

# Heritage

The Environment Effects Statement (EES) and the draft Planning Scheme Amendment for the Western Renewables Link are now available for public comment. Aboriginal cultural heritage and historical heritage are key topics covered in the EES.



This fact sheet has been developed to help you navigate the Western Renewables Link EES and connect you with the information that matters to you.

It provides details on how potential impacts on how **Aboriginal cultural heritage and historical heritage** have been considered and where to find more information in the EES.

## Planning and approvals

The EES includes information on how the project could affect the environment during construction, operation and decommissioning, and how any adverse impacts could be managed. It helps decision-makers determine whether the project should be approved under Commonwealth and Victorian laws and what conditions should apply.

The EES for the Western Renewables Link has involved extensive technical studies including field surveys and investigations, along with Traditional Owner, landholder, community and stakeholder consultation. It includes 20 technical reports on the topics listed on the final page of this fact sheet.

The EES and the draft Planning Scheme Amendment, which allows for the project land use and development to proceed, can be viewed in full on the WRL website at [westernrenewableslink.com.au/ees](https://westernrenewableslink.com.au/ees)



**The Western Renewables Link will unlock Victoria's renewable energy generation potential and play a key role in facilitating access to clean, reliable, and affordable energy.**

The Western Renewables Link is a proposed high-voltage, double-circuit overhead electricity transmission line, extending over 190 kilometres from Bulgana in western Victoria to Sydenham in Melbourne's north-west. The project will connect significant renewable energy developments within the Western Victoria Renewable Energy Zone to the grid and establish a direct link between the New South Wales and Victorian electricity networks.

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An example of a culturally modified tree

## Aboriginal Cultural Heritage

The project passes through unique cultural landscapes containing specific landforms, landscape features and artefacts that may be culturally sensitive and may contain Aboriginal cultural heritage values.

These values include Country, places and objects that are of significant value to Aboriginal Traditional Owners. Aboriginal heritage places provide a connection between generations and help to connect landscapes with past and current generations.

### What was investigated?

Heritage Advisors (HAs) specialising in Aboriginal cultural heritage, in consultation with Traditional Owner (TO) Representatives of Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) assessed impacts of the project on tangible and intangible ACH. The assessment aimed to avoid, minimise or mitigate impacts through all phases of the project. A combination of desktop analysis and field surveys comprising pedestrian surveys and subsurface investigations was used to determine the existing ACH values. Additionally, cultural values assessments (CVAs) focusing on intangible heritage values was undertaken with all TO groups. Where field investigations were not possible, the specialists relied on desktop information and modelled data which provides a conservative worst-case assessment of impacts that is expected to be reduced through design refinement and further survey. Cultural Heritage Management Plans (CHMPs) being prepared for the project will include final measures and impacts as well as conditions to manage ACH.

### Investigations included:

- desktop review and analysis of restricted databases including site registrations, extents and reporting
- CVAs with TOs including workshops and field visits building on desktop reviews
- pedestrian surveys identifying surface artefacts and other tangible values as well as cultural landscapes important for TOs
- subsurface archaeological testing at select locations of potential archaeological sensitivity; and
- TO knowledge and oral history gained through extensive consultation.

### Managing potential impacts

AusNet must minimise potential impacts by implementing measures that are defined in CHMPs. Nine CHMPs are currently being prepared for the project, in consultation with Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs), TOs, and First Peoples State Relations. These plans document general and specific management conditions to protect and manage registered as well as unidentified Aboriginal Places and values. CHMPs are the main tool for managing potential impacts on Aboriginal cultural heritage and will be completed and approved at the conclusion of the EES process.

The CHMP management conditions outline an agreed approach to manage and minimise the extent of impacts to known and unknown Aboriginal cultural heritage during construction. Once mitigation measures have been applied there will still be some remaining high impacts. AusNet will apply the CHMP management conditions and continue to work with the RAPs.

If the project can't avoid impacts to these cultural values through changes to the design or proposed route, construction could impact the values.



This fact sheet outlines potential EES topics you may wish to explore further, but submissions should not be based on this information. Please refer to the more detailed information on Aboriginal Cultural Heritage in **EES Chapter 9** and **Technical Report B**, and base submissions on the material provided there.



### Examples of how we plan to manage potential impacts:



Developing Cultural Heritage Management Plans to protect and manage registered as well as unidentified Aboriginal Places and values



Continuing to engage with Registered Aboriginal Parties, Traditional Owners, and First Peoples State Relations



Deep Lead mine

## Historical Heritage

Historical heritage is tangible evidence of the more recent past, and contains objects and places associated with Australia's history since the arrival of European settlers. This encompasses values linked with historical settings, places or objects.

The project area includes parts of the Victorian goldfields in Western Victoria, including areas that were added to Australia's World Heritage Tentative List in March 2025 as well as a range of other historical heritage places. These include archaeological sites (such as former gold mines and diggings) and buildings and structures (such as historical homesteads and precincts, churches, residences, mills, bridges and dry-stone walls). The project has been designed to avoid known heritage values as far as reasonably practicable.

### What was investigated?

Heritage specialists assessed impacts of the project on post contact historical heritage values with an aim to avoid, minimise or mitigate impacts to such values through all phases of the project. A combination of desktop analysis and field surveys comprising pedestrian surveys was used to determine the existing heritage values. Where field investigations were not possible, the specialists relied on desktop information and remote aerial data which provides a baseline of assessment of values and resultant impacts that is expected to be reduced through design refinement and further survey.

### Investigations included:

- desktop review (including primary and secondary source material) and analysis of heritage databases (ie HERMES, National Trust, LGA HOs, RNE etc), including site registrations, extents and reporting
- oral histories
- interrogation of aerial imagery
- pedestrian surveys identifying historic heritage materials including architectural structures and industrial, agricultural installations of historical significance
- identification of subsurface archaeological deposits; and
- extensive consultation with Heritage Victoria and other experts in the field.

### Managing potential impacts

During construction, AusNet will work closely with Heritage Victoria and local councils to develop and implement plans to manage potential impacts on identified heritage places. These plans will include requirements for excavation, reporting and handling artefacts, setting up physical barriers and no-go zones around heritage sites, and training construction workers about historical heritage. If any unexpected historical items are found, they will be managed according to the unexpected finds protocol in the Construction Environmental Management Plan.

After these measures are in place, the impact on heritage sites from construction are expected to be low or none at all.



This fact sheet outlines potential EES topics you may wish to explore further, but submissions should not be based on this information. Please refer to the more detailed information on Historical Heritage in **EES Chapter 10** and **Technical Report C**, and base submissions on the material provided there.



### Examples of how we plan to manage potential impacts:



Avoiding known heritage values



Implementing physical barriers and exclusion zones



Delivering historical heritage awareness training for workers



### Making a submission

Planning Panels Victoria (PPV) manages the EES public exhibition process.

Submissions must be made in writing and received by the exhibition closing date via the Engage Victoria website – the Victorian Government's centralised online consultation platform [engage.vic.gov.au/Western-Renewables-Link-IAC](https://engage.vic.gov.au/Western-Renewables-Link-IAC). Submissions will be considered by the independent Inquiry and Advisory Committee (IAC) and the Minister for Planning.

Only one submission is needed to address all your views about the project, its effects, and the relevant documents.

If you do not have internet access and are unable to lodge a submission online via the Engage Victoria website, please contact PPV through the Customer Call Centre on 136 186 (select option 6) and request a hard copy submission coversheet. Each hard copy submission must be accompanied by a completed coversheet issued by PPV.








All submissions must state the name and address of the person making the submission. Submissions will be treated as public documents and will be published on the Engage Victoria website. Do not include personal information in the body of your submission (such as your email address or phone number or photos of people, particularly children).

If you would like to present your submission in person to the IAC, you will need to make a submission and mark on the submission form that you would like to be heard.

For more information about the EES submission process or any enquiries regarding the IAC process, contact PPV on 136 186 (select option 6) or email [planning.panels@transport.vic.gov.au](mailto:planning.panels@transport.vic.gov.au)






## Key topics in the EES

						
Amenity and Safety	Biodiversity and Environment	Community and Land Use	Heritage	Land and Water	Landscape and Visual	Transport and Aviation
Air Quality	Biodiversity	Agriculture and Forestry	Aboriginal Cultural Heritage	Contaminated Land	Landscape and Visual	Aviation
Bushfire	Climate Change	Economic	Historical Heritage	Geology and Soils		Transport
EMI and EMF	Greenhouse Gas	Land Use and Planning		Groundwater		
Noise and Vibration		Social		Surface Water		

### More information

Visit the project website [westernrenewableslink.com.au](https://westernrenewableslink.com.au) for the latest project information.

### Contact us

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