

Land access for field surveys and investigations

Please note that this document has been superseded and therefore may contain outdated information. To access current information on Western Renewables Link, please visit our website's Resources page or [contact our project team](#).



Purpose

This document provides information for landholders on the proposed route for the Western Renewables Link, including about how we will communicate and work with landholders to complete field surveys and investigations on private property.

This guide expands on the information about land access provided in the previously published Landholder Guide: Land access, easements and compensation which is available on the [project website, resources page](#). In this document, we provide more detailed information about the way we communicate and engage with landholders, the process we use to request access to private property, and how we work with landholders to reduce disturbance and address their concerns about us accessing their property.



Landholder

The person/s (including an entity e.g., company or trust) entitled to hold title to a parcel of land.

With the approval of the landholder, we will work with tenants, and other parties with a legal interest in the property during the land access process outlined in this document.

Support for landholders

We acknowledge that the Western Renewables Link project is causing uncertainty and concern for some landholders and communities. There are confidential, independent, free-of-charge, support services available for those individuals who may be affected by the project.

Contact:

- Benestar: 1300 360 364.
- Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS): 1300 735 578.
- Refer to the [project website, Community and Landholders page](#) for more support services.

Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners





AusNet acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands on which the proposed Western Renewables Link will operate, and pays respect to their Elders past, present and emerging. We recognise the role of each Registered Aboriginal Party and Traditional Owners in the management, protection, and promotion of cultural heritage, connection to Country, cultural awareness and land access.

Accessibility services

If you need an interpreter, please call 13 14 50.

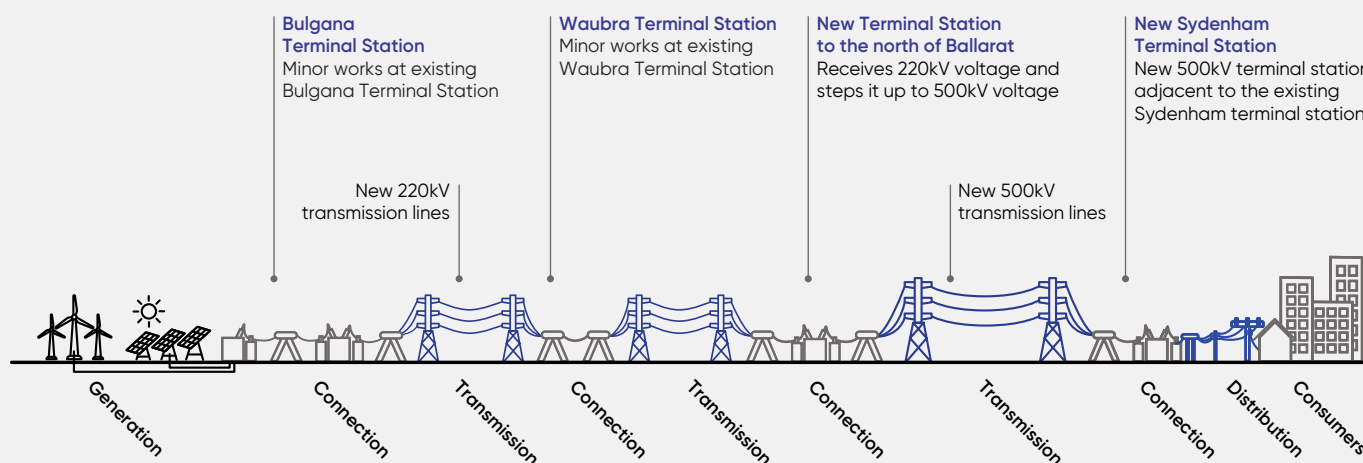
If you are deaf, hearing impaired or speech impaired, please contact the National Relay Service on voice relay number 1300 555 727, TTY number 133 677 or SMS relay number 0423 677 767.

How to contact the project team

 www.westernrenewableslink.com.au/contact
 1300 360 795 (8am to 5pm Monday to Friday)
 info@westernrenewableslink.com.au
 PO Box 638, Ballarat VIC 3353

To report faults and emergencies, you can contact AusNet 24/7 on 13 17 99.

Western Renewables Link



New overhead double circuit 220kV transmission line between the existing Bulgana Terminal Station, connecting to the existing Waubra Terminal Station and a new terminal station to the north of Ballarat.

From there, a new overhead double circuit 500kV transmission line connecting to a new terminal station at Sydenham.

For illustrative purposes only

Western Renewables Link

A new electricity transmission link, the Western Renewables Link, is required to deliver renewable energy from wind and solar farms in western Victoria, a key renewable energy zone, to homes and businesses across Victoria and into the National Electricity Market.

AusNet Transmission Group Pty Ltd (AusNet) was selected by the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) to develop, design, construct, operate and maintain the proposed transmission line.

We are required to prepare an Environment Effects Statement (EES) for the project that will be assessed by the Victorian Minister for Planning. To best inform the EES and project design and planning, we are undertaking extensive technical studies including field surveys and investigations, along with landholder, community and stakeholder consultation on the project and the proposed route.

The EES process must be complete and Victorian Government and Commonwealth approvals must be obtained before construction can commence.

You can find all the latest project information, including timelines and public documents on the [project website](#).

Essential Services Commission Statement of Expectations

We are committed to complying with the Essential Services Commission's (ESC) Electricity transmission company land access statement of expectations (statement of expectations). The approach and processes outlined in this guide align with the principles set out in the statement of expectations, which cover landholder communication and engagement, managing land access impacts and managing complaints and disputes. We are committed to meeting these expectations to foster the best possible relationships with landholders.

More information about the statement of expectations is available on the ESC website at www.esc.vic.gov.au/electricity-and-gas/electricity-and-gas-inquiries-studies-and-reviews.

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Landholder communication and engagement

Commitment to landholders

As a landholder on the proposed route for the Western Renewables Link, you are a key stakeholder in delivering this significant energy transmission project for all Victorians. We are committed to working with you in a respectful, open and responsive way, in accordance with our values and the statement of expectations, that reflects your role as a key stakeholder and host of the required infrastructure.

Landholder input to the project

Your input is important to the planning and design of the Western Renewables Link. Information provided by landholders and gathered through field surveys on private property is being used to identify the potential impacts of the project including to land use, environment, Aboriginal cultural heritage and historic heritage. We are using this information to avoid or minimise these impacts through selection of the proposed route and transmission line design.

As a landholder on the proposed route, we will continue to work with you to better understand your land use and activities, the potential impact of the project to your property and operations, and to discuss the siting of transmission towers and access tracks on your property.

Engagement principles

We are committed to delivering extensive and meaningful engagement with landholders throughout the planning, delivery and operation of the Western Renewables Link.

We will engage with you in an open, inclusive, accessible and timely manner. Our approach is underpinned by four key values – understanding, openness, respect and responsiveness.



Understanding

- We will seek to understand the impacts of the project on landholders.
- We will seek to identify benefits for landholders or areas for improvement based on feedback.
- We will seek to understand the communities in which we operate – who will be interested and why.



Openness

- We will be open and transparent with all landholders.
- We will be authentic in our dealings with landholders.
- We will set clear expectations with landholders about what they can influence or provide input on.



Respect

- We will engage with landholders as early as possible.
- We will treat all landholders with respect.
- We will ensure our information is useful and accessible to landholders.



Responsiveness

- We will communicate with and respond to landholders in a timely manner.
- We will ensure the information we provide to landholders is consistent and accurate.
- We will deliver what we say we will, when we say we will.

Designated Land Liaison Officer

We have appointed a dedicated Land Liaison Officer (LLO) for each landholder with property within the proposed route for the Western Renewables Link.

Project information

As a landholder, your LLO is your key contact person for all project matters during the planning and construction phases. They will provide project information and updates, address any questions and concerns, and consult with you when specific input is required for the project. They will also communicate your views and preferences back to the project team to inform the project planning and design.

Contact details

You can contact your LLO any time via their direct mobile phone or email to ask any questions you may have about the project. Your LLO is committed to responding to you as quickly as possible and will endeavour to get back to you within two business days of your contact.

If you are unsure of who your LLO is or their contact details, you can request this information through the project team on 1300 360 795 or via email info@westernrenewableslink.com.au.

Meetings

You can request a meeting with your LLO at any time or your LLO may request a face-to-face meeting(s) with you to discuss the project or your concerns in more detail. You can meet at a time and place that suits you and meetings can be held after business hours if that suits you best.

Land access arrangements

Your LLO can discuss and answer any questions you have about why access to your property may be required and the process used to request access to your property. They will be your key contact person throughout the land access process to ensure your requirements are understood and met and any concerns you have are addressed.

Easement compensation process

Your LLO will facilitate and support you through the easement acquisition and compensation valuation process, which is expected to begin in late-2022. They can arrange for a valuer to visit your property to gain a more detailed understanding of your land use and the impacts that an easement and any transmission towers will have on the value and use of your property. Your LLO will provide more information about the process, payments, and terms and conditions of the easement agreement throughout this process.

Respectful and flexible approach

Your LLO will be respectful and flexible in their approach to contacting you and arranging meeting times and locations. We will also be respectful and flexible in our approach to scheduling field surveys and investigations on your property and will work with you on the timing and logistics.

Informing and responding to landholders

This is a summary of the key engagement steps for a landholder on the proposed route for the Western Renewables Link. You may also receive other general project notifications and communications that are not landholder specific.

Contacting landholders and introducing the project

- Every landholder within the proposed route is sent a project introduction letter, including where to find more information on the project.
- Your LLO will contact you to confirm you have received the letter, answer any questions, explain their role, confirm your preferred contact method and if there are other people occupying the property or parties with a legal interest in the property who we should also engage.
- You will receive a follow-up email or letter to confirm and provide any additional information in writing.
- We will contact you via your preferred contact method going forward.

Keeping landholders informed and listening to their feedback

- Your LLO will provide project updates as the project is developed and as new information becomes available, for example changes to the proposed route or exhibition of the EES documents.
- You can sign up for project eUpdates to receive all the latest project information via email.
- Your LLO will contact you to request specific input to the project planning and design where appropriate, for example tower and access track siting on your property.

Land access requests

- We will send all landholders along the proposed route a general request to consider providing their voluntary consent for us to access their land to undertake field surveys and investigations. These may include, for example, land use or general flora and fauna surveys. You will also receive a template voluntary land access consent form for your consideration (see attachment).
- Where a need is identified to undertake a specific field survey or investigation on your property, we will request your consent for us to access your land to undertake the work (see page 8).
- Your LLO can respond to any questions you may have about why access to your property may be required, and the process for you to provide your consent for us to access your land.

Easement acquisition and compensation process

- Your LLO will discuss the easement acquisition process with you and can arrange meetings for you with the valuer to discuss the easement acquisition value.

Why is access to private property required?

Undertaking field surveys and investigations

Field surveys and investigations are required to confirm the existing conditions and environmental sensitivities of the land and assess the potential impacts of the project. The findings of field surveys have helped us to identify the proposed route with the least overall impact and will help to identify the indicative tower sites and access track locations in consultation with landholders.

We may also request access to private property to visit the proposed route, discuss tower siting and access tracks, and undertake property visits with valuers to assess the value of compensation for the acquisition of an easement.

Informing the Environment Effects Statement

Information gathered in the field is important to ensure the EES accurately assesses the potential impacts of the proposed transmission line. Technical specialists may need to conduct field surveys on private property to confirm their desktop-based analysis. For example, field surveys and investigations have been used to inform impact assessments such as:

- Biodiversity
- Aboriginal cultural heritage
- Historic heritage
- Landscape and visual amenity
- Surface water and groundwater

Informing Cultural Heritage Management Plans

We are working closely with Registered Aboriginal Parties and Traditional Owners to prepare Cultural Heritage Management Plans for the proposed route in accordance with the requirements of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* (Vic). The Cultural Heritage Management Plans outline the measures to be taken before, during and after the construction of the proposed project to manage and protect Aboriginal cultural heritage. We have notified landholders on the proposed route where a Cultural Heritage Management Plan is being prepared.

Traditional Owners and archaeologists may need to conduct field surveys to identify if Aboriginal cultural heritage is present in certain areas. This is to investigate the potential impacts to Aboriginal cultural heritage within and surrounding the proposed route and ensure appropriate measures are taken to protect it.

Is access to every property required?

To reduce the number of times we need to access private property we:

- Use aerial imagery.
- Undertake surveys on adjacent and/or representative public land.
- Source survey results/data from other neighbouring projects or land.

We acknowledge that aerial surveys using helicopters can cause disturbance to people, animals and farming operations. We will advise you before we undertake an aerial survey over your property so you can make any necessary arrangements for your operations and livestock. All aerial surveys are undertaken in accordance with Civil Aviation Safety Authority regulations. The helicopter surveys are generally undertaken at no lower than 1000 feet over built-up areas and 500 feet above other areas. When flying between survey areas, the helicopter will fly at an appropriate height to minimise disruption.

We will notify you if we plan to undertake ground-based surveys on the roadside or public land near your property to keep you informed.

In some instances, desktop and other research by the technical specialists may indicate that a specific area may contain features or values, such as protected flora and fauna, that would be impacted by the proposed transmission line. Field work may be required to verify the presence of these features and potential impacts.



Rights and commitments

AusNet commitments when accessing private property

AusNet will:

- Comply with all applicable laws in accessing property, including compliance with any required COVIDSafe protocols.
- Comply with the ESC's statement of expectations.
- Abide by all access protocols set out in the voluntary land access consent form, where in place.
- Carry identification, which can be produced upon request by the landholder or a representative of the landholder at any time when accessing a property.
- Minimise disturbance and do as little damage as possible when undertaking any surveys and investigations.
- Make good any damage caused while undertaking field surveys and investigations.
- Have appropriate public liability insurance in place that covers the field surveys and investigations to be conducted on private property.
- Handle all complaints in accordance with our complaint handling process and offer dispute resolution support where required.

Landholder rights

All landholders have the right to:

- Either provide or refuse to provide voluntary consent for access to their property.
- Receive prior notice of any access to their property.
- See identification of all persons entering their property.
- Have their requests and requirements for access to their property understood and adhered to.
- Set out biosecurity procedures to be followed during land access.
- Privacy and confidentiality.
- Compensation for any damage caused by AusNet while undertaking surveys and investigations, if that damage cannot be made good.

Expectations of landholders and parties interested in land

The ESC's statement of expectations outlines the following expectations:

Landowners and parties interested in the affected land are critical partners and stakeholders with electricity transmission companies in the delivery of major energy projects. They also play a major role in provision of essential transmission services.

Cooperation and acceptable outcomes are more likely to be achieved where landowners:

- Liaise with the electricity transmission company in good faith.
- Provide responses to electricity transmission company requests or notices with minimum delay.
- Respect the rights and activities of the electricity transmission company, and provide reasonable access.
- Promptly notify the electricity transmission company of any damage to property caused by the company.
- Engage in negotiations with the electricity transmission company to determine appropriate conduct and compensation arrangements (for any damage caused during land access).
- Ensure that those present on their land do not impede the electricity transmission company's authorised activities and do not, in any circumstances, jeopardise the physical or personal safety of any authorised representative of the electricity transmission company.

ARCHIVED DOCUMENT

Land access snapshot



~190km
proposed route



~ 240
landholders



More than 200
field surveys completed

Land access process for field surveys and investigations

We acknowledge that requesting access to private property can raise questions and concerns for landholders. We are committed to engaging openly, listening to your concerns, considering your requests and requirements, and working with you to achieve the best outcome. Our aim is to minimise disruption to you, your family and your property throughout this process.

Where we have identified a need to undertake a specific field survey or investigation on your property, we will request your consent for us to access your land to undertake the work. If you are willing to consider granting access to your property, the following table summarises the process.

Land access for field surveys and investigations

Step	Description	Timeframe
1. Identify sites and timing	We identify which properties or areas within properties we need to access for a specific field survey(s).	
2. Request access	Your LLO will contact you, via your preferred method, to discuss access to your property. We will then send a letter requesting access to your property for a specific purpose and timeframe. We will provide you with the voluntary land access consent form to consider.	A minimum of 21 days before the required property access period.
3. Understand your requirements	Your LLO will discuss and agree any property access requirements, protocols and procedures that you would like us to follow, for example access points, biosecurity requirements and timing.	
4. Support for legal advice	You can seek independent legal advice regarding the voluntary land access consent form and AusNet will reimburse the cost up to \$1,000 (excluding GST).	
5. Consent	<p>You consent to property access by signing the voluntary land access consent form (noting consent can be withdrawn at any time).</p> <p>OR</p> <p>You do not consent to property access.</p> <p>Where you do not consent to property access, we may consider undertaking the required field survey in accordance with section 93 of the <i>Electricity Industry Act 2000</i> (Vic). See page 12 for more information.</p>	
6. Confirmation notice	Where you give your consent, we will confirm the upcoming property access, activities and details.	A minimum of 7 days before the agreed property access period, or as otherwise agreed.
7. Property access	We will undertake the field survey in accordance with the agreed arrangements and protocols.	We will contact you 24 hours before the agreed property access and on the day of the access prior to entry or as otherwise agreed with you.
8. Remediation and compensation	We will take all precautions to avoid and minimise any damage to your property during field work. Where unavoidable, we will remediate any damage caused as soon as possible. You will be compensated for any damage caused during the surveys and investigations that is unable to be remediated. If compensation cannot be agreed upon, any compensation will be determined in the manner provided under the <i>Land Acquisition and Compensation Act 1986</i> (Vic).	We will endeavour to pay compensation that is assessed as payable within 30 days of assessment. You have up to two years after the damage occurs to submit a claim.

Steps in the voluntary land access consent process

Where voluntary consent is given for land access for field surveys and investigations, more information on each of the steps in the process is provided below.

1. Identify where and when access is required

Where desktop and other research by the technical specialists indicates that a specific area may contain features or values, such as protected flora and fauna or Aboriginal cultural heritage, that may be impacted by the proposed transmission line, we aim to undertake field surveys and investigations to verify the presence of these features and better understand the potential impacts.

The timing of the field surveys will depend on the survey type. For example, some flora and fauna field surveys need to be conducted during a seasonal period for the specific species or may need to be conducted at night.

We are committed to minimising impacts to you and your operations during field work. We will coordinate field work to ensure different surveys are conducted simultaneously, where possible, to limit the access time required on your property.

2. Request access to property

If access to your property is required to conduct specific field surveys or investigations, we will endeavour to contact you a minimum of 21 days prior to access to request your consent for temporary access. We will provide an explanation of why access is needed and a template voluntary land access consent form for you to consider.

Your LLO will facilitate and support you throughout the access request process. They will ensure your questions are answered and your requirements are understood and met. Your LLO can discuss the land access process, protocols and procedures, and our commitment to the ESC's statement of expectations, with you.

3: Understand landholder requirements

As a landholder, you have the best knowledge of your land and operational requirements. We value your advice on how to best undertake field surveys on your property with minimal disruption to your property and activities. If you have any specific concerns or requirements, you can discuss them with your LLO, who will document the requirements and protocols in the voluntary land access consent form.

For example, requirements and protocols may include:

- Property access points and gates to use.
- Biosecurity arrangements.
- Timing.
- Operational information, for example, lambing or calving periods, cropping or harvesting requirements, or scheduled property spraying.

4. Support for legal advice for landholders

We recognise that the requirements of each property and landholder are unique. This guide provides general information for landholders about the land access process. If you wish to obtain independent legal advice regarding our request to access your land, we will reimburse the reasonable legal costs with respect to the review and negotiation of the voluntary land access consent form up to a maximum of \$1,000 (excluding GST). Your LLO can assist you to claim this reimbursement.

5. Providing consent for access

Landholder choice

Providing consent for us to access your property to undertake field surveys and investigations is voluntary and your consent can be withdrawn at any time. Providing access to your land will help us to minimise impacts to your property and take your preferences into account in the design of the proposed transmission line. It will also help us to identify any sensitive areas on your property that should be avoided and assist in micro-siting towers and designing access tracks to minimise impacts to your property.

Providing consent for access does not indicate endorsement of the project but will help to ensure a comprehensive and robust EES that considers all of the potential impacts of this project is delivered for consideration by decision makers. More information about the process where voluntary consent is not provided is outlined on page 12 of this document.

Voluntary land access consent form

We will provide you with a template voluntary land access consent form for your consideration. The template is used for you to provide consent for us to access your property for a specific field survey(s) and a specific period of time.

The period of time you provide your consent for is up to you and we do not have ongoing access to your property after the term has expired. You may opt to sign a voluntary land access consent form that includes an extended access timeframe (e.g., 12 months). Where an extended agreement is in place and a specific survey requirement is identified, we will contact you in the manner and timeframe agreed in the voluntary land access consent form.

Commitment to how access will occur

Your LLO will discuss and agree with you the survey activities and arrangements you are willing to consent to, which will then be documented in the voluntary land access consent form for your signature, for example:

- Planned dates and times for access.
- Estimated duration of access and where this is an estimate that may change based on conditions found during the survey(s).
- Purpose of activities, for example, flora and fauna survey, historic heritage survey, etc.
- Type of activities to be conducted during access.
- Specified area(s) of land to be accessed, where possible.
- Entry and exit point(s).
- Mode of access, for example, 4WD, on foot, etc.
- Equipment that may be used.
- Number of people to attend and organisation(s) they represent.
- Biosecurity processes.
- Any other requirements you may have.

6. Confirmation notice and access details

We will contact you at least 7 days before the planned access date to confirm details of the visit to your property. The confirmation notice of intention to enter property will confirm the details of the planned access as outlined in the voluntary land access consent form.

7. Property access

During property access

Step	Description
Contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your designated LLO will continue to be your main point of contact throughout this period and will facilitate access to your property.• Your LLO will contact you 24 hours prior to and on the day of access to your property to confirm arrangements, ensure safe access and determine if anything has changed.• Sometimes planned property access may be impacted by events such as weather (i.e., weather conditions may cause access restrictions). We will keep you updated of any changes throughout our field works.
Entry	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your LLO will work with you to agree on entry and exit points to be used and method of entry, such as vehicle access or walk on to property. We will meet you at the agreed entry point and time, or as otherwise agreed.• We will minimise the number of people attending field work, noting that ensuring your health and safety, and that of our staff and delivery partners, is a priority. On the day, the field survey team will consist of:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your Land Liaison Officer.• Technical specialists, for example ecologists, archaeologists, Registered Aboriginal Party representatives and Traditional Owners.• Support staff.
Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All field personnel will carry project identification and can present this to you when asked.
Observing landholder requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your LLO will run through your requirements and our planned activities with you verbally before we start work to confirm we are in agreement.• Field staff will be briefed on and adhere to your access requirements. Your specific requirements will be discussed during field briefing and pre-start meetings.• Our staff and delivery partners are required to leave all gates, fences and other grids as they find them on entry to your property. This is standard practice for our field teams unless instructed otherwise by you.
Biosecurity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We will complete the biosecurity entry procedure including any specific requirements you may have.
Undertake works	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The field team will complete field surveys and investigations as agreed by you and documented in your land access consent form.• We will provide you with an update at the end of each day on our progress.• When we have completed the field work we will make good any soil disturbance or other damage.
Biosecurity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We will complete the biosecurity exit procedure, if required, including any specific requirements you may have.
Exit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We will leave your property via the agreed exit point.

Landholder attendance

You are welcome to discuss the proposed works with the technical specialists and our staff before they start the field work on your property. You can generally be present during the survey activities if you wish, with some restrictions, for example for health and safety reasons.

Where a survey is being undertaken for Aboriginal cultural heritage, we are guided by the Registered Aboriginal Party and Traditional Owners as to who is appropriate to be present.

You can inspect the area upon completion of the work and the specialists can provide an update at the end of each day as to the progress of the works and expected duration and completion time.

Vehicles and equipment

Where possible we will access your property on foot, leaving vehicles at the access point. If vehicles are required, we will remain on existing tracks where possible. The access route will be agreed with you. No vehicles or equipment will be left on your property without your prior consent.

Environmental and biosecurity controls

We understand the importance of biosecurity to farmers and their farming operations, and respect environmental and biosecurity controls and procedures. We have sought input on best-practice biosecurity procedures to prevent the spread of pests, weeds and diseases while working on your land.

We take emerging biosecurity threats, such as the spread of foot and mouth disease, seriously and continually review our processes and procedures to ensure they deal with these threats when they become known. We take advice from the relevant government and industry associations as to additional controls that may be put in place to manage any emerging pest, weed or disease concerns.

When accessing your property for survey and investigation purposes, we will comply with biosecurity procedures and will observe all biosecurity signage. All vehicles will be cleaned and undergo a biosecurity wash prior to entry. This includes washing down all ground-engaging parts with a biosecurity wash solution. The wheel arches, side boards, tail gates, and bull bars/nudge bars (if fitted), are sprayed underneath. Our staff and delivery partners undertake a biosecurity boot wash prior to entry by standing in a biosecurity wash solution and agitating the water. If the field survey team leave the property and intend to re-enter the property or enter another property, the biosecurity process is undertaken again.

You can discuss any questions or concerns you may have regarding biosecurity procedures with your LLO. The LLO can discuss any additional biosecurity measures that you require on your property and can document these biosecurity protocols. All of our staff and delivery partners will comply with any property-specific requirements you have when entering your property.

Field staff requirements

All of our staff and delivery partners undertaking fieldwork will have completed inductions and project and field work specific training before attending your property. They will have the required skills, training and qualifications for the role they are performing. AusNet and our delivery partners are also required to comply with all relevant Commonwealth, State and Local Government legislation and requirements.

Work standards

Field surveys and investigations are undertaken by qualified specialists such as ecologists, cultural heritage specialists and soil specialists, along with support professionals. The field surveys and investigations primarily consist of low-impact activities with limited ground disturbance and are predominantly based on observation. Work may include ground surveys, daytime and nocturnal surveys for native flora and fauna, taking photographs of relevant environmental matters, water and soil sampling and/or sub-surface excavations to understand the geology. Where we need to undertake sub-surface investigations, such as geotechnical investigations where soil samples may be taken via boreholes and test pits, we will backfill any ground disturbance, and reinstate the land as agreed with you.

Managing fire risks

We undertake a field work risk assessment before any works in fire risk areas and re-assess fire risks if the conditions change. We monitor fire warnings and total fire ban conditions during the declared fire season and communicate this information to the field work team in the daily pre-start meetings. All of our staff and delivery partners complete our bushfire preparedness induction training before attending field works. All vehicles travelling off-road during the declared fire season are checked to ensure they comply with our safety requirements and are equipped with firefighting equipment.

All engines and equipment used in country areas (other than State Forests, National Parks or other protected public land) comply with the requirements prescribed in the *Country Fire Authority Regulations 2014* (Vic). In addition to this, all engines and equipment used on or within 1.5km of State Forests, National Parks or other protected public land must comply with the requirements prescribed in the *Forests (Fire Protection) Regulations 2014* (Vic).

Managing COVID and other health risks

AusNet and its delivery partners will comply with all applicable statutory requirements, including relevant health and safety, COVIDSafe procedures and protocols, and reasonable landholder requests when entering property.

We have COVIDSafe plans that are updated when government requirements change and we follow a COVID management and testing procedure. Rapid Antigen Testing is regularly undertaken before accessing private property. Social distancing is employed during field works. We provide hand sanitiser and masks if required and report and isolate any COVID cases to minimise potential exposure.

8. Remediation and compensation

We will take all precautions to prevent and minimise damage to your property during field works and we will remediate any areas that are damaged as soon as possible. Should any damage be caused to your property that is unable to be remediated, we will compensate you.

If you need to make a claim for compensation, you can contact your LLO and/or submit your claim information and supporting documentation to info@westernrenewableslink.com.au. Your claim needs to be made within two years of the damage occurring. We will endeavour to pay compensation within 30 days of assessment.

If we cannot agree a compensation value with you, any compensation will be determined in accordance with the *Land Acquisition and Compensation Act 1986* (Vic).

What happens if a landholder does not provide access consent?

Our preference is always to work with landholders to agree on land access arrangements. However, in circumstances where we cannot reach voluntary agreement, AusNet may need to access and undertake work on your land under section 93 of the *Electricity Industry Act 2000* (Vic). Your LLO will work with you to facilitate this process.

The ESC's statement of expectations provides the following advice for this process:

If, despite an electricity transmission company's compliance with the ESC's statement of expectations, a landowner refuses to engage with the electricity transmission company or to allow access, then:

- The electricity transmission company should document the refusal and surrounding circumstances.
- The electricity transmission company may exercise its statutory powers of access but must do as little harm as possible in exercising those powers.
- The electricity transmission company must compensate for damage it causes in accordance with section 93(2) of the *Electricity Industry Act 2000* (Vic).

Section 93 land access process

Step	Description	Timeframe
1. Voluntary consent not provided	We will document your refusal and the surrounding circumstances. The option to sign a voluntary land access consent form remains open to you throughout this process.	
2. Review access requirement	We will review the requirement to access your property and consider if there are any other alternatives.	
3. Request access	We may send you a follow-up request for access to your property for a specific purpose and timeframe and outline this process. Your LLO will follow-up with a meeting, phone and/or email to you.	A minimum of 14 days before the required property access period.
4. Understand your requirements	Your LLO will discuss and agree with you the property access requirements, protocols and procedures to be used, for example access points, biosecurity requirements and timing.	
5. Provide notice	We will send you notice advising access to your property will be undertaken under section 93 of the <i>Electricity Industry Act 2000</i> (Vic) with full details of activities.	A minimum of 7 days before the required property access period.
6. Property access	We will undertake the field survey in accordance with the arrangements and protocols agreed and/or outlined in our notice to you. The process for entering your property will remain the same whether voluntary consent for access is provided or your property is accessed using section 93 of the <i>Electricity Industry Act 2000</i> (Vic), with the exception of individual access arrangements agreed in the voluntary land access consent process. See page 10 for more information.	We will endeavour to contact you 24 hours prior to and on the day of planned property access.
7. Remediation and compensation	<p>In accordance with our obligations under the <i>Electricity Industry Act 2000</i> (Vic), we will take all precautions to do as little damage as possible to your property during field work. Where unavoidable, we will remediate any damage caused as soon as possible. See page 11 for more information.</p> <p>You will be compensated for any damage caused during the surveys and investigations that is unable to be remediated. If compensation cannot be agreed upon, any compensation will be determined in the manner provided under the <i>Land Acquisition and Compensation Act 1986</i> (Vic). See page 11 for more information.</p>	We will endeavour to pay compensation that is assessed as payable within 30 days of assessment. You have up to two years after the damage occurs to submit a claim and supporting documentation.

Field survey information

Historic heritage surveys

Archaeologists may look for artefacts or archaeological sites that are significant to Victoria's European cultural history. This could include:

- Remains of buildings and farmhouses
- Fences and stone walls
- Pieces of ceramic, plates, glass.

These surveys will typically begin by walking over the site and making observations. If the archaeologist(s) considers the site requires further investigation, then small-scale excavations may be undertaken.

Flora and fauna surveys

Ecologists undertake flora and fauna surveys in accordance with relevant survey guidelines. These surveys may need to be conducted at specific times of the year or times of the day or night depending on the species being investigated. Surveys are conducted by using recording equipment to record animal calls over a period of time, or by physically observing the presence of flora and fauna species and ecological communities.

Geotechnical investigations

Geotechnical engineers or geologists may undertake investigations including the collection of samples to investigate soil composition and validate the desktop analysis of geologic conditions. In some locations, soil samples may be taken via drilled boreholes, up to approximately 300mm in diameter, using a vehicle mounted drilling rig.

Aboriginal cultural heritage surveys

Traditional Owners, cultural heritage advisors and archaeologists may conduct field surveys and investigations for evidence of Aboriginal cultural heritage in areas of potential sensitivity. Surveys may include walk overs and small-scale excavations to find evidence of features such as:

- Scar trees
- Mounds
- Fresh-water middens
- Stone tools
- Artefact scatters
- Quarries
- Rock art

Cultural values assessment field work

Cultural values assessments are designed to identify the intangible Aboriginal cultural heritage values and connection to Country by Traditional Owners including stories and song lines. The assessment findings are used to inform the Aboriginal cultural heritage impact assessment for the EES and the Cultural Heritage Management Plans.

When conducting field work for the cultural values assessments, a group of Elders and other Traditional Owners and cultural heritage advisors will visit the identified areas on the property and discuss their findings and record their observations of the intangible cultural heritage or cultural values associated with the area. This may include discussing stories and song lines associated with the landscape features and looking for evidence of occupation, including tangible cultural heritage to support the cultural values. The group may break up into smaller parties to allow for sensitive information to be discussed (for example, women, men, age groups). These surveys generally involve visual inspections only and no ground-disturbing activities.

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Frequently asked questions

How do we identify landholders?

We undertake a comprehensive process to identify and establish the correct contact details for all landholders who are in the project area including:

- Identifying current registered proprietor by land title search.
- Identifying contact details for companies using Australian Securities and Investments Commission company search.
- Visiting the property, where appropriate.

We also review notifications of title registrations from Land Use Victoria to identify changes in property ownership and contact new landholders using the process outlined.

Can others be involved in landholder discussions?

While the landholder is our key point of contact for discussions about land access, we want everyone who has an interest to have the opportunity to be informed and have input on this project. The landholder can request for others to attend meetings and discussions or for us to contact others directly to discuss the project with them.

How do you handle livestock?

We have a trained stock hand who is available to attend field work to ensure livestock are carefully managed and not disturbed by field work and survey activities.

Can you view the study findings?

We can provide you with a summary of the findings of surveys undertaken on your property upon request. Outcomes of the EES existing conditions assessments, based on desktop reviews and field surveys, are available on the project website in the form of preliminary EES information sheets.

The results of technical studies will be publicly exhibited as part of the EES. Any confidential data collected during field surveys will not be publicly linked to specific parcels of land.

What if something significant is found?

Field surveys are being used to gather information for many different technical studies for the EES. There are protections under law for some of these things including for Aboriginal cultural heritage, historic heritage and certain flora and fauna species.

If something significant is found, for example protected flora or fauna or historic heritage, we will provide you with as much information as possible about what was found.

If an Aboriginal Place is discovered, following verification, we will:

- Record and register the place with First Peoples – State Relations (formerly Aboriginal Victoria).
- Work with First Peoples – State Relations, local Traditional Owners or the relevant Registered Aboriginal Party to develop management strategies for the Aboriginal Place with the aim of avoiding or minimising harm during future planned works.

We are working with all Registered Aboriginal Parties along the proposed route to develop a process with each of them for when an Aboriginal Place is found.

Generally, having Aboriginal cultural heritage on private land will not stop the existing land use from continuing however management strategies may need to be put in place. Aboriginal sites and places are protected by law, so if something is found, we will work with you and the local Traditional Owners to design management strategies to protect the site or place; in some instances this may mean relocating and protecting the cultural heritage elsewhere.

More information about Aboriginal cultural heritage is available on the First Peoples – State Relations website www.firstpeoplesrelations.vic.gov.au.

How are records kept?

We record all landholder contact, including meetings, phone calls and emails, in our landholder and stakeholder management system. Meeting notes are recorded to ensure important information is captured for each property. Where relevant, this information is provided to the technical specialists working on the EES for the project. For example, agricultural practices are shared with the agriculture specialist and reports of native animals or threatened species are shared with the biodiversity specialist.

The technical specialists undertaking field surveys and investigations will document their findings and use the information to complete the relevant technical study including impact assessment for the EES. The field survey and investigation findings and related material will be included in the EES but will not contain any personal information (as defined under the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth)).

What is the privacy policy?

To the extent we collect personal information (as defined under the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth)), AusNet Services is committed to handling your personal information in accordance with the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth). Information about how we handle personal information is provided in the:

- AusNet Services' privacy policy, available at: www.ausnetservices.com.au/Privacy
- Privacy Collection Statement, which applies specifically to the Western Renewables Link project, available here: www.westernrenewableslink.com.au/privacy-policy/.

The *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) gives people the right to request access to their personal information. You can request access to your personal information through the project website ([Request for Access to Personal Information form](#)).

If you have questions about the way we handle your personal information, please contact us by:

- Calling the AusNet Customer Service Centre on 1300 360 795 (8am–5pm, Monday–Friday)
- Writing to us at:
AusNet Services
Attention: Privacy Officer –
Western Renewables Link
Melbourne City Mail Centre VIC 8001
privacy@ausnetservices.com.au

Complaints

How can a land access complaint be reported?

You can lodge a land access complaint or any other type of complaint or feedback about the project via:

- Online enquiry form on the [project website](#)
- Phone 1300 360 795
- Email info@westernrenewableslink.com.au
- Mail PO Box 638, Ballarat VIC 3353

You can also lodge a complaint or provide feedback directly to your LLO.

How are land access complaints handled?

Complaint handling steps

1. You can lodge a complaint with AusNet as outlined above.
2. We will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within two working days.
3. We aim to resolve the complaint within ten working days.
4. Where we cannot reach a resolution within ten working days, we will keep you informed of the progress being made and provide a revised timeframe for resolving the complaint.
5. At any time, you may request to have your complaint escalated to the project senior management team.

How will land access disputes be resolved?

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your complaint to the project team, you can:

- Request escalation to a higher level of AusNet management.
- Pursue dispute resolution in relation to land access through the Energy and Water Ombudsman Victoria; an independent and impartial dispute resolution service that is free to Victorian customers.

Energy and Water Ombudsman Victoria

Phone: 1800 500 509

Email: ewovinfo@ewov.com.au

Website: www.ewov.com.au

Other complaints

If your complaint relates to the RIT-T process, you can make a complaint to AEMO by emailing WestVicRITT@aemo.com.au.

If your complaint relates to the EES process, you can make a complaint to the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning by emailing environment.assessment@delwp.vic.gov.au.

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ESC statement of expectations

Statement of expectations principles quick reference guide

	Principle	Reference
General principle	Comply with this statement of expectations	Page 3
Approach to communication and engagement	Ensure staged, timely engagement and consultation	Pages 4 to 5
	Be accessible and responsive	Pages 4 to 5
	Use accessible, readable communications	Pages 4 to 5
	Employ respectful two-way communication	Pages 4 to 5
Process of communication and engagement	Identify and contact those affected	Pages 5 and 14
	Provide identification on contact	Page 10
	Outline access rights and obligations	Page 6
	Make clear when and why access is required	Page 6
	Explain the processes involved	Pages 8 to 12
	Commit to details on how access will occur	Pages 8 to 9
	Give reasonable notice of proposed access	Pages 8 and 12
	Keep records	Page 14
	Maintain confidentiality and respect privacy	Page 14
Managing impacts of access	Minimise impact on land and landowners	Page 9
	Meet expected work standards	Page 9
	Meet requirements for field-based employees and contractors accessing land	Page 11
	Implement environmental and biosecurity controls	Pages 11
	Manage fire risks	Page 11
	Manage COVID and other health risks	Page 11
Managing complaints and disputes effectively and fairly	Implement effective complaint handling	Page 15
	Offer dispute resolution	Page 15

Reporting requirements

The Essential Services Commission requires AusNet to report outcomes achieved in meeting the statement of expectations in relation to activities undertaken for development of the Western Renewables Link. AusNet will report to the Essential Services Commission each month (from 1 June 2022) as required about how the expectations are being adhered to. This information will be reported publicly by the Essential Services Commission, in accordance with any legal obligations such as privacy requirements, via their website www.esc.vic.gov.au.

Sample voluntary land access consent form

I/We hereby authorise employees, contractors, agents and consultants of AusNet Transmission Group Pty Ltd (AusNet Services) and AEMO engaged on the Western Renewables Link to enter my property until 1 August 2023 or the date agreed being _____ to undertake physical survey and investigation work as detailed in the attached schedule.

This may include one or more of the following:

- Land use activities including agriculture.
- Ecological investigations.
- Aboriginal cultural heritage surveys.
- Historical heritage.
- Soil contamination investigation.
- Land and cadastral survey to confirm title boundaries and geographic features.
- Sample/testing water, vegetation and soil for planning purposes.
- Geotechnical investigations.

The period of agreed access for survey purposes is granted from the date of this agreement until 1 August 2023 (or other date stipulated) and will be conducted in accordance with the agreed access protocol listed in Schedule A.

Signature: _____

Landholder Name/s: <<insert landholder name/s>>

Date: _____

Signature: _____

AusNet Services Agent (Land Liaison Officer): <<insert LLO name>> Date: _____

Property parcels (as per land title/s): Certificate of Title <<insert vol-fol>> (<<insert lot and plan>>)

This voluntary consent to access can be revoked at any time by the landholder. Please complete and sign this consent form, including the access protocols in Schedule A and return it to your Land Liaison Officer via email to <<insert Land Liaison Officer email address>> or info@westernrenewableslink.com.au. A scanned copy of the completed and signed form is acceptable.

Privacy:

AusNet Services implements a range of measures to protect the security of the personal information it collects. All personal information is collected and stored by AusNet Services in accordance with AusNet Services' Privacy Policy which can be found at <https://ausnetservices.com.au/en/Misc-Pages/Privacy>. More information about the Privacy Policy and the Privacy Collection Statement which applies specifically to the Western Renewables Link can be found at www.westernrenewableslink.com.au/privacy-policy/.

Schedule A – Access Protocol
Date:

Landholder/s (property owner/s):	<<insert landholder names>>
Land title numbers (list all relevant title, lot and plan numbers):	<<Certificate of Title and lot and plan>>
Person to contact for access:	[manually insert details] Name: Mobile Phone: Home Phone: Email: Mailing Address:
Period and form of notice required prior to and following access:	AusNet Services or its agent will contact the landholder at least seven (7) days prior (by email or text or mail) to discuss details of the survey and investigation types, proposed timing, locations on your land for proposed activities, number of people and vehicles or equipment that may be brought onto the property. We will also contact you on the day prior to the proposed access to re-confirm access arrangements and any relevant details.
Preferred access times and exclusion dates and times:	[manually insert details]
Land access procedures:	All persons entering the property will carry identification which can be produced at any time. AusNet Services and its authorised persons will comply with all applicable laws in accessing your property, including compliance with any COVIDSafe protocols. AusNet Services and its authorised persons will advise how access to the property is proposed e.g., on foot or by vehicle and the proposed location of entry/exit. AusNet Services and authorised persons will provide a description of the work program and the extent and type of activities to be conducted on the property. AusNet Services and authorised persons will provide an outline of the areas to be surveyed. AusNet Services and authorised persons will leave all gates, fences and grids as they are found. [manually insert any agreed additional details]

<p>Detail of works to be undertaken</p> <p>(Land Liaison Officer to list survey(s) to be undertaken):</p>	<p>Commencing from [insert date agreed with landholder], AusNet Services needs to access your property to undertake:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Ecological investigations. • Aboriginal cultural heritage surveys. • Historical heritage. • Soil contamination investigation. • Geotechnical investigations.] <p>AusNet Services or its agent will contact the landholder at least seven (7) days prior (by telephone or email or text) to discuss details of the specific surveys and investigations to be undertaken.</p>
<p>Biosecurity requirements for access to the property:</p>	<p>All vehicles entering the property after being on another property must wash all tyres and mudguards with water to remove all adherent mud, seeds and faeces; and all persons before entering the property after having been on another property must undertake a washdown of their footwear to remove all traces of mud, seeds and faeces.</p> <p>The biosecurity register for the farm property will be signed prior to access, and any additional protocols established for the farm business will be complied with:</p> <p>[manually insert any agreed additional details]</p>
<p>Existing hazards (plant and animal pathogens, soil contamination etc):</p>	<p>[manually insert details]</p>
<p>Access tracks/access points (any areas where vehicle use is restricted):</p>	<p>[manually insert details]</p>
<p>Any other specific instructions or requirements regarding access to the property:</p>	<p>[manually insert details]</p>

My AusNet Services Agent (Land Liaison Officer) is <<insert Land Liaison Officer name>> at <<insert Land Liaison Officer email address>> or << insert phone number>>

Ref:






Questions about land access

We recognise that the requirements of each property and landholder are unique. This guide provides general information for landholders around access to your land. Your Land Liaison Officer is available to discuss with you any specific questions or concerns you have.

Contact details for your Land Liaison Officer can be provided by the project team on 1300 360 795 or via email info@westernrenewableslink.com.au.

Western Renewables Link information

 www.westernrenewableslink.com.au
 1300 360 795
 info@westernrenewableslink.com.au

Ballarat PO Box
PO Box 638, Ballarat VIC 3353

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:

 1300 360 795
 info@westernrenewableslink.com.au
 PO Box 638, Ballarat VIC 3353

Feedback

You can provide feedback on this document via our website www.westernrenewableslink.com.au or by calling 1300 360 795 or by emailing info@westernrenewableslink.com.au

Translation and interpretation services



If you need an interpreter, please call 13 14 50.

If you are deaf and/or find hearing or speaking with people on the phone difficult, please contact the National Relay Service on voice relay number 1300 555 727, TTY number 133 677 or SMS relay number 0423 677 767.

Other sources of information

Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner (www.aeic.gov.au) including information about how to make a complaint, best industry practice and resources for landholders.

Australian Energy Market Operator

(www.aemo.com.au) including information on the Regulatory Investment Test for Transmission (RIT-T) process for this project.

Energy and Water Ombudsman Victoria

(www.ewov.com.au) including information about complaints and dispute resolution.

Energy Safe Victoria

(www.esv.vic.gov.au) including information about the safe design and operation of high voltage transmission networks in Victoria.

Environment Effects Statement Process in Victoria

(www.planning.vic.gov.au/environment-assessment/what-is-the-ees-process-in-victoria) including information about the environment assessment process managed by DELWP.

Essential Services Commission

(www.esc.vic.gov.au) including information about the regulation of transmission licenses in Victoria and the Electricity Transmission Company Land Access Statement of Expectations.

Valuer General of Victoria

(www.land.vic.gov.au/valuations/first-time-here/about-valuer-general-victoria) including general information about how land is valued in Victoria.

The information in this document is for reference only – it is not designed to be, nor should it be regarded, as professional or legal advice. You should seek appropriate independent professional and/or legal advice where appropriate and before making any decisions based on material in this document. The information is an overview (in summary form) and does not purport to be complete. This document, and the information in this document, will not form the basis of any contract or commitment. AusNet Services does not guarantee or warrant the accuracy, completeness, or currency of the information provided and AusNet Services, its directors, officers, employees, agents and advisers disclaim all liability and responsibility (including for negligence) for any direct or indirect loss or damage which may be suffered by any recipient through use or reliance on anything contained in or omitted from this document.