

Western Victoria
transmission network project



APRIL TO NOVEMBER 2020

Community Engagement Summary Report

Delivered by

mondo[®]

AusNet
services

westvictnp.com.au

Introduction

The Western Victoria Transmission Network Project (WVTNP) is critical infrastructure required to unlock the renewable energy potential and economic development of western Victoria.

The energy sector across the world is in transition. In Victoria, the way we generate electricity is shifting away from reliance on Latrobe Valley coal-fired energy sources, towards areas rich in renewable resources in western Victoria.

Renewable energy will be fed through a new electricity transmission line starting at Bulgana, near Stawell in Victoria's west and covering a distance of approximately 190km to the north-western Melbourne suburb of Sydenham. A new terminal station will also be built, in a location to be determined, to the north of Ballarat.

The project entered the environmental assessment and project approvals phase in 2020 that will continue through 2021, and construction is planned to be completed in 2025.

Purpose of this report

An integral part of the WVTNP (the project) is engaging with stakeholders, including local communities and landowners. Community input is critical to ensuring the project design considers the perspectives of all stakeholders.

Community feedback received during early engagement, combined with the findings of technical investigations, will inform key project decisions such as identifying the project route which will be subject to further environmental, social and technical investigations.

This report summarises the key issues and concerns raised with us during our engagement with communities and local landowners in 2020. It is published so that an outline of what has been heard can be shared with those who have engaged to date, inform those who may now have an interest in the project, and invite any further comments or queries as the next stages of community engagement commence.

We are actively considering this valuable feedback in the next 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.



What's happened so far?

We understand that some communities and landowners are concerned about the impacts of the project and community input is critical to helping us learn more about the local area to inform project decisions for this state-significant energy project.

Over 4500 unique pieces of community feedback and insight were gathered in 2020 and will be considered as part of the EES process.

Six live online community sessions were held, and eight community drop-in sessions were conducted in Stawell, Beaufort, Ballarat, Creswick, Gordon, Ballan, Darley and Melton. One-on-one meetings were held with identified landowners and broad community awareness of the project was raised through local advertising and targeted letter-box drops.

A website was launched with fact sheets and a Question and Answer function providing an option for people to send their questions to the project team

and receive written responses. A project hotline was also established to enable people to speak directly with a project team member.

The online mapping tool specifically asked stakeholders to provide feedback on what is important to individuals and communities about their local area by allowing participants to drop a pin and make a comment.



To learn more about the project, register for updates or contact the project team, please visit westvictnp.com.au, call 03 9021 0674 or email info@westvictnp.com.au

What we've heard: calls for more information, engagement, and certainty about the following aspects and potential impacts of the project.

Project Development

- Location of the proposed route of the transmission line.
- Impact on land and property values, including buying and selling of land without knowing the exact location of the transmission line.
- The decision-making process to determine a preferred route.
- Impact on property values, visual amenity and rural landscape.
- Whether proper consideration has been given to an underground option.
- General acceptance for the reason behind the project (to unlock renewable energy for all Victorians).
- The regulatory process and assessment that initiated the project.
- Cost impact to electricity consumers in Victoria.
- Height of the towers and design.
- Transmission towers proximity to homes.

Health and safety

- Bushfire risks associated with transmission lines.
- How critical aerial and ground firefighting services will operate.
- Road access in and out of local townships and properties during bushfires.
- Health impacts associated with living near a transmission line.
- Impact on agriculture, crops and animal product quality.
- Welfare of livestock.
- Impact on organic certification of local producers.
- Noise and vibration impacts to people, wildlife and livestock.
- Risks associated with tower collapse.

Community engagement

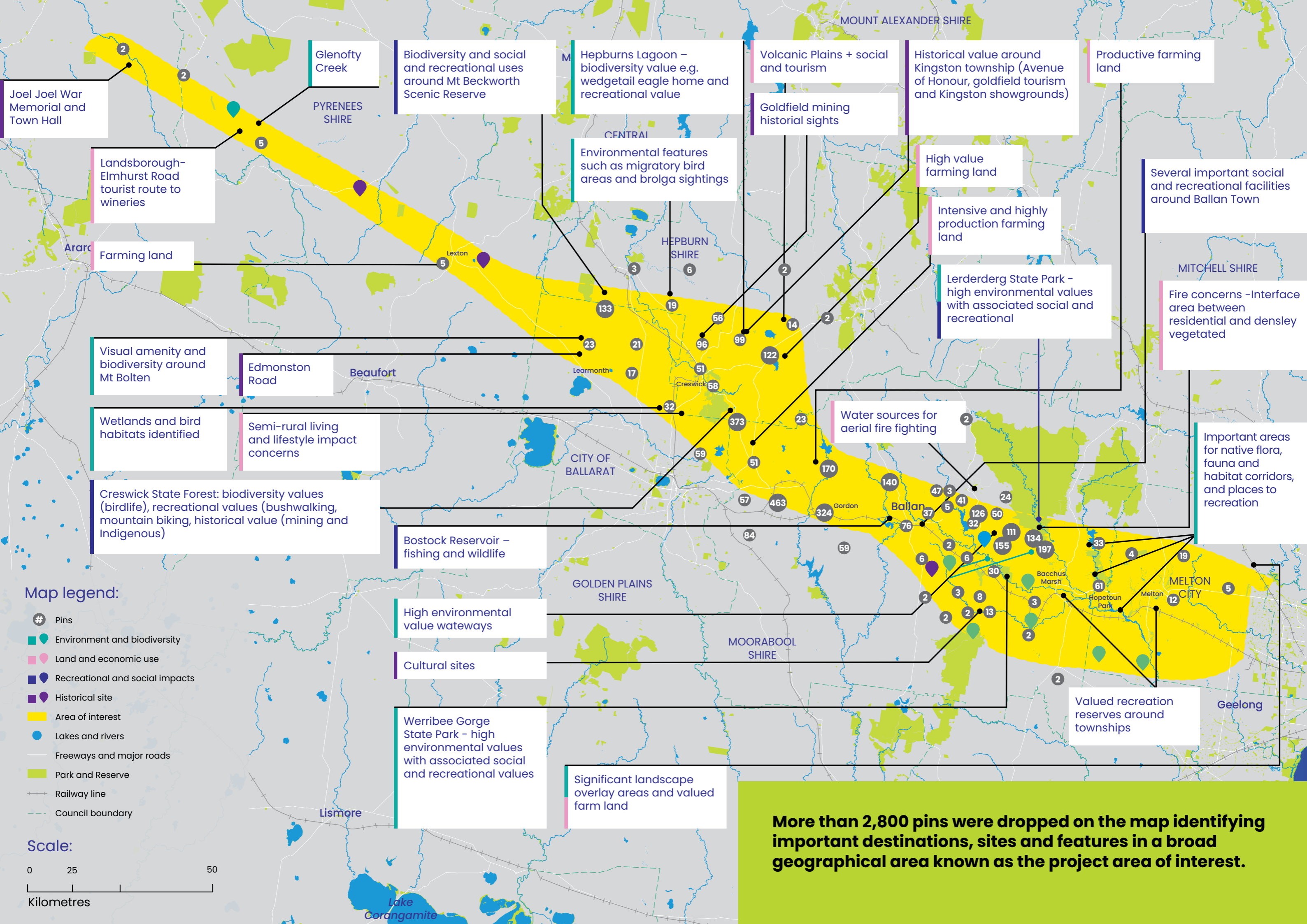
- Transparency and genuineness of the community engagement process.
- Ability to impact meaningfully on the project route.
- The decision-making process to determine a preferred route.
- Adequacy of access to engagement activities for individuals and groups in the community who don't have internet access or skills.

Environmental

- Visual impact on the rural landscape.
- Local and regional ecological and environmental impacts.
- Impact on National Parks, State Parks and Nature Conservation Reserves and ecologically significant areas.
- High value of diverse heritage sites including: Avenues of Honour, 1800s Flour Mills, gold mining and geological sites.
- Areas of cultural significance.
- Impact on ground and surface water supplies.
- Removal of habitat and the impact on declining koala population.
- Habitat and health impacts for kangaroos, echidnas, wombats, livestock and birds (wedge-tailed eagles and other birds of prey).
- Aboriginal cultural heritage sites and areas of sensitivity.
- Biodiversity impacts on native flora and fauna.

Socioeconomic

- Reduction in land use and use of farm equipment.
- Productivity of farming properties.
- Property values including residential, agricultural and horticultural properties.
- Transparency and genuineness of the community engagement process.
- Ability to impact meaningfully on the project route.
- The decision-making process to determine a preferred route.
- Adequacy of access to engagement activities for individuals and groups in the community who don't have internet access or skills.
- Adequate and fair compensation to all those impacted.
- Impact on the internet, mobile phone or everyday household equipment.
- Impact on rural lifestyle and amenity.
- Physical division of local communities by lines.
- Impacts on tourism.



Map legend:

- # Pins
- Environment and biodiversity
- Land and economic use
- Recreational and social impacts
- Historical site
- Area of interest
- Lakes and rivers
- Freeways and major roads
- Park and Reserve
- Railway line
- Council boundary

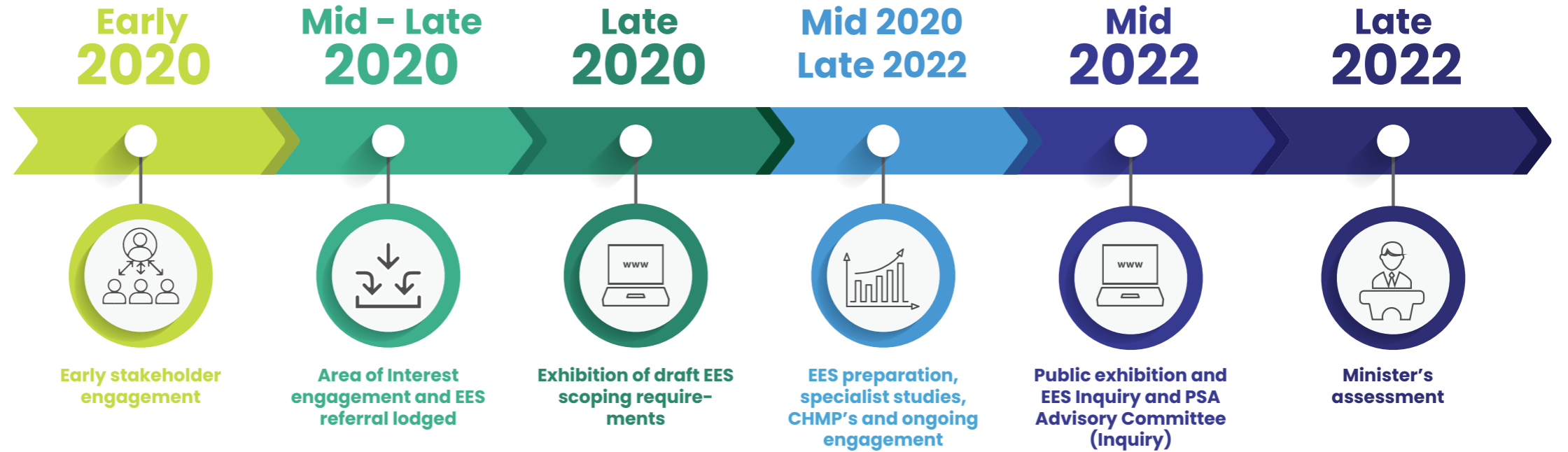


More than 2,800 pins were dropped on the map identifying important destinations, sites and features in a broad geographical area known as the project area of interest.

How will this feedback be used?

We are considering all feedback received from our stakeholders as we move to the next phase of the project and the EES process.

Community feedback received during early engagement, combined with the findings of technical investigations, will inform key project decisions such as identifying the project route that will be subject to further environmental, social and technical investigations.



Early stakeholder engagement

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

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.

EES preparation, specialist studies and ongoing engagement

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 preferred design

Public exhibition and EES Inquiry and PSA Advisory Committee (Inquiry)

Public submissions and the Inquiry will inform the Minister's assessment on whether the environmental impacts of the proposed project are acceptable.

Submissions to statutory exhibition processes will be considered by the relevant State Government department.

Minister's assessment

Minister for Planning releases written assessment of the project including recommendations for controls to minimise impacts.

Environment Effects Statement (EES)

In August 2020, the Victorian Minister for Planning required AusNet Services to prepare an EES under the Environment Effects Act 1978.

The EES process is a robust and transparent process to assess the potential environmental impacts of the project.

Along with a significant amount of technical work, the EES process allows for ongoing community input along the way. It is expected that the EES process for the project will be completed by late 2022.

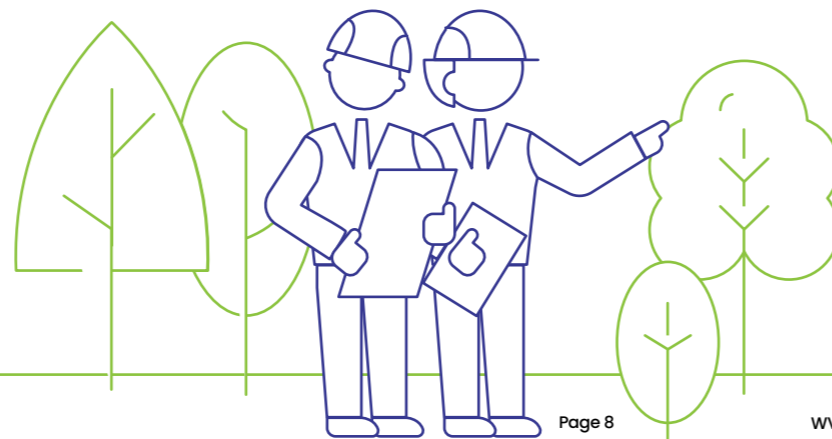
The final EES Scoping Requirements and frequently asked questions can be viewed on the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) website, click on this link.

<https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/environment-assessment/browse-projects/projects/western-victoria-transmission-network-project#documents>

Information on the project's EES Consultation Plan and the way that the project will be engaging with communities throughout the EES process.



If you're interested in contributing to this process, please register your interest. info@westvictnp.com.au



For more information about the EES, click on this link .

<https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/environment-assessment/browse-projects/projects/western-victoria-transmission-network-project>

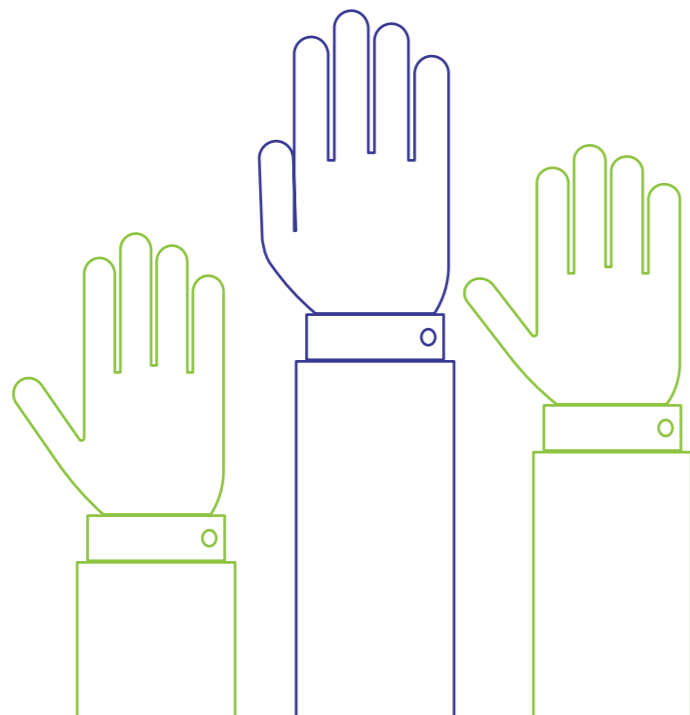
Thank you for your input

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 webinar or drop-in session, sent an email or called our project team.

Please contact us if you'd like to learn more about the project, provide feedback on this report or to register for updates. Visit westvictnp.com.au, call 03 9021 0674 or email info@westvictnp.com.au

Opportunities to stay involved

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





With you every step of the way

Delivered by



AusNet Transmission Group Pty Ltd and Mondo Power Pty Ltd are independent subsidiaries of AusNet Services Ltd