

# Foreword

Australia's energy landscape is changing. Increasing demand for energy, coupled with a reduction in coal-fired energy generation, means significantly more renewable energy must be connected into the National Electricity Market. The Western Renewables Link (the Project) will deliver critical infrastructure to help unlock the renewable energy potential of Victoria and improve the reliability of Victoria's transmission network.



**David Smales**  
Chief Executive Officer  
AusNet

The Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) selected AusNet to develop and deliver the Project following a competitive tender process. AusNet operates over 6,500 kilometres of transmission lines across Victoria. We are Victoria's largest diversified energy network business, connecting communities with reliable, affordable and sustainable energy.

AusNet has prepared this Environment Effects Statement (EES) in accordance with the requirements of the *Environment Effects Act 1978* (Vic). The EES assesses the potential environmental, social, and economic impacts associated with the Project's construction, operation, and decommissioning. We recognise that some impacts are unavoidable for a project of this size and scale, and we have applied our extensive experience and knowledge to develop the Project so it can meet its objectives while avoiding adverse impacts wherever possible.

To develop this EES, we undertook extensive consultation with landholders, communities, businesses, Traditional Owners, government representatives, and other key stakeholders along the Proposed Route. These conversations have deepened our understanding of local values and perspectives, helping us identify the most effective ways to minimise the Project's impacts. The relationships formed through this process provide a strong foundation for delivering essential infrastructure and contributing to a lasting social and economic legacy.

We undertook technical investigations along the Proposed Route to inform the Project's design and refine its alignment, with a clear focus on significantly reducing environmental impacts. This EES presents the potential impacts identified through these studies, along with the proposed Environmental Management Framework, developed to safeguard the environment, maintain regulatory compliance, and foster transparency while building trust with communities and stakeholders.

This has been a significant and collaborative undertaking, involving the dedication and expertise of many individuals and groups. I'd like to extend my sincere thanks to the Technical Reference Group (TRG) convened by the Department of Transport and Planning Impact Assessment Unit, the Community Consultation Group (CCG), and the Council Advisory Group (CAG) which were instrumental in assisting discussions between AusNet, community members, and Councils. Their insights and feedback have been thoughtfully considered throughout the preparation of this EES.

I'd also like to acknowledge the work of our technical specialists, planners, engineers, and everyone who played a role in shaping this EES. Your efforts are deeply appreciated.

Subject to receiving the necessary Project approvals, our focus will remain on responsible delivery. We are committed to working constructively with landholders and communities to manage impacts with care, transparency, and accountability. We will also continue to collaborate with AEMO, renewable energy generators, and other key energy system participants so the Project contributes meaningfully to Victoria's transition to a more reliable, affordable, and sustainable energy future.