposed-route-overview-August-2022.pdf
Underground Construction Summary – Nov 2021	Provides information regarding underground construction.	26 Nov 2021		westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/Underground-construction-summary-November-2021.pdf
Preliminary EES Information Sheet for Existing Conditions – Aviation	Provides a summary of the existing conditions identified for aviation within the AOI.	10 Dec 2021		westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/Existing-Conditions-Aviation-December-2021.pdf
Preliminary EES Information Sheet for Existing Conditions – Bushfire	Provides a summary of the existing conditions identified for bushfire within the AOI.	10 Dec 2021	14 Jul 2022	westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/Existing-Conditions-Bushfire-December-2021.pdf
Preliminary EES Information Sheet for Existing Conditions – Groundwater	Provides a summary of the existing groundwater conditions identified for the AOI.	10 Dec 2021	14 Jul 2022	westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/Existing-Conditions-Groundwater-December-2021.pdf
Preliminary EES Information Sheet for Existing Conditions – Surface water	Provides a summary of the existing surface water conditions identified for the AOI.	10 Dec 2021	14 Jul 2022	westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/Existing-Conditions-Surface-Water-December-2021.pdf
The Electricity Network – Transmission and Distribution	Provides general information about electricity transmission and distribution.	28 Apr 2022		westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/The-electricity-network-April-2022.pdf
Transmission Towers and Conductors	Provides general information about the overhead transmission towers and conductors.	16 May 2022		westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/Transmission-towers-and-conductors-May-2022.pdf
Preliminary EES Information Sheet for Existing Conditions Land Use and Planning	Provides a summary of the existing land use and planning conditions identified for the AOI.	18 May 2022	14 Jul 2022	westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/Existing-Conditions-Land-Use-and-Planning-May-2022.pdf

Document Name	Description	Date Published	Updated	Link
Landholder Guide: Land access for field surveys and investigations	Provides information for landholders about how AusNet will communicate and work with landholders to complete field surveys and investigations on private property. This guide was developed in response to the Essential Services Commission's SOE.	12 Sep 2022	29 Aug 2024	westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/Landholder-Guide-Land-access-for-field-surveys-and-investigations.pdf
Biosecurity fact sheet	Provides information on AusNet's biosecurity practices.	6 Apr 2023		westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/Biosecurity-April-2023.pdf
Transmission Line Construction fact sheet	Provides general information about the proposed overhead transmission line and double circuit lattice tower construction process.	27 Feb 2023		westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/Transmission-line-construction-February-2023.pdf
Permitted Vehicle and Equipment Heights	Provides information for landholders about height clearances under and around the transmission line.	27 Sep 2023	22 Jul 2024	westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/Permitted-vehicle-and-equipment-heights.pdf
Landholder Compensation and Payments	Provides information for the community about the range of payments and compensation available for landholders.	30 Nov 2023		westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/Landholder-compensation-and-payments-November-2023.pdf
New Landholder Guide: Easement safety and permitted activities	Provides landholders, the community and stakeholders (including councils, agencies, businesses and Traditional Owners) with information about permitted activities within the proposed easement for the transmission line.	20 Mar 2024	7 Oct 2024	westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/Landholder-guide-Easement-safety-and-permitted-activities.pdf
Updated proposed route north of Waubra	Provides information on the new proposed route to the north of Waubra.	22 May 2024		westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/Updated-proposed-route-north-of-Waubra-May-2024.pdf
Neighbouring Landholders	Provides information on how impacts on neighbouring landholders are being considered, and how feedback is being used during Project planning.	21 Jun 2024		westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/Neighbouring-landholders.pdf
Project complaint process	Provides information about AusNet's complaints process and escalation.	22 Jul 2024		westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/Project-complaint-process.pdf
Draft PSA	Provides information about the proposed primary planning approval process, the Planning Scheme Amendment. Provides links to further information on planning processes in Victoria and the Project EES process.	22 Jul 2024	27 Aug 2024	westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/Draft-planning-scheme-amendment.pdf

Document Name	Description	Date Published	Updated	Link
Updated Proposed Route North of Waubra	Provides information on the new Proposed Route, including the new 500kV terminal station near Bulgana.	22 Aug 2024		westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/Updated-proposed-route-overview-August-2024.pdf
Designing the proposed Western Renewables Link	Video explaining the design process of the Project's Proposed Route.	26 Aug 2024		westernrenewableslink.com.au/resource/videos/494001/#video-play
Field Surveys and Investigations: Landscape and Visual Impact	Provides information on the landscape and visual impact field survey and investigation findings to date.	30 Aug 2024		westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/Field-surveys-and-investigations-Landscape-and-visual-impact.pdf
Field Surveys and Investigations: Historic Heritage	Provides information on the historic heritage field survey and investigation findings to date.	30 Aug 2024		westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/Field-surveys-and-investigations-Historic-heritage.pdf
Field Surveys and Investigations: Flora	Provides information on the flora field survey and investigation findings to date.	30 Aug 2024		westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/Field-surveys-and-investigations-Flora.pdf
Field Surveys and Investigations: Fauna	Provides information on the fauna survey and investigation findings to date.	30 Aug 2024		westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/Field-surveys-and-investigations-Fauna.pdf
Field Surveys and Investigations: Aboriginal Cultural Heritage	Provides information on the Aboriginal cultural heritage field survey and investigation findings to date.	30 Aug 2024		westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/Field-surveys-and-investigations-Aboriginal-cultural-heritage.pdf
Real Careers – Jobs for bright future guide	Provides information on current and upcoming career opportunities with the Project team.	6 Sep 2024		westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/Real-Careers-Jobs-for-bright-futures-guide.pdf
Aboriginal Cultural Heritage	Provides information on how the Project team works with Traditional Owners on the lands on which the Project will operate to protect Aboriginal cultural heritage and values, and promote the laws, culture and rights of each of the Traditional Owner groups.	18 Sep 2024		westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/Aboriginal-Cultural-Heritage.pdf
New Landholder Guide: Option for Easement and Compensation	Provides landholders with an overview of the Project Option for Easement proposal and agreement process, how compensation for the easement in the	20 Sep 2024		westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/Landholder-Guide-Option-for-Easement-process-and-compensation.pdf

Document Name	Description	Date Published	Updated	Link
	proposal is assessed, and other payments available to landholders.			
Constructing the Overhead Transmission Line	Video explaining the process for constructing overhead transmission lines.	30 Sep 2024		westernrenewableslink.com.au/resource/videos/500253/
Terminal Stations	Provides information for landholders and communities about the proposed terminal station works for the Project.	7 Oct 2024		westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/Terminal-stations.pdf
Landholder Compensation and Payments	Provides information for the community about the range of payments and compensation available for landholders with a proposed Project transmission line easement over their property.	7 Oct 2024		westernrenewableslink.com.au/assets/resources/Landholder-compensation-and-payments.pdf

Table 38 Published eUpdates

Name of eUpdate	Description	Date Released
We're Listening to Your Feedback	Thanked community members who provided feedback on the Project AOI.	29 Jun 2020
Participate In Our Q&As Webinar	Sought participation in the community question and answer session webinars and thanked those who had already participated in webinars held by the Project team.	14 Jul 2020
EES Process Set to Begin	Announced the commencement of the EES process and lodgement of the EPBC Act referral.	6 Aug 2020
Transmission Line and Bushfire	Provided information on bushfire risk and the transmission line, promoting the fact sheet.	26 Aug 2020
Meet the team at a community drop-in session	Announced the times and dates of a series of community drop-in sessions and invited participation.	23 Sep 2020
AOI map closing 30 Oct 2020	Announced the closing date for input on the AOI map.	18 Oct 2020
Have your say on the EES draft scoping requirements	Provided a link to the draft scoping requirements, encouraging feedback from the community.	4 Nov 2020

Name of eUpdate	Description	Date Released
Online information session about the EES draft scoping requirements	Provided a link to an online session to answer questions about the EES draft scoping requirements.	10 Nov 2020
Meet the team at a community drop-in session in Melton	Announced a community drop-in session in Melton on 24 November 2020.	16 Nov 2020
The role of the RIT-T process in the Development of the Project	Announced a fact sheet for the RIT-T process.	7 Dec 2020
EES final scoping requirements released	Linked to the former scoping requirements for the EES.	12 Jan 2021
Apr to Nov 2020 Community Engagement Summary Report now available	Linked to the Community Engagement Summary Report for 2020.	17 Feb 2021
Corridors announced and calls for nominations to CCGs	Provided a link to nominate membership for one of three CCGs.	24 Feb 2021
EES Community Consultation Plan Released	Provided a link to the EES Consultation Plan.	2 Mar 2021
Community drop-in sessions Mar 2021	Announced times and locations for drop-in sessions for community members.	9 Mar 2021
Seeking feedback on the corridor options via the online interactive map	Sought community feedback on the corridor options via the online interactive map.	25 Mar 2021
Thank you for attending the community drop-in sessions	Reported the key issues raised through the community drop-in sessions.	21 Apr 2021
CCG up and running	Announced Catherine Botta as the independent Chair of the CCG, along with 13 community members.	10 May 2021
Living and working summary guidelines	Announced and linked to the Living and Working with the WVTNP (now WRL) Summary Guidelines.	19 Jun 2021
AusNet releases two more fact sheets focused on land access and key approvals	Linked to fact sheets: 'Environmental Assessment and Key Project Approval' and 'Land Access for Environmental and Engineering Studies'.	25 Jun 2021
AusNet announces the proposed single overhead corridor	Provided an update on the preferred single corridor for the Project.	30 Jun 2021
Important environmental studies are continuing	Provided information on engagement opportunities and the commencement of surveys for the EES related to the single overhead corridor.	4 Aug 2021
Working together to protect Aboriginal cultural heritage in western Victoria	Provided information on the preparation of the CHMP for the Project.	6 Aug 2021
Upcoming Project webinars	Provided notification of a variety of webinars and a link to a webinar on the single corridor on 16 September 2021.	30 Aug 2021

Name of eUpdate	Description	Date Released
Field surveys across the project transmission corridor	Provided information on some of the surveys that were underway as part of the EES.	6 Sep 2021
Webinars with technical specialists	Provided the dates, times and a link to register for a series of webinars on compensation and valuation, EMF, bushfire, agriculture and landscape, and visual amenity.	7 Sep 2021
One-on-one meetings with specialists	Invited community members to chat with technical specialists one-on-one and provided a booking link.	13 Sep 2021
Webinar recordings are live on the website	Provided a link to view the September webinar recording.	1 Oct 2021
Ongoing commitment to community engagement	Announced the release of the Community Engagement Summary Report March to May 2021.	29 Oct 2021
AusNet releases new Landholder Guide	Announced the publication of the Landholder Guide: Land Access, Easements and Compensation.	9 Nov 2021
AusNet releases new EES Preliminary Information Sheets	Linked to the new EES Preliminary Information Sheets.	17 Nov 2021
Improved website	Announced the new website.	23 Nov 2021
Proposed Route identified	Provided webinar and community information session times and locations to community members so they can learn more about the Proposed Route.	26 Nov 2021
Webinar recording on Proposed Route available now	Provided a link to the webinar regarding the Proposed Route.	3 Dec 2021
New venue for information session on 12 Dec	Announced the venue and time for the information session on Sunday 12 December.	10 Dec 2021
Releasing more EES Preliminary Information Sheets	Linked to the EES Preliminary Information Sheets.	10 Dec 2021
Compensation for landholders on the Proposed Route	Provided information on compensation for host landholders.	31 Jan 2022
Essential Services Commission seeks feedback on SOE for land access in Victoria	Provided information on the proposed SOE and linked to further information.	25 Mar 2022
EES submission update	Outlined a change in the submission date.	7 Apr 2022
Community Engagement Report for Jun to Dec 2021 available on project website	Linked to the Community Engagement Report.	8 Apr 2022
Register for upcoming community Q&A webinars	Provided a link to the upcoming community Q&A webinar.	22 Apr 2022

Name of eUpdate	Description	Date Released
AusNet to conduct Cultural Values Assessments, ground and aerial surveys	Announced the commencement of surveys for intangible Aboriginal cultural heritage values in the Project Area during the week of 2 May 2022.	29 Apr 2022
New online engagement room	Announced and linked to the new online engagement room.	17 May 2022
Webinar recordings and new fact sheets now available on the website	Linked to the individual webinar recordings for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land Use and Planning • EES Process • General Q&A 	18 May 2022
AusNet to conduct Cultural Values Assessments, ground and aerial surveys	Outlined recent CVAs undertaken.	6 Jul 2022
Further refinements to the Proposed Route	Foreshadowed announcements to further route updates.	11 Jul 2022
Upcoming community discussion dinners and drop-in sessions	Invited community members to the roadshow events.	2 Aug 2022
Western Renewables Link boosts leadership team	Informed stakeholders of a change in the Project leadership structure.	5 Aug 2022
Update to the Proposed Route	Informed communities of the route updates.	18 Aug 2022
New Landholder Guide available as latest round of community information sessions conclude	Informed communities of a new document in the library.	15 Sep 2022
AusNet to capture mapping and imagery data via light aircraft	Informed stakeholders of impending aerial surveys.	5 Oct 2022
UPDATE 11 May: AusNet to conduct flyover in western section of the Proposed Route	Informed stakeholders that the flyover scheduled between 21 April and 5 May 2023 would now take place on 12 May.	14 Apr 2023
AusNet to conduct flyover in western section of the Proposed Route	Informed stakeholders of a flyover that would be occurring between 21 April and 5 May 2023.	14 Apr 2023
New compensation Landholder Guide and construction fact sheet	Informed stakeholders of the release of The Landholder Guide: Option for Easement process and compensation.	20 Mar 2023
AEMO Victorian Planning Project Assessment Conclusions Report (PACR) for VNI West	Informed stakeholders that AEMO and TransGrid released the PACR for the VNI West project.	27 May 2023

Name of eUpdate	Description	Date Released
EES update	Informed stakeholders that AusNet had referred the Project, in its proposed form, to the Minister for Planning for a new decision on the assessment requirements under the Environment Effects Act.	15 Aug 2023
Project leadership update	Informed stakeholders that Malcolm Tinkler was appointed as Project General Manager.	16 Aug 2023
EES update	Informed stakeholders that on 22 August 2023, the Minister for Planning confirmed that an EES will be required for the Project, based on the new proposed Project form as outlined in the referral (no. 2023R-04), published on the DTP website on 11 August 2023.	25 Aug 2023
AusNet safety signage regarding 3m operating height	This eUpdate clarified AusNet's position in relation to the installation of new safety signs in some locations under existing transmission lines, including the existing 220kV Ballarat to Bendigo (BATS-BETS) transmission line in the Ballarat region.	5 Sep 2023
AusNet to conduct flyover inspections – BATS to BETS and BATS to HOTS lines	Informed stakeholders that AusNet would be conducting inspections along the BATS to BETS and Ballarat to Horsham (BATS to HOTS) transmission lines between 11 and 25 September 2023.	8 Sep 2023
Project update	Informed stakeholders that the Project is proposed as a 500kV transmission line from Sydenham to Bulgana.	22 Sep 2023
Upcoming community information sessions	Informed stakeholders that community information sessions will be held throughout October, with webinars in November, to discuss changes to the Project and other key topics including compensation, bushfire risk and farming near the transmission line.	5 Oct 2023
Newlyn community information webinars	Informed stakeholders that the planned Newlyn community information session would no longer proceed.	18 Oct 2023
Upcoming community information webinars	Informed stakeholders that the Project team would be hosting webinars in November to provide information about the latest Project updates and answer community questions.	31 Oct 2023
Project update	Provided a summary of recent Project activities, information about an upcoming community information webinar, and resources about firefighting and transmission lines.	14 Nov 2023
Project update	Informed stakeholders about the TRG, community information sessions, landholder compensation and western Victoria's Golden Sun Moth.	5 Dec 2023

Name of eUpdate	Description	Date Released
CFA information about firefighting near transmission lines	Shared information from the CFA about how firefighting is managed around transmission lines and infrastructure, including aerial firefighting and fighting fires on the ground in proximity to transmission lines.	19 Dec 2023
Project update	Provided a summary of how the Project progressed in 2023.	20 Dec 2023
Local business register and new fact sheets	Informed stakeholders about the release of a local business register and three new information resources on the website: the EES, draft PSA and Terminal Stations fact sheets.	19 Feb 2024
ESC Land Access Code of Practice	Informed stakeholders that the Essential Services Commission (ESC) developed a Land Access Code of Practice which replaces the SOE.	1 Mar 2024
Project update	Informed stakeholders about farming with the Project, upcoming webinars focused on farming, the Project's local business register, new fact sheets and the ESC Land Access Code of Practice.	7 Mar 2024
New landholder guide and webinars on farming and easement safety	Provided updated information for landholders about easement safety and permitted activities with a focus on agricultural and farming activities.	22 Mar 2024
AusNet to conduct helicopter transmission line repairs	Informed stakeholders of upcoming minor repairs to existing transmission lines between Bulgana and Waubra, near Crowlands.	16 Apr 2024
Project update	Informed stakeholders about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Landholder Guide: Easement Safety and Permitted Activities • New Ballarat project focused on transitioning the city to 100 per cent renewable energy • Wimmera Field Days 2024 recap • Updated EES Consultation Plan • New Project Overview video. 	22 Apr 2024
Project Proposed Route north of Waubra	Provided stakeholders with the latest information on changes to the Proposed Route for the Project in the area to the north of Waubra.	23 May 2024
Project update	Provided stakeholders with neighbouring landholder information, how the transmission line is designed, the update to the Proposed Route at Waubra, and how businesses can register interest in the Project.	4 Jul 2024
Project shortlists potential delivery partners	Provided stakeholders with information about the shortlisted potential delivery partners.	8 Aug 2024

Name of eUpdate	Description	Date Released
Proposed Route and Bulgana terminal station update	Provided stakeholders with the latest information on proposed terminal station works near Bulgana and updates to the Proposed Route.	22 Aug 2024
Project update	Provided stakeholders with information regarding updates to the Proposed Route and terminal station site, how the transmission line is designed, new fact sheets on field surveys and investigations, and information about community information sessions.	30 Aug 2024
Ballan pop-up session change	Informed stakeholders that the planned Ballan community pop-up session would no longer proceed.	15 Sep 2024
Community engagement activities and new online resources	Invited stakeholders to provide community feedback on the Project through an online survey, and at a community pop-up session in Lexton.	1 Oct 2024
AusNet to capture mapping and imagery data via light aircraft	Informed stakeholders of aerial mapping works proceeding after delays due to weather.	10 Oct 2024

Appendix F: Feedback from Social Pinpoint

Table 39 Social Pinpoint features collected in March and April 2021

Section	Town name	Features identified
Section 1: Bulgana to Waubra	Waubra	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brush-tailed Phascogales • Echidnas • Wedge-tailed Eagles • Old Cypress tree shelter belts along property boundaries and roadways • Reids Road important access route
Section 2: Waubra to Glendonald	Blowhard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extractive industry
Section 3: Glendonald to Mount Prospect	Coghills Creek	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black Swan and Brolga nesting sites • Australian Long Necked Turtle habitat • Growling Grass Frogs
	Glendaruel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lollipop Tree • Migratory bird flight path • Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos • Powerful Owls • Wedge-tailed Eagles
	Glendonald	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growling Grass Frogs • Seven Hills historic region • Ballarat Flying School flight path
	Glenmore	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Bluff
	Mount Beckworth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brush-tailed Phascogales
	Mount Bolton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paragliding launch site
	Tourello	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private farmhouse and homestead • Chinese market gardens • Wedge-tailed Eagles • Breeding colony of Swans • Echidnas • Ballarat Flying School flight path
	Allendale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hepburn Shire Council depot and quarry • Horse Stud • Lone Hand farmhouse and shearing shed • Lone Hand commemorative oval • Leishman drover's run from Snizort to Lone Hand • Wedge-tailed Eagles • Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos • Brown Falcons

Section	Town name	Features identified
	Blampied	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breeding grounds for local fish and aquatic animals • Fishing, kayaking and other recreational activities • Historic Hepburn Lagoon at the Seven Hills Estate • Swiss Mountain Hotel (oldest Victorian weatherboard pub) • Historical Post Office and phone exchange • Landscape and garden tourism attractions • Aerial access spraying for crops
	Bullarook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tipperary Hill
	Clarkes Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St Mary's School • Narrow gravel and paved roads
	Dean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avenue of Honour • Wedge-tailed Eagles
	Gordon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Melbourne to Ballarat helicopter and light aircraft flight path between Poverty Peak and the Western Freeway
	Kingston	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nineteenth Century bluestone bridge and stone drains constructed by Chinese workers • Kingston Avenue of Honour • Birches Creek • Forest Hill • Platypus • Wedge-tailed Eagles
	Mollongghip	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical town hall • Wedge-tailed Eagles • Platypus • Brush-tailed Phascogale • Powerful Owls • Echidnas • Wombats
	Mount Prospect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breeding grounds for local fish and aquatic animals • Wedge-tailed Eagles • Creek regularly floods the road and supplies aquifers in the region • Volcanic Hill scenic site • Cobb and Co. Station • Telegraph Post Office • Significant cultural heritage site • Aerial access spraying for crops
	Newlyn and Newlyn North	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Horse-riding locations • Cycling locations • Newlyn Primary School • Organic farming locations • Scenic views attracting artists and photographers • Volcanic landmark • Newlyn Reservoir • Platypus in Birch Creek • Newlyn Avenue of Honour

Section	Town name	Features identified
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Newlyn Primary School Historic butcher's wagon track Scrub Hill Church
	Rocklyn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural habitat Fish, frogs and other aquatic animals Stock water source
	Smeaton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Historic Anderson's Mill Homestead and quarry site Mt Kooroocheang significant Aboriginal site
	Springbank	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remnant Swamp Gum vegetation area Wedge-tailed Eagles Access to Western Freeway
Section 4: Mount Prospect to Long Forest	Bacchus Marsh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Airport Avenue of Honour Swift Parrot locations
	Ballan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ballan-Meredith Road is a key connector to services Main trucking route for large loads transported from the Port of Geelong School bus routes Bostock Reservoir Planned burns for fire safety Greendale Road is a key access route for fire safety Wedge-tailed Eagles
	Balliang	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unpowered glider aircraft area
	Bolwarrah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access road to Wombat State Forest
	Bunding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wedge-tailed Eagles Harriers Black cockatoos Rosellas Platypus in Moorabool West River
	Coimadai	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constrained road network Coimadai CFA station and helicopter landing area Wedge-tailed Eagles and other raptors Native grasslands Coimadai Primary School is identified as a BAR (Bushfire at Risk) school Avenue of Honour
	Darley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landing area for emergency services' helicopters Lerderderg Gorge Lerderderg River Morven homestead Highland homestead (built by convict labour and home to international and Australian armed forces in World War Two) Wedge-tailed Eagles Wombats

Section	Town name	Features identified
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Echidnas • Grey Headed Flying Foxes • Eastern Brown Snake habitat • Common Bent-wing Bats
	Fiskville	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PFAs soil contamination • Wedge-tailed Eagles
	Gordon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Haydens Hill Road access to recreation • Moorabool Reservoir
	Myrniong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Myrniong Creek • Native tree plantation • Native grasses • Growing Grass Frog • Runway for aerial spraying • Historical homestead and early flour mill
	Rowsley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swift Parrots • Wedge-tailed Eagles • Black Falcons
Section 5: Long Forest to Sydenham	Brookfield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pair of White-bellied Sea Eagles • Future potential overpass and entry and exit ramp to the freeway
	Exford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roads already in poor condition
	Hopetoun Park / Parwan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culturally modified trees • Melton Reservoir is a significant frog habitat for Common Froglets, Growling Grass Frog, Pobblebongs, Striped and Spotted Marsh Frogs, Peron's Tree Frog, Whistling Tree Frog, Southern Brown Tree Frogs and Spadefoot Toad breeding ground • Cormorant and Darter Birds • Wedge-Tailed Eagles • Pelicans • Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos • Black Falcon • Long Necked Turtle • Heritage listed endangered Bluebox Tree
	Melton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos • Melton Airport
	Parwan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Old growth River Gum • Bluebells on volcanic plains
	Parwan / Balliang	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe landing options for powerless gliders
	Toolern Vale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arnolds Creek East Branch • Melton Park farmhouse and stables • Racetrack under construction • Heliport for aerial spraying

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