

JANUARY TO JUNE 2022

Community Engagement Summary Report



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Introduction

The Western Renewables Link (WRL) is a critical upgrade of Victoria’s transmission network. It will support Victoria’s successful transition from coal-generated electricity to sustainable, affordable and reliable renewable energy.

The project features a proposed new 190-kilometre transmission line running from Bulgana, near Stawell in Victoria’s west, to Sydenham in Melbourne’s north-west. The project will connect renewable energy generated in western Victoria to the National Electricity Market and increase the Victorian transmission network capacity.

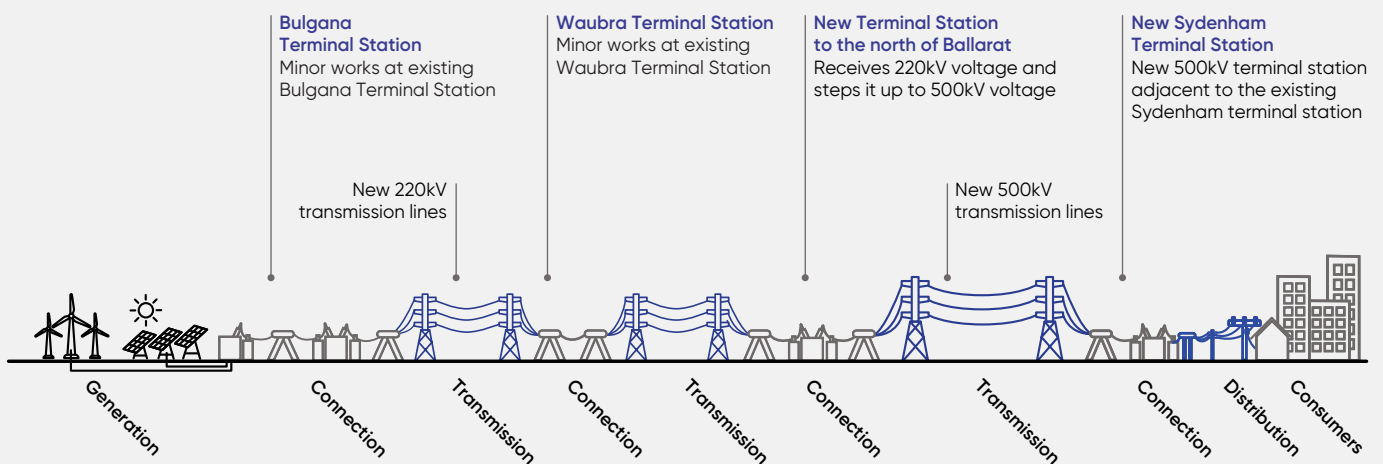
Purpose of this report

This report covers the period from January 2022 until June 2022 and includes details of the engagement undertaken by the WRL team including a series of webinars, landscape and visual impact assessment site visits, and meetings with landholders.

The project is going through an Environment Effects Statement (EES) – the most comprehensive environmental impact assessment in Victoria – and has not yet been approved for construction.

We are currently considering all feedback and encourage anyone interested or affected to contact the project team on 1300 360 795 or info@westernrenewableslink.com.au if you have any comments or information you would like us to be aware of.

Western Renewables Link



New overhead double circuit 220kV transmission line between the existing Bulgana Terminal Station, connecting to the existing Waubra Terminal Station and a new terminal station to the north of Ballarat.

From there, a new overhead double circuit 500kV transmission line connecting to a new terminal station at Sydenham.

For illustrative purposes only



What happened between January and June 2022?

After rigorous technical investigations and further consultation with stakeholders – including the communities and landholders within the proposed single corridor – a proposed route was identified and announced in November 2021.

Throughout May and June 2022, stakeholders and landholders in the Melton area were informed of an update to the proposed route. The updated proposed route has been re-aligned to the northern boundary of MacPherson Park but does not impact the sporting fields. It also balances the distance between the proposed route and the Melton aerodrome to the north and the new campus for Melton Christian College, Melton West

Memorial Park and Melton Gilgai Woodlands Nature Conservation Reserve to the south.

The updated proposed route in the Melton area increases the distance between the route and built-up residential housing areas and more closely follows existing property boundaries to reduce impact on landholders while also avoiding patches of native grassland, a seasonal wetland and threatened buloke trees in the area.

In May 2022, the Essential Services Commission (ESC) released its Electricity Transmission Company Land Access Statement of Expectations. The statement of expectations offers a framework for

respectful and transparent relationships between transmission companies and landowners. Following a period of review and a pause in engagement, the entire project team undertook training on the statement of expectations and made a commitment to work in accordance with the principles outlined. The project's Landholder Guide: Land Access, Easements and Compensation was updated to include information on the statement of expectations for landholders. The statement of expectations was implemented on 1 June 2022 and is an interim measure while the ESC develops an enforceable land access code; this is expected to be completed in 2023.

Key engagement activities between January and June 2022

- Updated Landholder Guide: Land Access, Easements and Compensation
- Published new fact sheets including: 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 site visits with surrounding landholders
- Continued meetings with landholders (both in person and virtual)
- Regular eUpdates were issued
- Government and industry meetings continued
- Technical Reference Group meetings continued
- Community Consultation Group meetings continued
- Three webinars were hosted in May
- The virtual engagement room launched in May

Fast facts for January to June 2022



169 emails to project inbox



10 phone calls to project hotline



Four Community Consultation Group meetings



More than 10,000 visits to the project website



Three webinars with 81 attendees



86 key stakeholder meetings

Webinar series – May 2022

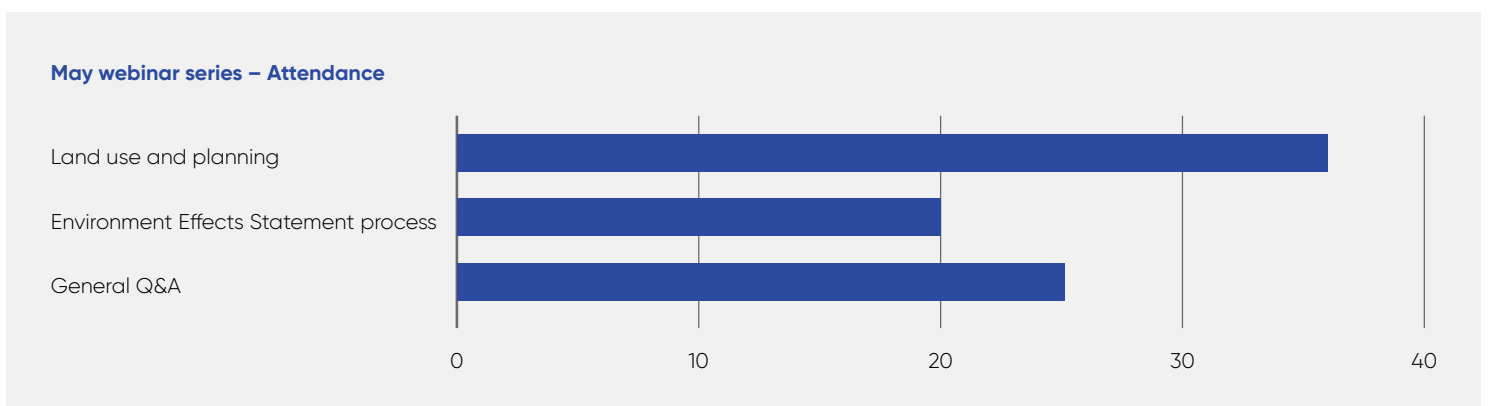
In May 2022, the Western Renewables Link hosted three webinars where environmental and technical specialists, as well as project team members, were available to answer questions from the public. The webinars provided a COVID-safe way for community members to obtain information.

There was a total of 81 attendees across the three webinars. The topics included:

- Land use and planning
- Environment Effects Statement process
- General Q&A

The following key themes and concerns were raised by attendees at each webinar:

Webinar	Date and time	Key themes
Land use and planning	Monday 2 May 7 pm – 8:30 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implication on future land use and farming practices including machinery, crops and equine facilities • Terminal station site selection criteria • Impacts on tourism and local businesses particularly around Darley and the Lerderberg • Planning Scheme Amendment approvals process • Northern and southern alternatives for the proposed route at MacPherson Park, Melton
Environment Effects Statement process	Thursday 5 May 7 pm – 8:30 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of statutory decision makers • Assessment criteria for an EES • The role of land access in the EES process • The use of map pin data previously collected by AusNet • Local, State and Federal Government roles in the EES process
General Q&A	Thursday 12 May 7 pm – 8:30 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compensation for surrounding landholders and communities • The difference between HVDC and HVAC, with reference to undergrounding • Undergrounding, and the selection of Darley for further investigation in relation to partial undergrounding • Devaluation of properties • Future expansion of infrastructure • Assessment of alternative routes and design options including underground construction • Community attitude to overhead transmission lines • Timing of key decisions • Bushfire risk • Implication on future land use and farming practices • Use of exiting easements like the Western Hwy





Landholder engagement

Following the release of the proposed route in November 2021, further consultation with landholders, as well as surrounding landholders and other stakeholders, was undertaken in order to refine the proposed route. This has occurred throughout the first half of 2022. We are continuing to consult landholders about the proposed route, impacts to their land use and operations, tower locations and micro-siting, and the easement compensation valuation process.

This consultation with landholders, as well as key stakeholders, informed updates to the proposed route. Updates in response to landholder and stakeholder feedback has occurred in the following locations:

- Waubra to Glendonald
- Bolwarrah
- Mt Steiglitz to Korjamnunnip Creek
- Myrniong
- Darley military camp area
- Merrimu Reservoir
- Melton – MacPherson Park

The potential agriculture and land use impacts, Aboriginal cultural heritage, and native flora and fauna impacts including platypus and birds, relating to the Hepburn Lagoon north and south alternatives, released in November 2021, are still being investigated by technical specialists and the Registered Aboriginal Party.

The following key themes and concerns have emerged through consultation with landholders:

- Route selection and tower placement
- Implication on future land use and farming practices
- Landscape and visual amenity



What is the role of a Land Liaison Officer?

As a landholder along the proposed route, you have a dedicated Land Liaison Officer as your key point of contact for the project. The officer will work with you to address any questions and concerns.

In relation to land access, your Land Liaison Officer will discuss land access protocols and procedures, the land access process and our commitment to the Essential Services Commission Electricity Transmission Company Land Access Statement of Expectations with you to ensure any potential impact to your property, lifestyle, operations, biosecurity and any livestock is kept to a minimum.

As part of project design and planning, your Land Liaison Officer will work with you to understand your land use and activities, how the infrastructure will impact your property, discuss the easement requirements and towers and provide information about compensation.

Contact details for your Land Liaison Officer can be provided by the project team on 1300 360 795 or via email info@westernrenewableslink.com.au.

Surrounding landholder engagement

Surrounding landholders are people (including an entity, e.g. company or trust) who own, live or work on land near the proposed route and may be impacted by the project, but will not have an easement on their property. This includes properties from which the proposed transmission line may be visible.

There are dedicated resources within the Stakeholder and Community Engagement Team available to surrounding landholders throughout the development of the project. Surrounding landholders have access to the project team via the project email address and hotline.

For the first half of 2022, consultation with surrounding landholders has been focused on the landscape and visual assessment. The Stakeholder and Community Engagement Team has reached out to several surrounding landholders to enquire about visiting with the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Team.

The purpose of the field visits was to assess the potential visibility and visual impact of the proposed infrastructure as well as consider mitigation measures that may help reduce the visual impact of the project from sensitive viewing locations. It is important for us to understand the landscape and visual impacts of the project and for those impacts to be included in the EES. Decision-makers, such as ministers and statutory authorities, will use the information in the EES to determine whether approvals for the Western Renewables Link should be granted and what conditions should apply.

The following key themes and concerns have emerged through consultation with surrounding landholders:

- Compensation for surrounding landholders
- Property devaluation
- Landscape and visual amenity
- Setback distances from dwellings

Environment Effects Statement engagement phases



Early stakeholder engagement

Stakeholder feedback has helped to shape the engagement and communications approach, including the project's understanding of issues and points of interest.



Area of interest engagement and EES referral lodged

Community and landholder input assists with identification of opportunities and constraints within the project area of interest, to inform decision-making on the potential project corridors.



Exhibition of draft EES scoping requirements

Formal public comment informs the final Scoping Requirements on matters to be investigated and documented in the EES.

Engagement phases during the preparation of the EES

Community involvement

The EES process provides an opportunity for ongoing, transparent community consultation, and is documented in the Western Renewables Link EES Consultation Plan.

The plan was originally published in February 2021 with updates made in May 2022 to reflect changes to the EES submission schedule, key project engagement phases, as well as a review of stakeholders and related activities. The plan's branding was also updated to reflect the project's new name. The latest updated version (May 2022) can be found on the [DELWP website](#).

Ongoing consultation helps us to identify issues of concern and potential impacts of the project and informs the technical studies for the EES. The EES will be publicly exhibited for at least 30 days, during which time the public can review the EES and provide written submissions on the project to Planning Panels Victoria. These submissions will inform the panel in making a recommendation to the Minister for Planning. The timing of the directions and panel hearing is determined by Planning Panels Victoria.

Further information about the EES is outlined in the Environmental assessment and key project approvals fact sheet and available on the project website in the Resources section.

Thank you for your input

We would like to extend a sincere thank you to everyone who has participated by attending a webinar or a one-on-one meeting, sent an email or called our project team.

We look forward to continuing to engage with the community and will keep collecting feedback and valuable information from interested members of the public.

Stay involved

If you need further information about the project, please call 1300 360 795 or email info@westernrenewableslink.com.au. To register for updates visit westernrenewableslink.com.au.



EES preparation and specialist studies

Ongoing community feedback will assist in the:

- Identification of existing values and matters to be considered in environmental, cultural and social studies.
- Development of appropriate and effective measures to avoid and minimise impact and risks.
- Identification of opportunities to maximise benefits.
- Development of a design.



EES to DELWP

Draft EES document and supporting technical reports submitted to DELWP for review.

The EES will be exhibited for at least 30 days for public comment, allowing the public to review the EES and provide written submissions on the project to Planning Panels Victoria.




The submissions will inform the panel in making its recommendations to the Minister for Planning.



Ongoing landholder, community and stakeholder engagement



Western Renewables Link information

 www.westernrenewableslink.com.au
 1300 360 795
 info@westernrenewableslink.com.au

Ballarat PO Box
PO Box 638, Ballarat VIC 3353

Information straight to your inbox

Sign up for information straight to your inbox at the project website www.westernrenewableslink.com.au.

Complaints

If you have a query, a compliment or a complaint, you can let us know by using the online enquiry form on www.westernrenewableslink.com.au. Or you can let us know by:

 1300 360 795
 info@westernrenewableslink.com.au
 PO Box 638, Ballarat VIC 3353

Feedback

You can provide feedback on this document via our website www.westernrenewableslink.com.au or by calling 1300 360 795 or by emailing info@westernrenewableslink.com.au

Need an interpreter?



If you need an interpreter, please call 13 14 50.

Other sources of information

Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner (www.aeic.gov.au) including information about how to make a complaint, best industry practice and resources for landholders.

Australian Energy Market Operator (www.aemo.com.au) including information on the Regulatory Investment Test for Transmission (RIT-T) process for this project.

Energy and Water Ombudsman Victoria (www.ewov.com.au) including information about complaints and dispute resolution.

Energy Safe Victoria (www.esv.vic.gov.au) including information about the safe design and operation of high voltage transmission networks in Victoria.

Environment Effects Statement Process in Victoria (www.planning.vic.gov.au/environment-assessment/what-is-the-ees-process-in-victoria) including information about the environment assessment process managed by DELWP.

Essential Services Commission (www.esc.vic.gov.au) including information about the regulation of transmission licenses in Victoria and the Electricity Transmission Company Land Access Statement of Expectations.

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