

Land and Water

The Environment Effects Statement (EES) and the draft Planning Scheme Amendment for the Western Renewables Link are now available for public comment. Contaminated land, geology and soils, surface water and groundwater 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 **land and water** 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



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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Contaminated Land

The proposed route passes through potential sources of contamination from current and historical uses including sand and gravel quarries, agricultural land and historic gold mining sites. However, soil investigations have not identified significant contamination and there are no sites publicly identified by Victoria's Environment Protection Authority as presenting unacceptable exposure to contamination.

What was investigated?

Technical specialists assessed potential impacts of the project on human health and the environment as a result of disturbing contamination and measures to avoid, minimise or manage these impacts through all phases of the project. Desktop review of publicly available mapping and databases,

and investigations and soil sampling by AusNet and specialists was used to identify potentially contaminated areas and protected environmental values.

Managing potential impacts

Whenever possible, the project will avoid areas that could be highly contaminated. However, there are still some areas that might contain contamination. To manage potential impacts from uncovering unknown contamination, the project will conduct investigations and implement control measures to reduce its spread during construction.

After mitigation measures are applied no lasting impacts are expected to human health or the environment.



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 Contaminated Land in **EES Chapter 23** and **Technical Report R**, and base submissions on the material provided there.



Examples of how we plan to manage potential impacts:



Identifying and assessing any unknown sources of contamination before earthworks begin



Developing plans to address potential contamination issues effectively



Implementing measures to reduce contamination spread during construction, including appropriate storage, handling, and disposal of potential contaminants and spoil



Geology and Soils

Construction work can change the natural landscape and disturb the natural processes that shape the land. Activities such as building access roads, tower foundations, and other earthworks can have a physical impact on the land.

What was investigated?

Technical specialists assessed potential impacts of the project on geology and soils and measures to avoid, minimise or manage impacts through all phases of the project. Desktop review of publicly available mapping and databases, topography data collected by AusNet and field investigations by specialists was used to determine existing geology and soil conditions and important geological sites.

Managing potential impacts

To reduce the impact on important geological areas, the project is designed to avoid steep slopes and significant geological sites as much as possible.

Any remaining effects on soil erosion, land stability, and important geological sites during construction are expected to be minor. These will be managed through planning, engineering solutions, and regular inspections and maintenance. If it's not possible to avoid areas prone to erosion, unstable soils, steep slopes, or significant geological sites, the project will follow industry standards and apply measures to reduce the impact.



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 Geology and Soils in **EES Chapter 22** and **Technical Report Q**, and base submissions on the material provided there.



Examples of how we plan to manage impacts:



Implementing an ongoing inspection and maintenance schedule to minimise remaining impacts to soil erosion, land stability and geologically significant sites



Treating unstable soils on site as required



Documenting inspection needs for erosion-prone areas in the Erosion and Sediment Control Management Plan



Groundwater

Groundwater is the water found beneath the Earth’s surface. Soils and rocks that store large quantities of groundwater are known as aquifers. Across the project area, groundwater and surface water are closely connected. Many rivers, creeks, and wetlands in the area rely on groundwater.

What was investigated?

Groundwater specialists assessed potential impacts of the project on groundwater and measures to avoid, minimise or manage impacts through all phases of the project. Desktop review of publicly available mapping and databases and development of a conceptual groundwater model was used to determine the existing groundwater conditions and values. This includes groundwater levels, flow, recharge, quality, groundwater users (bores) and groundwater dependent ecosystems.

The expected depth to the water table across the project area varies from less than five metres to greater than 50 metres, with groundwater typically found 10 to 20 metres below the surface.

Managing potential impacts

Construction activities might encounter the water table, which is the saturated ground in an aquifer. While the depth of works below the ground at terminal station locations will be dependent on geotechnical investigations, it’s considered unlikely that groundwater will be encountered due to the expected shallow nature of works.

There is the potential for the project to intersect groundwater at several transmission tower locations, which may require groundwater to be drawn down within an excavation (dewatering). This will be managed through planned dewatering protocols. As works would be localised and short term, groundwater levels are expected to return to current levels.

Construction activities can contaminate groundwater if not properly managed. To manage this, surface seals – barriers that prevent contaminants from entering the ground – can be used to minimise the chance of contaminants entering the groundwater.

Removing patches of vegetation in three areas along the proposed route—in the vicinity of Mile Creek Road and Forest Road in Lexton, south of Coutts Road in Waubra, and in an area north of Wilson Reservoir—may result in an increase in groundwater levels; however, only minor and temporary changes to water levels are expected.



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 Groundwater in **EES Chapter 24** and **Technical Report S**, and base submissions on the material provided there.



Examples of how we plan to manage potential impacts:



Developing and implementing dewatering protocols if required to return groundwater levels to current levels



Designing all surface seals to minimise the potential for contaminants to enter groundwater



Implementing buffer distances where possible between construction works and groundwater bores or groundwater-dependent ecosystems



Surface Water

The proposed route crosses several waterways and water bodies, from small creeks that only flow after rain, to major waterways with permanent flows. Removing vegetation during construction can lead to erosion and weaken waterway beds, banks, and channels.

What was investigated?

Surface water specialists assessed potential impacts of the project on surface water and waterways and measures to avoid, minimise or manage impacts through all phases of the project. Desktop review and analysis of publicly available mapping and data from water and catchment management authorities was used to determine the existing surface water conditions. This includes waterway characteristics, values and protected areas, flood behaviour and water quality.

Managing potential impacts

To minimise impacts, towers, terminal stations, and access tracks are required to be kept a safe distance from waterways.

If this isn't possible, the site will be assessed and specific measures put in place to protect the area.

Rainfall, leaks or spills from machinery and equipment may lead to sediment or contaminants being carried to nearby waterways. A monitoring program will establish baseline water quality and continue during construction to detect changes.



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 Surface Water in **EES Chapter 25** and **Technical Report T**, and base submissions on the material provided there.



Examples of how we plan to manage potential impacts:



Documenting and implementing measures to maintain existing flow paths and drainage lines and avoid diverting or blocking flows to dams and other water users



Establishing water quality baseline conditions for designated waterways



Monitoring water quality during construction to detect any changes



Minimising impacts to waterway beds and banks by setting a minimum distance between project infrastructure and waterways where possible





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. 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






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 for the latest project information.

Contact us

 westernrenewableslink.com.au
 1800 WRL WRL (975 975)
 info@westernrenewableslink.com.au

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