

Western Victoria  
**transmission network project**



**MARCH – MAY 2021**

# **Community Engagement Summary Report**

Delivered by

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## Introduction

The Western Victoria Transmission Network Project (WVTNP) is a critical upgrade of the state's transmission network which will help ensure Victoria's successful transition from coal generated energy to sustainable, affordable and reliable renewable energy. It will connect large scale wind and solar in the west into the grid to power more than half a million homes across Victoria.

The project includes a new transmission line starting at Bulgana, near Stawell in Victoria's west, and covering approximately 190km to Sydenham in Melbourne's north-west. The project will enable the connection of new renewable energy generated in western Victoria into the National Electricity Market and increase the Victorian transmission network capacity.

The project is being delivered by AusNet Services through its commercial division Mondo. AusNet Services currently operate 6,500kms of transmission lines across Victoria.

## Purpose of this report

An important part of the WVTNP is ongoing engagement with communities and landowners. Community input is critical to all major projects to ensure that all potential impacts and opportunities are considered in the planning, approvals, and design phases. This report summarises the key issues and concerns raised with us by local communities and landowners between March and May 2021. The next Community Engagement Summary Report will cover the period June – October 2021 and include details of the ongoing engagement undertaken by our land access team and the series of online webinars and face-to-face sessions held in September and October.

We actively consider all feedback we have received through the current planning, design and approvals phase of the project and the Environment Effects Statement (ESS) process. However, if there are any other issues that you do not feel are reflected in this report and you would like us to consider, please contact the project team on 1300 360 795 or email [info@westvictnp.com.au](mailto:info@westvictnp.com.au).



**Figure 1: Number of people participated in engagement activities from 15 March through 2 May 2021.**

## Online and face-to-face engagement undertaken

Between March and May 2021, a series of online and face-to-face engagement activities were held.

An online mapping tool was open from 15 March until 30 April. Community members were invited to share their knowledge about the multiple project corridors within the area of interest (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 and image. In total 1951 map pins were added.

In late March and April, 10 community engagement sessions were hosted across the project area. Sessions were held at Newlyn, Ballarat, Gordon, Daylesford, Joel Joel, Balliang, Melton, Myrniong, Darley and Waubra. Each session went for 5 hours, and a total of 569 people attended.

In addition to the above engagement, community members and landowners could contact the project team at any point via phone or email, or by posting a question directly onto the website.

**What we've heard:** key themes have emerged that will be addressed through the EES process.

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## Health and safety

- Most contributions under this theme related to fire and emergency response which included discussion about bushfire risk, fire safety and firefighting.
- Participants frequently raised questions about the safety of living and working near high voltage transmission infrastructure.

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## Landscape and visual amenity

- Participants were concerned about the visual impact that towers would have on the local landscape.
- The existing landscape is valued for its long vistas and views of hills and greenery.
- The landscape was cited by many participants as the fundamental part of the 'country lifestyle' that had first attracted them to the area.

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## Socioeconomic

- The project area contains high value agricultural land which supports many agricultural businesses including cropping, livestock and breeding.
- Questions regarding the future viability of agriculture in the area were frequently raised.
- Questions included the impact of electric and magnetic fields (EMF), restrictions on land uses under easements including height restrictions and underground infrastructure, restricted access for machinery and stock movements.
- The impact on property values and tourism was raised by several participants.

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## Heritage

- Most contributions related to historic heritage history.
  - Participants identified both recorded and potential sites of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage significance across the corridor areas. These included waterways, caves, shelters, rock carvings, tree scarring, middens, and scatters.
  - Some participants referenced historical significance and attachments to the local area on a more personal level (generational landownership).
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## Environment

- Most contributions received under this theme related to flora and fauna, threatened, endangered and protected species and habitat. Some of the threatened and endangered species included the Brush-tailed Phascogale, Swifts Parrot and Growling Grass Frog.
- Wedge-tailed Eagles and other birds of prey were the most frequently identified both as valued native fauna and as species with the highest degree of interest.
- Participants identified the presence and diversity of fauna and flora across the project area.
- The Lerderderg River, Myrniong Creek, Birch Creek and other local waterways were identified by community members as valuable waterways.

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## Amenity and access

- Participants raised traffic and accessibility as a key issue. This included discussion about local access, community access to services, fire safety and access required to support agriculture.

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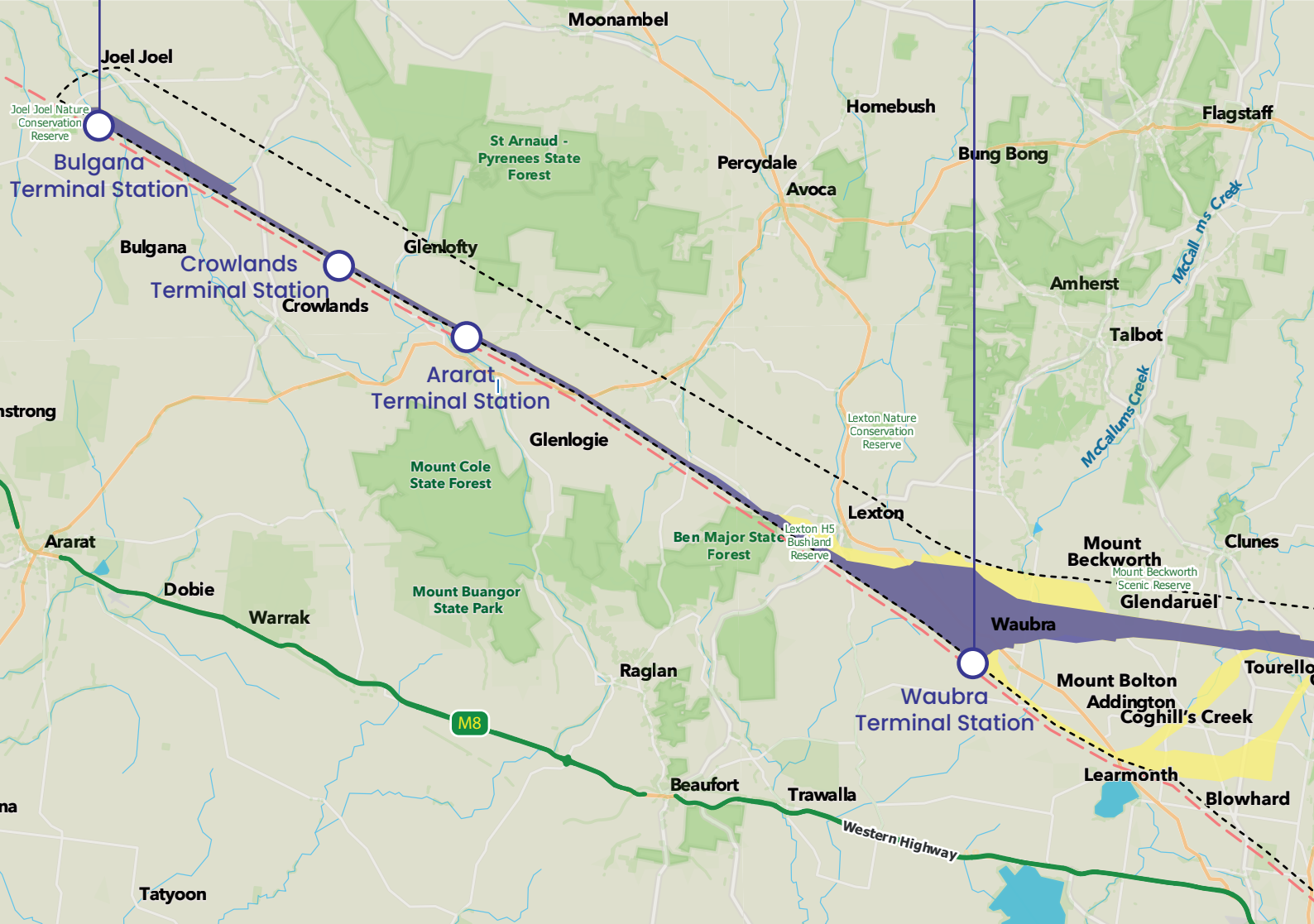
## Project development

- Participants shared a strong desire for underground powerlines.
  - Questions about using the Western Highway was also highlighted as a preference due to its proximity to existing infrastructure.
  - The impacts of overhead lines on the landscape, amenity and land use were the most frequent concerns across all areas.
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# Single corridor - Area of Interest

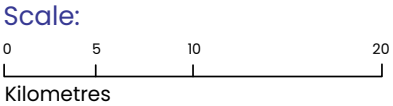
**Section 01**  
Bulgana to Waubra

**Section 02**  
Waubra to Glendonald



## Map legend

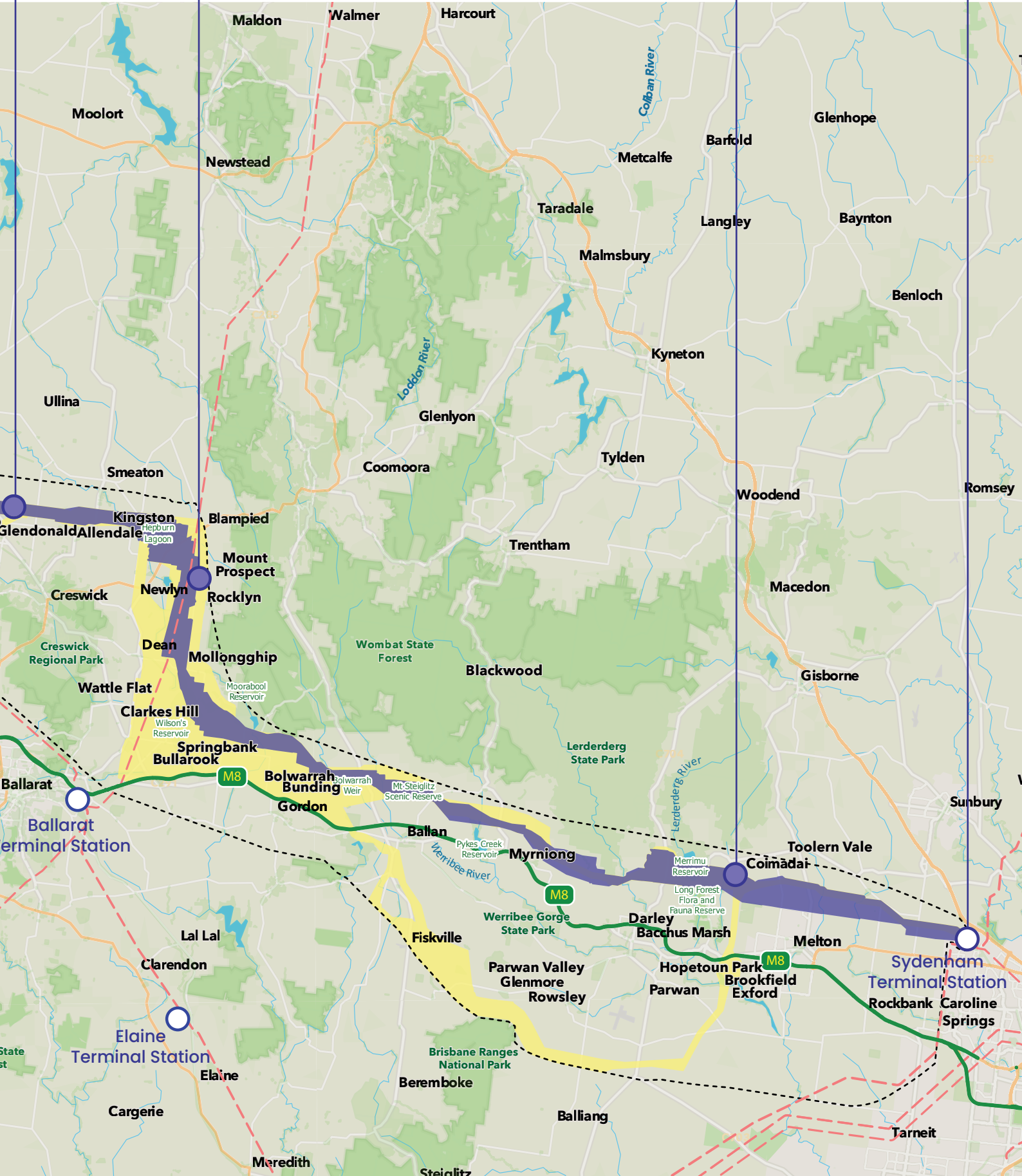
- Single Corridor
- Corridors
- Area of interest
- Lakes and rivers
- Freeways and major roads
- Parks, Reserves and Forests
- Existing transmission line
- Western Highway



**Section 03**  
Glendonald to Mount Prospect

**Section 04**  
Mount Prospect to Long Forest

**Section 05**  
Long Forest to Sydenham





In total 1951 pins were dropped on the online map identifying important destinations, sites and features in a broad geographical area known as the project area of interest.

Area of Interest	Town name	Important features identified
<b>Section 1: Bulgana to Waubra</b>	<b>Waubra</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brush-tailed Phascogales</li> <li>• Echidnas</li> <li>• Wedge-tailed Eagles</li> <li>• Old cypress trees shelter belts along property boundaries and roadways</li> <li>• Reids Road important access route</li> </ul>
<b>Section 2: Waubra to Glendonald</b>	<b>Blowhard</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extractive industry</li> </ul>
	<b>Coghill's Creek</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Black Swan and Brolga nesting sites</li> <li>• Australian Long Necked Turtle habitat</li> <li>• Growling Grass Frogs</li> </ul>
	<b>Glendaruel</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lollipop Tree</li> <li>• Migratory bird flight path</li> <li>• Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos</li> <li>• Powerful Owls</li> <li>• Wedge-tailed Eagles</li> </ul>
	<b>Glendonald</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growling Grass Frogs</li> <li>• Seven Hills historic region</li> <li>• Ballarat Flying School flight path</li> </ul>
	<b>Glenmore</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Bluff</li> </ul>
	<b>Mount Beckworth</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brush-tailed Phascogales</li> </ul>
	<b>Mount Bolton</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paragliding launch site</li> </ul>
	<b>Tourello</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Private farmhouse and homestead</li> <li>• Chinese market gardens</li> <li>• Wedge-tailed Eagles</li> <li>• Breeding colony of Swans</li> <li>• Echidnas</li> <li>• Ballarat Flying School flight path</li> </ul>

Area of Interest	Town name	Important features identified
<b>Section 3: Glendonald to Mount Prospect</b>	<b>Allendale</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hepburn Shire Council depot and quarry – frequent heavy vehicle traffic</li> <li>• Horse Stud</li> <li>• Lone Hand farmhouse and shearing shed</li> <li>• Lone Hand commemorative oval</li> <li>• Leishman drover’s run from Snizort to Lone Hand Wedge Tailed Eagles</li> <li>• Yellow Tailed Black Cockatoos</li> <li>• Brown Falcons</li> </ul>
	<b>Blampied</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breeding grounds for local fish and aquatic animals</li> <li>• Fishing, kayaking and other recreational activities</li> <li>• Historic Hepburn Lagoon at the Seven Hills Estate</li> <li>• Swiss Mountain Hotel (oldest Victorian weatherboard pub)</li> <li>• Historical Post Office and phone exchange</li> <li>• Landscape and garden tourism attractions</li> <li>• Aerial access spraying for crops</li> </ul>
	<b>Bullarook</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tipperary Hill</li> </ul>
	<b>Clarkes Hill</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• St Mary’s School</li> <li>• Narrow gravel and paved roads</li> </ul>
	<b>Dean</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avenue of Honour</li> <li>• Wedge-tailed Eagles</li> </ul>
	<b>Gordon</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Melbourne to Ballarat helicopter/light aircraft flight path between Poverty Peak and the Western Freeway</li> </ul>

**Area of Interest****Town name****Important features identified****Kingston**

- 19th century bluestone bridge and stone drains constructed by Chinese workers
- Kingston Avenue of Honour
- Birches Creek
- Forest Hill
- Platypus
- Wedge-tailed Eagles

**Molongghip**

- Historical town hall
- Wedge-tailed Eagles
- Platypus
- Brush-tailed Phascogale
- Powerful Owls
- Echidnas
- Wombats

**Mount Prospect**

- 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 & Co station
- Telegraph Post Office
- Significant cultural heritage sites
- Aerial access spraying for crops

**Newlyn and Newlyn North**

- Horse-riding
- Cycling
- Newlyn Primary School
- Organic farming
- Scenic views attracting artists and photographers
- Volcanic landmark
- Newlyn Reservoir
- Platypus in Birch Creek
- Newlyn Avenue of Honour
- Newlyn Primary School
- Historic butcher's wagon track
- Scrub Hill Church



Area of Interest	Town name	Important features identified
	<b>Rocklyn</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Natural habitat</li> <li>Fish, frogs and other aquatic animals</li> <li>Stock water source</li> </ul>
	<b>Smeaton</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Historic Anderson's Mill</li> <li>Homestead and quarry site</li> <li>Mt Kooroocheang significant indigenous site</li> </ul>
	<b>Springbank</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remnant Swamp Gum vegetation area</li> <li>Wedge-tailed Eagles</li> <li>Access to Western Freeway</li> </ul>
<b>Section 4: Mount Prospect to Long Forest</b>	<b>Bacchus Marsh</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Airport</li> <li>Avenue of Honour</li> <li>Swift Parrots</li> </ul>
	<b>Ballan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ballan-Meredith Road is a key connector to services</li> <li>Main trucking route for large loads transported from the Port of Geelong</li> <li>School bus routes</li> <li>Bostock Reservoir</li> <li>Planned burns for fire safety</li> <li>Bostock Reservoir</li> <li>Greendale Road is a key access route for fire safety</li> <li>Wedge-tailed Eagles</li> </ul>
	<b>Balliang</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unpowered glider aircraft land area</li> </ul>
	<b>Bolwarrah</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access road to Wombat State Forest</li> </ul>
	<b>Bunding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wedge-tailed Eagles</li> <li>Harriers</li> <li>Black cockatoos</li> <li>Rosellas</li> <li>Platypus in Moorabool West River</li> </ul>



**Area of Interest****Town name****Important features identified****Section 4: Mount Prospect to Long Forest****Coidamai**

- 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**

- 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 WWII)
- Wedge-tailed Eagles
- Wombats
- Echidnas
- Grey Headed flying foxes
- Eastern Brown Snake habitat
- Common Bent-wing Bats

**Fiskville**

- PFAS soil contamination
- Wedge-tailed Eagles

**Gordon**

- Haydens Hill Road access to recreation
- Moorabool Reservoir

**Myrniong**

- Myrniong Creek
- Native tree plantation
- Native grasses
- Growling Grass Frog
- Runway for aerial spraying
- Historical homestead and early flour mill

**Rowsley**

- Swift Parrots
- Wedge-tailed Eagles
- Black Falcons

Area of Interest	Town name	Important features identified
<b>Section 5: Long Forest to Sydenham</b>	<b>Brookfield</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pair of White-bellied Sea Eagles</li> <li>• Future potential overpass and entry /exit ramp to the freeway</li> </ul>
	<b>Exford</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roads already in poor condition</li> </ul>
	<b>Hopetoun Park/Parwan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal Scar Tree</li> <li>• Melton Reservoir is a significant frog habitat for Common Froglets, Growling Grass Frog, Pobblebonks, Striped and Spotted Marsh Frogs, Peron's Tree Frog, Whistling Tree Frog, Southern Brown Tree Frogs and Spadefoot Toad breeding ground.</li> <li>• Cormorant and Darter Birds</li> <li>• Wedge-Tailed Eagles</li> <li>• Pelicans</li> <li>• Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos</li> <li>• Black Falcon</li> <li>• Long Necked Turtle</li> <li>• Heritage listed endangered Bluebox Tree.</li> </ul>
	<b>Melton</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos</li> <li>• Melton Airport</li> </ul>
	<b>Parwan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Old growth River Gum</li> <li>• Bluebells on volcanic plains</li> </ul>
	<b>Parwan / Balliang</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safe landing options for powerless gliders</li> </ul>
	<b>Toolern Vale</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arnolds Creek East Branch</li> <li>• Melton Park farmhouse and stables</li> <li>• Racetrack under construction</li> <li>• Heliport for aerial spraying</li> </ul>

# How was this information used?

Community feedback received between March and May 2021, combined with the findings of technical investigations, informed the selection of the single corridor that was announced in June 2021.

This corridor is currently undergoing further environmental and technical investigations through the EES process.

Community feedback detailed above has been incorporated into the project planning and design in the following areas:

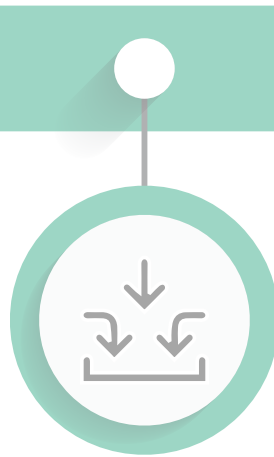
- Identification of existing values and matters to be considered in environmental, cultural and social technical reports.
- Identification of preliminary risks and issues to be addressed in the impact assessment technical reports.
- Identification of opportunities to maximise benefits (including the Community Benefit Fund).

## Engagement phases during the preparation of the EES

### Early 2020

### Mid-Late 2020

### Late 2020



#### 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 landowner 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.

**Mid 2020–Mid 2022**

**Mid 2022**



### **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.

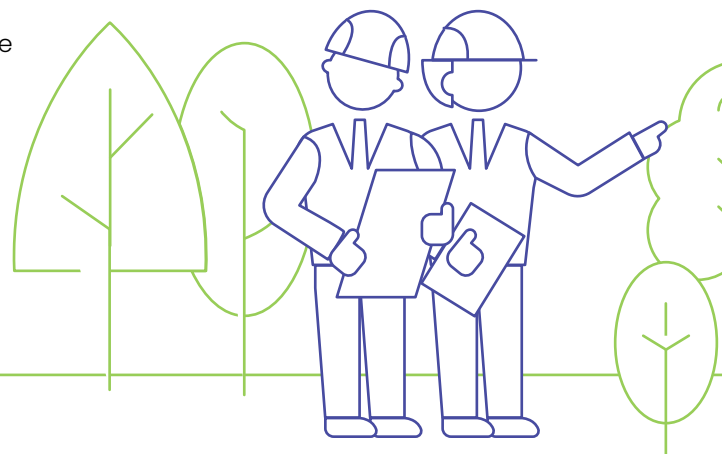


### **EES to DELWP**

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.



# Community involvement

The EES process provides an opportunity for ongoing, transparent community consultation, which are documented in the WVTNP Environment Effects Statement Consultation Plan. The plan was published in February 2021 on the DELWP website - [https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0018/513531/WVTNP\\_EES\\_Consultation-Plan.pdf](https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/513531/WVTNP_EES_Consultation-Plan.pdf)

Ongoing consultation will help us to identify issues of concern and potential impacts of the project and will inform the technical studies and the EES. The EES will be exhibited for at least 30 days for public comment. The timing of the directions and panel hearing is determined by Planning Panels Victoria. The public exhibition period allows members of 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.

Further information about the EES is outlined in the Environmental and key project approvals Fact Sheet published in June 2021 and available on the project website.

## Thank you for your input

We would like to extend a sincere thank you to everyone who has participated by dropping a pin on the online mapping tool, attending a community engagement session, sent an email or called our project team. We look forward to engaging with the community and continuing to build on feedback and valuable information from the interested members of the public.



### Stay informed

If you need further information or clarification about the project in general, please call 1300 360 795 or email [info@westvictnp.com.au](mailto:info@westvictnp.com.au). To register for updates, visit [westvictnp.com.au](http://westvictnp.com.au).