

Land access for environmental and engineering studies

Introduction

The project is critical infrastructure required to unlock the renewable energy potential of western Victoria.

The Western Renewables Link proposes 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 (AusNet). AusNet currently operates 6,500kms of transmission lines across Victoria.



Purpose of this fact sheet

This fact sheet outlines:

- Why we need access to people's properties.
- The type of scientific and engineering studies that may be completed.
- The process for discussing access and agreeing on conditions landowners may have for people accessing their land (e.g. biosecurity).

Why we need access to people's properties

The Western Renewables Link is still in the development stage. The proposed project requires Victorian and Commonwealth Government approval as well as extensive community consultation through the Environment Effects Statement (EES) process before construction commences.

The process for preparing the EES for this project, as for any EES, involves detailed field surveys to fully understand the existing conditions and environmental sensitivities of the land within the proposed corridor.

Findings of these studies are used to guide where the proposed route will be located by excluding properties in some instances. It is therefore important that the EES contains the most accurate information possible.

Which is why we require access to land to conduct surveys, investigations, and monitoring. These studies primarily consist of low impact activities with limited ground disturbance.

These comprehensive field studies help us better understand the environmental impacts that could result from the proposed transmission line. The studies will also help us identify ways for those impacts to be mitigated or managed.

The exhibited EES will be a key information resource for anyone who wishes to make a public submission, as well as for decision-makers who may need to determine approvals required if the project is to proceed. Further information about the EES and the timelines is outlined in the Environmental and key project approvals fact sheet available on the [project website](#).

Furthermore, access to land is required to determine the proposed route for the transmission line that minimises not only environmental impacts but also strives to minimise impacts to land use and livelihoods. Your input as a landholder as to how you use your property is vitally important.

The type of scientific and engineering studies required

Studies are focused on understanding the existing conditions on the land in detail to see what significant environmental and cultural features exist. These studies include:



Ecology

Ecologists undertake daytime and nocturnal surveys for native flora and fauna. These may be conducted at specific times of the year.



Historical heritage

Archaeologists undertake investigations for evidence of historical heritage.



Land and cadastral survey

Surveyors undertake surveys to confirm title boundaries and geographic features.



Soil contamination

Environmental scientists undertake investigations to identify areas of potential contamination including collecting soil and groundwater samples for analysis.



Surface water and groundwater

Environmental scientists undertake investigations including the collection of samples and review of groundwater bores.



Aboriginal cultural heritage

Traditional Owners and archaeologists will conduct investigations for evidence of Aboriginal cultural heritage including walk overs and small-scale excavations in areas of potential archaeological sensitivity.



Geotechnical

Engineers and scientists will undertake investigations including the collection of samples for the geotechnical engineering aspects of the project.



Visual and landscape amenity

Specialists will photograph existing views and create visual simulations from representative residences and other important viewpoints within or overlooking areas of visual sensitivity.



Land use

Land liaison officers are working with landholders to understand their current land use and operations to inform the impact assessments and refinement of the proposed route.

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Updated with Western Renewables Link name change, logo and contact details and other minor content updates to reflect current information.



Your rights as a landholder or occupier of land

We respect your privacy, ownership and use of the land. Where any of the above studies are required within your property, you will be contacted by an AusNet representative to identify how we can mitigate the interruption to your property, farming operations and livestock. These agreed conditions can be documented in a voluntary land access consent form.

AusNet understands the importance of biosecurity to farmers and their farming operations, and respects procedures such as closing gates, avoiding disturbance to livestock, and driving on existing laneways and tracks. An AusNet representative will discuss any additional biosecurity measures that may be required on your property including wash-downs or any other protocols reasonably required.

We recognise that entering a land access agreement is a voluntary undertaking and that you may not wish to enter such an agreement with AusNet. However, we would appreciate the opportunity to discuss and resolve your concerns by determining appropriate arrangements relating to timing, access, biosecurity arrangements and logistics.

AusNet obligations

We support the Essential Services Commission's Electricity transmission company land access statement of expectations. Our approach to land access is aligned with the principles set out in the statement of expectations. We are committed to meeting these expectations to foster the best possible relationships with landholders.

The statement comprises 22 principles outlining how electricity transmission companies should exercise their powers according to section 93 of the *Electricity Industry Act 2000* to access private land. The statement also outlines the expectations of landholders and parties interested in land as critical partners and stakeholders in the delivery of major energy projects and the provision of essential transmission services.

More information about the statement of expectations is available at www.esc.vic.gov.au/electricity-and-gas/inquiries-studies-and-reviews/electricity-transmission-company-land-access-statement-expectations.

Minimising land access requirements

To minimise interruption to landholders, AusNet has made significant efforts to reduce the level of private land access required for physical surveys and investigations including by:

- Using aerial imagery.
- Undertaking surveys on adjacent and/or representative public land.
- Sourcing survey results/data from other neighbouring projects or land.
- Prioritising land access based on EES assessment and approval requirements

Statutory access rights

Our preference is always to work with landholders to determine access arrangements. However, in circumstances where we cannot reach voluntary agreement, AusNet is authorised under law to access and undertake work on land. Where we seek to do this, we will provide landholders with notice at least seven days in advance and will comply with the Essential Services Commission Electricity transmission company land access statement of expectations throughout the process.

Next steps

We remain committed to working closely with you to minimise interruptions to your property and farming operations.

Your dedicated land liaison officer will be your main point of contact for all matters relating to your property. They will contact you to discuss access to your property, if required, and to determine reasonable conditions of access that will minimise impact to you and your property where possible.

More information about land access is available in the Landholder Guide: Land access, easements and compensation available on the [project website, resources page](#).



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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:

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Feedback

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